

Translating Culture:
Denise Bombardier's *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*

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Abstract

Translating Culture: Denise Bombardier's *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*

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Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec, by Denise Bombardier, is a collection of subjective essays about the features that make Quebec unique on the North American landscape, and that distinguish it from its European counterpart, France. Throughout the book, the author makes reference to French words, grammar and language usage, and also employs cultural references that are specific to Quebec and/or France. In this thesis, I translate select excerpts from the *Dictionnaire*. The thesis also examines the factors that might make an Anglophone reader less likely to understand these references if they were to be left intact in an English translation, with no attendant explanations. Chief among these factors are a lack of French-language proficiency and a deficient knowledge of the source culture. It then discusses the methods and strategies that I employed in my translation of *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* to address these linguistic and cultural challenges, in an attempt to bridge the lexicultural gap between the source-text reader and the target-text reader.

Résumé

Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec, de Denise Bombardier, est un recueil d'essais subjectifs abordant diverses particularités qui rendent la Belle Province unique dans le paysage nord-américain et la distingue de son homologue européenne, la France. Au fil du livre, l'auteure s'intéresse à la langue française – mots, grammaire et usage – et emploie des références culturelles propres au Québec et à la France. Dans le cadre de ce mémoire, je traduis des extraits choisis du *Dictionnaire*. Le mémoire se penche également sur les facteurs qui pourraient faire en sorte qu'un lecteur anglophone comprenne moins aisément ces références si elles étaient laissées intactes dans une traduction anglaise, sans autres explications. Un manque de maîtrise de la langue française et une connaissance insuffisante de la culture d'origine sont deux de ces principaux facteurs. La mémoire aborde ensuite les méthodes et les stratégies que j'ai employées dans ma traduction du *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* pour relever ces défis linguistiques et culturels, dans une tentative de combler le fossé lexiculturel entre le lecteur du texte source et celui du texte cible.

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*Translation is by definition interlingual and intercultural,
it involves both linguistic and cultural transfer;
in other words, it is a culture-transcending process.
(Vermeer, 1992)*

I. Commentary

1. Background

Introduction

Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec, written by acclaimed author and journalist Denise Bombardier, and published in 2014, is a sweeping, A-to-Z ode to Quebec. Written in an engaging literary style, it is not in fact a dictionary, as the first word in its title would suggest, and as the author herself confirms in an interview with *Le Huffington Post Québec*: “Ceux qui pensent que le livre est un simple dictionnaire avec des définitions eh bien, ce n’est pas cela du tout” (Bombardier, quoted in Houdassine 2014); rather, it is more of an encyclopedic collection of informative essays punctuated with autobiographical elements and personal anecdotes.

The second word in the title, *amoureux*, describes both the author and the reader. French writer and journalist Denis Tillinac, author of *Dictionnaire amoureux de la France*, from the same collection, confirms the labour-of-love aspect involved when a writer is invited to pen a book for the celebrated series: “C’est souvent l’un des meilleurs livres de l’auteur, car il n’y parle que de ce qu’il aime. Sur la France, en toute modestie, c’était à moi que cela revenait. Ensuite, il faut trier dans son grenier intime, oublier le mot dictionnaire pour ne plus penser qu’à amoureux” (Tillinac, quoted in Gandillot 2009). Proving herself equal to the task, Bombardier lovingly draws a nuanced and oftentimes humorous portrait of her native land—“De A à Z, la journaliste au franc parler y dévoile l’amour qu’elle porte à son peuple” (Houdassine 2014)—for readers who are similarly enamoured of Quebec.

Finally, the last word in the title, *Québec*, is self-explanatory. The book is all about *la belle province*, “de la géographie jusqu’à la langue, en passant par l’histoire et les héros” (ibid.), written from the author’s perspective, as a means of showcasing to the rest of the world what

makes her beloved province so unique. As Bombardier describes it: “C’est un témoignage sur ce qui fait nos forces et sur pourquoi on est différent des autres” (ibid.).

For my thesis project, I chose to translate excerpts from Bombardier’s *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* for two reasons. First, for the specific translation challenges they represented: The book itself, and my chosen thirteen entries in particular, is replete with references that are specific to the Québécois and/or French context (henceforth to be understood as meaning French-speaking Quebec and France, respectively), which required me, as the translator, to continuously tread the line between maintaining the author’s elegant, flowing style and producing a translation that reads equally well, but that does not leave the reader mystified by a string of unfamiliar references.

In negotiating my translation method, I had to decide whether to take one of the two approaches described by Friedrich Schleiermacher: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him” (Schleiermacher, 49). This decision between two apparently opposing methods of “foreignization” versus “domestication,” concepts expounded upon by Antoine Berman (2004) and Lawrence Venuti (2008), required me to make choices regarding the level of visibility or invisibility that I would assume as the translator, namely the strategies I would use to translate foreign words and concepts for an uninitiated readership, and how much these would interrupt the flow of reading. These methods and strategies will be discussed further on.

The second reason I chose *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* as my thesis topic is my own love of Quebec. As a born-and-bred Montrealer, I am deeply *amoureuse du Québec*. It is my home. As such, I saw the translation of *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* as an opportunity to share my passion, and that of Bombardier, with English-speaking readers who are less familiar, or not at all familiar, with the subtleties of the province. This potentially even includes Anglophones who were born and raised in Quebec, whom Bombardier herself asserts still remain very divided, both culturally and linguistically, from Francophones: “Au Québec, nous vivons en parallèle sans nous rencontrer. Les artistes francophones sont totalement méconnus des anglophones sauf naturellement Céline Dion qui est une star internationale. Et si vous quittez le Québec, le Canada

qui est officiellement un pays bilingue ne l'est absolument pas... On ne parle français que dans les institutions fédérales” (Bombardier, quoted in Gihousse 2014). My goal, however ambitious, was to make my translation of *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* a tool for furthering the understanding between the two distinct linguistic and cultural communities that continue to exist in this province.

The *Dictionnaire amoureux* collection

The *Dictionnaire amoureux* collection, published by French publishing house Plon, was created in 2000, under the direction of Jean-Claude Simoën. An editor who went on to become the literary director at Plon, Simoën first conceived of the idea for the collection in 1997, while editing Dominique Fernandez’s *Le Voyage d’Italie*, an alphabetical exploration of the artists, music, literature, cities and splendours of Italy. Simoën found the title unoriginal and rather uninspiring, so when Fernandez suggested the subtitle *Dictionnaire amoureux*, Simoën enthusiastically agreed (Gandillot 2009).

This would eventually inspire Simoën to launch a collection based on the alphabetical dictionary format, bringing on board some of France’s most prestigious authors to write volumes for the new series, which proved to be a resounding success with the reading public. More than fifteen years since it was first introduced, the collection has sold well over one million copies combined of its 105 titles published to date.

The key word of the collection—and also the key to its success—is *amoureux*. Simoën has a knack for pairing well-known, knowledgeable and talented authors with subjects of popular interest, with impressive results. Stéphane Billerey, an executive at Plon, confirms, “L’alchimie du succès, c’est une personnalité reconnue, une belle écriture, et une passion partagée par le plus grand nombre” (Billerey, quoted in Artus 2011). Simoën also allows authors to give free rein to their subjectivity. What results is a volume of meandering, eloquent and deeply personal essays on the numerous facets—people, places, events, music, objects—of a topic that excites the writer. *Dictionnaires amoureux* have been written about several major world religions, prominent writers and composers, multiple countries, cities, and regions around the world, and a

myriad of subjects in between: cats, hunting, cooking, rock and roll, the opera, Jesus and the devil, to name just a few.

The best-selling volume, and in fact the only one to sell over 100,000 copies, has been Bernard Pivot's *Dictionnaire amoureux du vin*, at more than 140,000 copies sold (Gandillot 2009). As of 2009, Simoën was continuing to receive five to ten proposals per week for new titles for the collection, but he is very particular about which ones he accepts, even going so far as to reject book ideas from well-known authors in order to preserve the integrity of his collection: "Alain Minc voulait consacrer un dictionnaire à l'économie. Mais peut-on tomber amoureux de l'économie? Jérôme Clément, le PDG d'Arte, souhaitait écrire sur la culture, mais c'est un champ trop vaste" (ibid.). Conversely, other authors have refused requests to write for the collection, some feeling unequal to the daunting proposal. When asked to write about Germany, Michel Tournier said: "Je suis beaucoup trop vieux et j'ai l'écriture beaucoup trop rare." Finding the right cobranding—a good name *and* a good topic—is no easy feat (ibid.).

Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec, the author and critical reception

Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec, by Denise Bombardier, was published by Plon in October 2014. The eighty-second book in the *Dictionnaire amoureux* collection, it is a compendium of nearly one hundred short entries arranged in alphabetical order and peppered with first-person anecdotes. In it, the author fondly presents her subjective and deeply personal interpretation of what makes Quebec and Quebecers tick and what distinguishes them from their French cousins: the historical figures and events that shaped them, the food they eat, the language they speak, and the people, places, symbols and institutions they hold dear. Of her work, she says, "J'y ai mis tout mon amour. Cela veut dire que c'est totalement subjectif. [...] J'ai décidé de parler des thèmes qui me sont chers. [...] Je parle de mes rencontres et de toutes les personnes que je trouve attachantes. J'ai beaucoup puisé dans mes souvenirs" (Bombardier, quoted in Houdassine 2014).

Denise Bombardier was born in the Petite-Patrie neighbourhood of Montreal in 1941. Her father was very strict and contemptuous of her devotion to the Catholic religion. Despite being a star

pupil, she was forced to drop out of school at the age of sixteen when her father refused to continue paying her monthly tuition. She struck out on her own, landing a few acting roles, until she returned to school in 1968. She studied political science and joined various political movements on the Université de Montréal campus. The passionate articles she penned for the student newspaper caught the eye of the head writer on a Radio-Canada television show, who offered her a job. She accepted but continued to pursue her university education. After completing her Master's degree, she enrolled at the Sorbonne, in Paris, where she earned a Ph.D. with a thesis on foreign policy in France as seen through its television programming (Sauvé n.d.).

Bombardier went on to host the weekly television program *Noir sur blanc*, which aired from 1979 to 1983 on Radio-Canada. In doing so, she became the first woman in Quebec to produce and host a public affairs program (Sabourin 2012), the first of many that she would helm on television and radio over the course of her career. She is also a journalist, editorialist and columnist (she currently writes a weekly column for *Le Journal de Montréal*), essayist and prolific author, with some twenty books to her credit. In 2007, she also wrote the lyrics to Céline Dion's song *La Diva* (ibid.).

In interviews granted at the time of the *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* launch, Bombardier makes it very clear that her target audience for the book was the global French-speaking population. When asked whether she found it difficult to decide which topics to cover in her volume, she replied: “Non, parce que j'avais la conscience que j'écrivais pour toute la Francophonie. Il fallait que je touche tout le monde” (Bombardier, quoted in Troadec 2015). When one interviewer pointed out that the book steers clear of any controversial subjects despite the author's reputation for speaking her mind, Bombardier retorted, “Le livre est destiné à la francophonie. Quand on est avec de la visite, eh bien nos conflits, on les garde pour nous” (Bombardier, quoted in Houdassine 2014).

Despite Bombardier's stated intention of writing *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* for a global audience, and while none of her entries are controversial *per se*, her personal sentiments and opinions about Quebec and Quebec society are evident in the text. Running through many of her essays like an undercurrent are Bombardier's well-known nationalist leanings and protectionist

attitude toward the French language, not to mention her reverential attachment to the province's Catholic heritage and values, and to a bygone era in general. Depending on which side of the Atlantic the critics hailed from, this personal bias earned her mixed reviews for *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*. On the one hand, in a review that appeared in the Quebec daily *Le Devoir*, literary critic Christian Desmeules (2014) somewhat harshly takes Bombardier to task for the sentimentality and nostalgia she expresses for a society that he asserts no longer exists:

En moins d'une centaine de courts chapitres baignés par une odeur légère d'encens et de renfermé, où les rares références culturelles sont le plus souvent datées, ce *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* résonne comme un long lamento nostalgique à l'endroit d'un Québec qui n'existe plus. [...] L'attachement de la polémiste à l'héritage catholique du Québec — de même qu'à certaines de ses valeurs — n'est un secret pour personne. Elle oint, asperge, enrobe et moralise avec sa nostalgie du bon parler et son catastrophisme. [...] De manière sinueuse, à coups de commentaires moraux disséminés ici et là, ce *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* est bien entendu l'expression d'un fascinant et complexe rapport amour-haine envers le Québec, « *pays plus métaphorique que réel* ». Pour ajouter à la confusion, le livre s'ouvre sur l'illustration d'une feuille d'érable et se referme sur celle d'un castor. Rien n'y fait.

On the other hand, in a post entitled “Les Québécois sont là!” appearing on his blog *Les pieds dans le plat*, French journalist, writer, and literary and food critic Gilles Pudlowski (2015) appears to have been utterly charmed by Bombardier's book, which he describes alternately as passionate, smart and funny:

Bref, si vous pensiez connaître le Québec parce que vous avez parcouru l'Estrie, les Laurentides, Baie Saint-Paul ou visité Montréal sans omettre l'historique cité de Québec elle-même, remisez toutes vos idées au placard et ouvrez le dictionnaire amoureux de Denise Bombardier. Amoureux, certes, mais fort lucide. Notre journaliste populaire et cousine du Nouveau Monde n'a pas la langue (verte et mûre) dans sa poche. Tout est bon à dire pour cette chroniqueuse impénitente qui sait raconter, aimer, se moquer, donner à voir. La lettre « Q » qui se prononce « Que » en québécois, New York, grand rivale pas forcément louée, Charlevoix et Charlebois, Félix Leclerc et Gilles Vignault sont ici le lieu d'entrées à la fois drôlatiques, tendres et savoureuses. Quel joli hommage à la Belle Province que voilà!

Pudlowski's reaction to *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* is that of an outsider looking in, one not privy to the Quebec's proverbial “dirty laundry” that Bombardier referred to and deliberately chose not to air in the writing of her book. So, while Bombardier's intimate portrait of her beloved province will likely—and justifiably—seem favourably biased to the reader who was born and raised in Quebec, the intended reader is not, in fact, Québécois, as Desmeules (2014)

reminds us: “On se sent même un peu voyeur, avant de se rappeler que ce livre, en effet, ne s’adresse pas à nous.”

On the question of bias, Bombardier is the first to admit that, like all other volumes in the *Dictionnaire amoureux* series, hers is a highly personal work, and one that she wrote as a means of promoting a deeper understanding of Quebec by the larger Francophonie, and by the French, in particular. In an interview with Béatrix de l’Aulnoit (2018) of France’s *Marie Claire* magazine, Bombardier describes her motivation for writing *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*:

C’est un cri du cœur. Un plaidoyer pour les Québécois [sic], leur anti-conformisme, leur bonne humeur, leurs créateurs actifs et très dynamiques. [...] Les Québécois ne pensent pas comme les Français. Ce dictionnaire amoureux devrait permettre à tous ceux et celles qui le liront de se faire une idée juste de cette terre d’accueil qui, à juste titre, fait tant rêver les jeunes!

2. Theoretical framework

Declarative and procedural knowledge

Translation is inherently a problem-solving or decision-making process. According to the article on the subject in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, “in order to solve a problem, a human being must basically possess two types of knowledge: [...] declarative knowledge (knowing what) and procedural knowledge (knowing how)” (Wilss 1998, 57).

On the one hand, the declarative knowledge—“pool of stored knowledge and experience” (ibid.) that a person holds in their memory—that qualifies me to translate *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* is my background as a native Quebecer who was born to a Francophone father and an Anglophone mother, both also born in Quebec. While I was raised speaking English at home, I have always been fluently bilingual, living all my life straddling the divide between the American-influenced, yet unique Anglo-Quebec culture in which I was raised, and the vibrantly distinct French-Québécois culture. While my media consumption (television, radio, movies, books, newspapers, magazines) has always been predominantly in English, I was also always keenly aware of Québécois cultural phenomena playing out in the background of my everyday life. As André Lefevre and Susan Bassnett (1990, 11) succinctly sum up: “Since languages

express cultures, translators should be bicultural, not bilingual.” On the other hand, the procedural knowledge—ability to discern in which situations one “must apply which operative moves to attain the desired goal” (Wilss 1998, 57)—that I bring to the task of translating *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* stems from my formal university education in translation and translation studies, and my nearly twenty-year career as a professional translator.

In translating *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*, I chose to combine my declarative knowledge with my procedural knowledge to address the challenges presented by rendering Québécois/French references into English in a manner that makes them accessible and understandable to an English-speaking audience. For the purposes of this analysis, I considered these references to be any element of the text that refers to a phenomenon specific to the Québécois and/or French culture or context, and/or to the French language and that, without a minimum knowledge of the latter, would be incomprehensible to an Anglophone reader. I identified two broad categories of challenges in the source text: 1) the use of French words, and references to French grammar and language usage (linguistic challenges); and 2) the use of references specific to the Québécois and/or French context (people, places, objects, literary/historical references, etc.) (cultural challenges).

***Skopos* and readership**

Before I could begin the task of translating *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*, however, I first had to identify what Chris Shei (2005, 313) states are the four key elements of any translation process: the purpose, or *skopos*, of the target text; the readership of the target text; the overall method for the translation; and the translation strategies used. The word *skopos*, from the Greek meaning aim, purpose or target, was applied to the theory developed in the late 1970s by Hans Vermeer that “reflects a general shift from predominantly linguistic and rather formal translation theories to a more functionally and socioculturally oriented concept of translation” (Schäffner 2009, 235). Under *skopos* theory, two translation-related factors are highlighted as being key, namely, the culture of the target audience, and the intended function of the text in the culture of those readers. In short, the *skopos* of a translation is its purpose, which must be identified before the translation is started, and it is that purpose that ultimately determines the method and strategies the translator will employ in creating the translation (ibid., 236).

During my translation process, I addressed Shei's first two steps, that is, determining the *skopos* and defining the readership of the target text, almost simultaneously. Since I did not have a translation brief or even a specific publisher in mind to guide my work, I decided that I would approach the translation as a book broadly intended to provide more information about Quebec (*skopos*) to curious and interested English-speaking audiences (readership). On a micro level, this audience would be English-speakers living in Quebec and would progress upward and outward in reach to English-speakers living in the rest of Canada, through to the macro level of English-speakers living anywhere in the world.

Language proficiency of readership

Before I could address the first category of challenges in my translation (linguistic challenges), however, I first had to consider my readers' level of understanding of the French language, given that *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* is filled with references to French words and instances of French-language usage.

Starting at the macro, or international, level of my target readership, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie states that French was the fifth most spoken language in the world in 2014 (after Mandarin, English, Spanish, Arabic and Hindi), with 274 million speakers. Of these, 212 million are “born and bred” in French, “that is to say they use French on an everyday basis, even if contexts vary greatly as the language, learnt during childhood, is acquired earlier or later and used often or less so” (Wolff 2014, 3, 5). While this may sound like a large number of people, compared to the world population of 7.2 billion in 2014, native French speakers and *speakers of French as a learned language* (my emphasis) represent a mere 3.8%—a drop in the bucket. I therefore assumed that the chances were slim that an English-speaking reader living abroad who picked up my translation would have anything beyond a rudimentary proficiency in French, or indeed any knowledge of the language at all. Because, after all, one can also assume that when a person reads a book in translation—if they choose to or even have the opportunity to do so at all, since “in America and the United Kingdom, translations only constitute 3 percent of publications” (Fitzpatrick 2016)—it is generally because they do not have a sufficient grasp of the source language to read the original.

At the intermediate level, I operated on the assumption that most English-speaking readers outside of Quebec, but within the rest of Canada, would have only a functional knowledge of French, or even no knowledge at all. Despite the fact that the 2016 Canadian Census (Statistics Canada 2017) shows that bilingualism in Canada reached an all-time high of 17.9% in 2016, the fact remains that almost 82% of Canadians, or more than 28.8 million people, do not speak French. Moreover, it was found that “over 60% of the growth of the bilingual population is attributable to Quebec” (ibid.), meaning that the number of French speakers in the rest of Canada is increasing at a substantially slower rate than in Quebec. Taking this one step further, while almost 18% of people in this country self-report as being bilingual, the Census data (ibid.) reveal that only 10.3% of Canadians outside of Quebec are able to conduct a conversation in French.

At the micro level of my readership, I assumed that most Anglophones living in Quebec would fare substantially better than their Canadian counterparts in terms of being able to understand the references to French words and French-language usage in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*. I made this determination based on the fact that, if they were not already exposed to French at home due to any number of different circumstances (having a French-speaking parent, grandparent(s), caregiver, etc.), Anglophones who attended English schools in Quebec after the mid-1960s began receiving formal French instruction starting in kindergarten. In some cases, their exposure to the language started even before one year of age, in the daycare setting. Therefore, many Anglophone Quebecers are likely to recognize and understand the references that Bombardier makes to French words and terms, such as the *fleurdelisée* and *la belle province*. They would also probably have little trouble understanding her references to French grammar and usage by virtue of having learned French in a formal setting from such a young age. As for older Anglophones, however, their education pre-dates the introduction of French-immersion programs in Quebec in the mid-1960s, when “Anglophone parents started becoming concerned that their children were not learning French well enough in an English school” (Barmania 2017). These Quebecers grew up during a time when Anglophones and the English language dominated the business world in Quebec, and there was little interest in or need to learn French in order to be assured of career advancement opportunities. It is therefore plausible that Bombardier’s French-language references might be lost on them. As a category, English-only speakers in Quebec account for 4.6% of the total population, or 372,450 people (Statistics Canada 2016)—not a significant number, but a group that nonetheless merited consideration in my translation

process. Hence my overarching assumption that my readers at all three levels (macro, intermediate, micro) would be unilingual English speakers with little to no understanding of French or the conventions of that language.

Cultural knowledge of readership

As Shei mentions (2005, 313), culture is a key consideration in determining the intended function, or *skopos*, of the translation in the target context. Therefore, at the same time as I considered my readers' presumed level of French-language proficiency, I also had to consider their cultural knowledge. This is because, alongside many instances of French words used as such and French-language usage, *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* also contains numerous references specific to the Québécois and/or French context, which represent my second category of translation challenges. As such, I had to account for the crucial aspect of the cultural framework within which my English-speaking target audience would receive my translation, as this would guide my choice of translation methods and strategies moving forward. Translation theorist Susan Bassnett sums up the importance of the translator taking into account the culture of their readership with this elegant analogy: "In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his or her peril" (2014, 25).

While the field of translation studies has been marked by the development of numerous trends, theories and approaches since it first emerged in the 1970s, underpinning all of the research has been "an emphasis on cultural aspects of translation, on the contexts within which translation occurs" (ibid., 3). Bassnett's tidy comparison between heart surgery and translation essentially describes a mindset that was enabled and supported by a pivotal shift in the field of translation studies referred to as "the cultural turn," a term coined by Mary Snell-Hornby in her chapter in *Translation, History and Culture*, the seminal collection of essays edited by Bassnett and Lefevere in 1990, to describe "the move from translation as text to translation as culture and politics" (Munday 2012, 192). The cultural turn in translation studies, put forward by Snell-Hornby and taken up by Bassnett and Lefevere "as a metaphor" (ibid.) for this cultural shift, ushered in a new era in the discipline of translation studies. Within this translation movement, the focus moved beyond the linguistic theories that had traditionally framed

translation studies to translating within the framework of the source and target cultures, with the goal being to understand “the interaction between translation and culture [and] the way in which culture impacts and constrains translation” (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, 11). Ultimately, the aim was to improve the “readability” of translated texts. This is achieved by the translator consciously accounting for the knowledge and cultural background that the reader brings to the experience of reading a translation, rather than simply translating the words on the page as a purely linguistic, or mechanical, operation.

In her chapter “From Ouèredéare to Soçauzez: Translating the English of Jacques Ferron,” appearing in *Culture in Transit: Translating the Literature of Quebec*, literary translator Betty Bednarski describes the responsibility that a translator feels toward their reader, as well as the sense of concern for the latter’s understanding of the target text that permeates the act of translating: “The translator is obliged to look ahead—more consciously, perhaps, than any other writer—to the reception of the text” (1995, 120). Therefore, my broad working assumption in terms of the receiving culture of my English-speaking readers was that the latter had little to no knowledge of the Franco-Québécois culture. This is most likely the case at the macro level of Anglophones living abroad, to whom even the culture of Canada is potentially foreign, let alone the distinct culture of Quebec, Canada’s only majority French-speaking province. I also extrapolated this assumption to Anglophones living in the rest of Canada. However, Gordon McIvor, former president of the *Alliance Française Toronto* and well-known advocate for bilingualism, postulates that this is beginning to change (2012): “More and more Canadians have been learning French and the beauty of the French-Canadian culture, and breaking down the anachronistic concept of ‘two solitudes.’” The term “two solitudes” comes from Hugh MacLennan’s 1945 novel of the same name and refers to the troubled relationship between English- and French-speaking Canadians, and their perceived lack of communication and even lack of will for communication (McGill-Queen’s University Press n.d.).

As for Anglophones in Quebec, they exist within an unusual dynamic. According to the federal government, while English is the principal language of North America, the Anglophones in Quebec, who “live primarily in the Montréal area, but are also found in small but dynamic communities across the province” (Government of Canada 2013), are nevertheless in a minority situation. They are vastly outnumbered by French-speaking Québécois who, over the centuries,

have forged a culture as unique as it is distinct from that anywhere else on the North American continent, “richly endowed by its aboriginal history and [by] the strong ties it has maintained with the European and American civilizations that helped shape it. At the same time, as the only majority French-speaking society in North America, Quebec has a deeply felt attachment to its own culture, the symbol of its identity” (Gouvernement du Québec 2018). Yet, as strong and as vibrant as this Franco-Québécois culture is, it appears to exist alongside that of the Anglo-Quebec culture, almost as though in parallel universes—cohabiting the same space, but seldom meeting or intersecting.

This point is clearly illustrated in an interview that *La Presse* columnist Marc Cassivi conducted with Terry DiMonte, long-running host of the morning show on Montreal’s CHOM-FM radio station and an Anglo-Quebec cultural icon in his own right. When Cassivi asks DiMonte how Quebec has evolved in the 32 years since he’s been in radio, DiMonte replies: “I think things have improved. The majority of Anglophones who stayed—because several left in the 70s—remained because they feel at home here. We do not feel foreign in Québec.” Cassivi goes on to say, “And yet, despite thirty years at the helm of a popular morning show in Montreal, you’re still not very well known among Francophones. There’s still a cultural divide...,” to which DiMonte answers, “Of course. This is understandable. My Ontario or Alberta friends also ask me, ‘Who are these stars at the ADISQ gala?’” (Cassivi 2016).

What DiMonte is referencing is Quebec’s *star système*, the insular, “tight-knit group of celebrities” (Woods 2016) who play instrumental roles in helping the province’s culture to survive and thrive through their work in television, radio and film, and, in many cases, across all three media. Yet, while the A-listers who inhabit the *star système* are household names to almost all Québécois, the vast majority are virtual unknowns to Anglophones in the province. In a 2013 article in *Le Journal de Montréal* entitled “‘Who is Marie-Mai ?’ Les Anglois connaissent peu la culture populaire québécoise,” columnist Anne-Lovely Étienne writes that an informal survey conducted by the French-language daily reveals a staggering ignorance of Quebec stars by Anglophone Montrealers: “Les anglophones de Montréal connaissent toujours aussi mal la culture populaire québécoise. Nos vedettes les plus connues, Guy A. Lepage, Jean-René Dufort ou même Marie-Mai, pourraient vivre dans un anonymat parfait dans les rues du West Island. [...] Selon l’enquête, les chouchous des Québécois sont presque ignorés des anglophones de

souche.” In the same article, Jack Jedwab, Executive Vice-President of the Association for Canadian Studies, is cited as attributing this knowledge gap to the fact that members of Montreal’s Anglophone community, while mostly bilingual, almost exclusively consume North American cultural products, which are dominated by the English language. As mentioned previously, this was certainly my own personal experience—and that of all my peers—growing up as an Anglophone Quebecer. Going one step further, a 2012 CROP-*L’actualité*-98.5 FM survey of 560 English-speaking Quebecers revealed that, “la moitié des anglophones n’ont jamais eu de conversation « significative » avec un francophone – jamais de leur vie !” (Lisée 2012). What’s more, in addition to their sheer lack of cultural knowledge, certain Quebec Anglophones would appear to harbour outright resentment toward French and the Quebec culture itself, a fact that prominent Montreal businessman and philanthropist Mitch Garber deplors: “The refusal of some members of my Jewish and Anglophone community to learn and live in French is embarrassing” (Garber, quoted in Arsenault 2016).

So, while Gordon McIvor posits that the invisible, yet omnipresent wall that divides Canada’s “two solitudes” is slowly beginning to crumble, the fact remains that there is still a yawning cultural gulf between Anglophones and Francophones in this country, as well as in this province. It is for that reason that I based my translation method and strategies for *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* on the wide-ranging assumption that even most Anglophone Quebecers would be unfamiliar with Bombardier’s use of references specific to the Québécois and/or French context.

Translation method

Having determined my readers’ level of French-language proficiency and the extent of their knowledge of the Québécois and/or French cultural context, my next step was to decide on my overall approach to the translation. In their 2002 article in the journal *Meta*, entitled “Translation Techniques Revisited: A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach,” Lucía Molina and Amparo Hurtado Albir suggest that a significant amount of confusion exists surrounding the correct nomenclature for the categories used to analyze translations, such as translation method, strategies, procedures, techniques, etc. They cite Vinay and Darbelnet’s ground-breaking 1958 work *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais* as “the first classification of translation techniques that had a clear methodological purpose” (499). Other translation theorists followed

in Vinay and Darbelnet's footsteps, proposing their own systems of classification for the techniques that translators use to negotiate situations of structural, lexical, or morphological differences between the source and target languages that make direct or literal translation impossible. These theorists included Bible translators Eugene A. Nida, Jean-Claude Margot and Charles R. Taber, many of whose categories overlap with or are similar to those proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, adding to the confusion. Regardless of which terms are used, however, the theorists all agree that the translator must first decide on their overall approach to the translated text, which will determine the direction of the translation as a whole, and then identify the steps they will take to address the individual translation challenges encountered.

For the purposes of this analysis, I chose to adopt the terminology proposed by Molina and Albir, that is, "Translation method refers to the way a particular translation process is carried out in terms of the translator's objective, i.e., a global option that affects the whole text" (2002, 507) and "strategies are the procedures (conscious or unconscious, verbal or nonverbal) used by the translator to solve problems that emerge when carrying out the translation process with a particular objective in mind" (508). While *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* is not a work of fiction, it is nevertheless written in a literary style. In deciding on my translation method, I determined that I would obviously preserve the literary nature of the author's writing by adopting an idiomatic (free) translation approach, as opposed to a literal (faithful) one. In other words, at the broadest level, I would translate "sense-for-sense" rather than "word-for-word," to use the terms coined during Antiquity by St. Jerome and Cicero, respectively.

Since the previously stated *skopos* of the translation of *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* is to provide more information about Quebec to curious and interested English-speaking audiences, the "sense-for-sense" method, which, by the early fifteenth century, "had been accepted by almost everyone as the only orthodox approach to a foreign text" (Robinson 1998, 126), seemed the only logical way to proceed to ensure that Anglophones could read and understand the translation with a minimum of effort. One example of this sense-for-sense approach in my translation is my rendering of Bombardier's sentence "Les jeunes tutoient les vieux qui par ailleurs tutoient tous ceux qui leur disent tu" (*Tutoiement*, 26), which I translated as "Young people use *tu* when speaking to their elders, who give it right back to them" (Familiar *tu* form of address, 58). A word-for-word translation of the second part of the sentence would have been

much longer, and sounded much more awkward and even redundant to the Anglophone reader: “Young people use *tu* when speaking to their elders, who, in turn, use *tu* to refer to anyone who addresses them as *tu*,” hence my decision to render it with a concise, idiomatic translation in English.

Another aspect I had to consider in choosing my translation method was which side of the domestication versus foreignization fence I would come down on. As Venuti (2008, 14) reminds us: “Translation is not an untroubled communication of a foreign text, but an interpretation that is always limited by its address to specific audiences and by the cultural or institutional situations where the translated text is intended to circulate and function.” As previously stated, I had determined that my audience would be mostly unilingual English speakers with little to no knowledge of the Québécois and/or French context. Yet, I was faced with a book that was loaded with French words and expressions used as such, and Québécois/French cultural references. To quote Venuti: “What to do? Why and how do I translate?” (15). I had to decide how much “violence” I would wreak on the source text, a concept that Venuti defines as “the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that preexist it in the translating language and culture” (14). Do I domesticate the text, minimizing or even completely eliminating its French-ness, in an attempt to achieve what Nida calls a “naturalness of expression” (1964, 159), or a fluent translation? Do I, as Schleiermacher says, “leave the reader in peace as much as possible” (2004, 49), removing all obstacles they would stumble over, effacing all unfamiliar elements that would draw their attention to the fact that they are reading a translation? Or, do I “leave the author in peace as much as possible” (ibid.) by foreignizing the text? By leaving the alien-looking French elements in my translation, thereby making it glaringly obvious to my audience that they are reading a translation of a book written in another language, in another cultural context?

In the end, my decision landed somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, between the two black-and-white extremes of domestication and foreignization. In the vast majority of cases, I decided to leave the linguistic and cultural references in my translation, but with numerous concessions to my readers, in the form of translator’s notes and explicitions, as I will explain in the next sections. In writing about how he dealt with a Latin adage contained in a German novel that he translated into English, Michael Henry Heim perfectly sums up my position: “Leaving it

in Latin would have constituted foreignization, while translating it and omitting the original would have constituted a degree of domestication I was unwilling to embrace” (2013, 85). By the same token, I could not in good conscience leave the French in my translation without providing some sort of explanations to facilitate my readers’ understanding. However, nor could I completely eliminate the French by translating it into English, at the risk of committing an unacceptable act of violence against the source author, text and, indeed, culture.

3. Translation challenges and strategies

Having determined my overall translation method, my next task was to identify and apply individual strategies for resolving the translation challenges I encountered in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*, which, as mentioned previously, I had divided into two categories: 1) linguistic challenges, and 2) cultural challenges.

Category 1: Linguistic challenges

In the instances where Bombardier explicitly refers to French-language usage, I decided that there was no question of translating her references into English, as this would have obviated the meaning of the original text. This raised the spectre of untranslatability. Christine Durieux states that the definitions of untranslatability “évoquent la non-coïncidence des champs sémantiques couverts par les mots du vocabulaire entre deux langues” (2010, 24). Therefore, I had to ask myself: Is it even possible to talk about aspects of the French language that, in many cases, have no grammatical equivalence in English, without using the French words themselves? My answer to this question was no. So, when it came to rendering Bombardier’s passages about French grammar and language usage, I felt that my only acceptable strategy was to leave the French words or phrases in my translation and to add footnotes, which are a form of translator’s note.

Footnotes

Whether located within the text itself (textual) or outside of the main body of the text (extratextual), translator’s notes are commonly intended to provide clarification and to introduce encyclopedic or linguistic information into the target text to which readers would not otherwise

be privy. The ways of indicating the presence of a translator's note vary, from adding information in parentheses after a textual element, which I will discuss further on, to inserting a superscripted letter or number that directs the reader to an endnote or a footnote, as was my strategy for dealing with Bombardier's references to French-language usage.

Whatever typographical decision is made, the fact remains that translator's notes disrupt the linearity of the translated text, distracting the reader's eye and train of thought, and drawing attention to the fact that information has been added that was not present in the original text. As a strategy, the use of translator's notes, and particularly footnotes, is highly contested and divisive among translators, critics and theorists alike, seen by some as an acceptable means of adding this supplementary information and by others as a lazy solution employed by incompetent translators. This quote by Albert Bensoussan illustrates the latter viewpoint:

Redisons qu'en matière de traduction la note en bas de page, outre qu'elle gêne la lecture, est surtout jugée comme un aveu de faiblesse ou d'échec. Le texte doit se présenter au lecteur en parfaite lisibilité, sans nul écran, sans l'intervention active du traducteur qui n'est jamais meilleur que lorsqu'il est effacé, absent (apparemment) au texte (1995, 99).

What Bensoussan is describing is the translator's invisibility, or the traditional position that the translator should be neither seen nor heard, but rather should endeavour to make their translation as fluent as possible, abstaining from any intervention in the text, whether in the form of translator's notes or otherwise. This was typically achieved by "domesticating" the translation, or eliminating all traces of the foreign language and culture present in the original text, lest they (or the explanatory notes they would require) be met with resistance by readers in the receiving culture. Venuti calls for a change to this practice, one that would still result in a fluent, or readable, translation, but that would not seek to suppress the "foreignness" of the source text: "The aim is [...] to develop a theory and practice of translation that resists dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" (2008, 18). In other words, readers should know they are reading a translation of a work originally written in a foreign (other) language, within the framework of a foreign (other) culture, and not simply a book produced in the target (their own) context, according to the values of the target (their own) culture.

While there is no denying that the translator's note has long been a hot-button topic in the field of translation studies, Pascale Sardin states that "c'est probablement quand elle remplit une fonction exégétique que la note du traducteur apparaît dans son usage le plus répandu, et aussi le moins controversé" (2007, 3). In fulfilling this exegetical, or explanatory, function, the translator's note adds information intended to bridge a lexicultural gap between the source-text reader and the target-text reader. In other words, it provides background information to the target-text reader that would be implicit and understandable to a reader of the original because it is part of their language and/or culture. This explanatory application of the translator's note, while not necessarily seen as an ideal translation practice, is considered acceptable because of the objective, factual nature of the information presented in the note. Where controversy arises is when the translator uses the note as a means of subjectively interpreting the source text, consequently introducing meaning that was not present in the original work, transforming the note into what Jacques Derrida describes as "un dangereux supplément" (5). Nida, Taber and Margot refer to this as illegitimate paraphrasing, when source text items are made explicit in the target text, which they "agree is not the translator's job as it may introduce subjectivity" (Molina and Albir 2002, 503).

The deciding criterion in my use of footnotes versus parenthetical notes to address the Category 1 challenges, where the author is discussing grammatical constructions that would be unfamiliar to a reader with no prior knowledge of the French language, was the degree of complexity of the explanation required and the potential resulting awkwardness of a translation for the target audience. During this decision-making process, I found the test proposed by Heim to be very helpful:

When supplementing the text to clarify differences in everyday life [...] or to insert bits of historical or literary information [...], translators can perform a small experiment to ensure that their modified text does not deform the original. If they translate the modified text and insert it into the original, it must ring true: the explanation must not sound like an explanation of a phenomenon that members of the source culture take for granted (2013, 88).

Based on this test, I concluded that relatively lengthy expositions on French-language usage would have been out of place, not to mention completely unnecessary, had they appeared in the original French text, intended for French-speaking readers, hence my decision to include them in

footnotes for my English-speaking readers. This decision is supported by Carmen Buendía: “The translator uses this tool [footnotes] to include information he or she considers to be of interest or importance to the reader, but which, for one reason or another, cannot be included in the main text” (2013, 150). While the foreignizing strategy of leaving the French words for linguistic and cultural references untouched in the English translation and adding explanatory footnotes admittedly disrupts the fluency of the text, it also avoids potential comprehension problems related to leaving ambiguous elements in the translation.

Examples of instances where I used footnotes to explain Bombardier’s references to French grammar and language usage can be found in the *Avant-propos*/Foreword, where she writes, “Et ce n’est pas la langue avec son accent coloré, ses néologismes (*bancs de neige, poudrerie*), ses anglicismes (*prendre une marche*, calque de l’expression anglaise *take a walk*, c’est-à-dire « faire une promenade ») qui crée la distance...” (2). To support my translation (“It’s not the language, with its colourful accent and its invented words, like *bancs de neige* and *poudrerie*, or its anglicisms, like *prendre une marche*, that creates distance...” (41-42)), I felt that footnotes were the only viable option to explain to the reader, first, why *bancs de neige* and *poudrerie* are neologisms and, second, why *prendre une marche* is a calque of an English expression and not, in fact, a grammatically correct French saying. In the latter case, I made the decision to transplant information that Bombardier herself provides directly in the text (“calque de l’expression anglaise *take a walk*, c’est-à-dire « faire une promenade »”) into my footnote, since I obviously could not, as Bednarski says, “replicate the texture of differentiation that results when English actually occurs alongside French” in a translation that is written in English (1995, 112).

Another similar example includes Bombardier’s mention of the syntax error *l’homme que je marche avec*, appearing in the entry on *Accent* (4). Again, I opted to leave the French in my translation and add an explanatory footnote (“Literally, ‘the man I am walking with,’ instead of the more correct *l’homme avec qui je marche*, or ‘the man with whom I am walking’” (43)), since there was no way to illustrate an error in the French without leaving it in its original language. However, since the syntax of the phrase and, by extension, the faulty syntax, happen to be the same in both French and English (*l’homme que je marche avec* = the man I am walking with (improper syntax); and *l’homme avec qui je marche* = the man with whom I am walking

(correct syntax)), the information in my footnote provided a neat explanation of the problem to the English-speaking reader.

Bombardier also dedicates an entire entry to the practice of *tutoiement*, or the act of addressing someone with the French informal, singular, second-person subject pronoun *tu*. While *tu* can be compared to *vous*, the other singular form of the second-person subject pronoun, in terms of number, the level of formality of the two words is drastically different. Moreover, this distinction between *tu* and *vous* (which are both French equivalents of the second-person singular “you” in English), and consequently, the concept of *tutoiement*, simply does not exist in the English language. As translation scholar and linguist Vladimir Ivir reminds us, “Faced with an element of the source culture which is absent from the target culture, the translator relies on different procedures that enable him to convey to members of the target culture the content of that particular element” (1987, 37). To facilitate comprehension by a unilingual English reader who likely has no idea that two different forms of “you” exist in French, let alone that they can be used to denote various levels of familiarity with the person to whom one is speaking, I decided that foreignization was the best course of action. This consisted in leaving the instances of *tu* and *vous* in French to illustrate the distinction, and in providing an initial explanation of the difference between the two in a footnote (“‘Tu’ or ‘toi’ rather than ‘vous’ for the singular subject pronoun ‘you’ is a form of address that is more familiar or intimate, used by certain groups and in certain settings (55)). In this case, Molina and Albir (2002, 502) say that Nida would consider the footnote to be an adjustment technique, to be used as a solution “when no equivalence exists in the target language (in order) to correct linguistic and cultural differences.”

There are two other examples in the same entry where I also used footnotes to explain the difference between the informal and formal *tu* and *vous* forms. These are where Bombardier writes about “des ‘Sens-toi bien à l’aise’ ou des ‘Tu t’appelles comment?’” (24), which I translated as “choruses of ‘*Sens-toi bien à l’aise*’ and ‘*Tu t’appelles comment?*’” (55), and “C’est plus difficile de dire ‘Mangez donc de la merde’ que ‘Mange donc de la merde’” (26), which I translated as “‘Mange donc de la merde’ rolls off the tongue much better than ‘Mangez donc de la merde’” (56). In both cases, I left the French phrases in my translation and explained the grammatical distinctions for my Anglophone readers in footnotes, since translating them would have eliminated the vehicle used to illustrate the contrasting forms of the second-person

pronoun, a concept that does not exist in English. After all, a literal translation that reads “‘Eat shit’ rolls off the tongue much better than ‘Eat shit’” would have been redundant and therefore ineffective in rendering Bombardier’s message!

Parentheses

As mentioned earlier, the use of parentheses constitutes a form of intratextual translator’s note used to provide explanations to the reader. As Buendía reminds us, “There are other notes, such as explanatory ones, that hardly cause more than a slight deviation from the text. In fact, these types of notes could easily form part of the text with the addition of parentheses or dashes” (2013, 161). Having already used several footnotes in my translation, I decided that, in several specific instances, adding explanatory information in parentheses would be a less disruptive and more efficient solution for my reader. In particular, these are the places where Bombardier lists names of Quebec beers (*Bière/Beer*), names of coves (*Île d’Anticosti/Anticosti Island*), and book titles (throughout), as well as one instance of dialogue that took place in French (*Tutoiement/Familiar tu* form of address). For the purpose of the remainder of this analysis, the explanations that I added to my translations for my readers’ benefit are indicated in bold for emphasis.

In the case of the beer names, my translation reads:

“Beers were baptized *L’eau bénite* (“**Holy Water**”), *La Maudite* (“**The Damned**”), *La Fleurdelisée* (for ***fleur-de-lis***, the stylized lily that is the emblem of Quebec), and *Le don de Dieu* (“**Gift of God**,” also the name of explorer **Samuel de Champlain’s ship**), all references to Quebec’s religious heritage. Other microbreweries upped the ante with *Le trou du diable* (“**The Devil’s Hole**”) and *Dominus Vobiscum* (**Latin for “The Lord be with you”**)” (49).

In most cases, I provided a simple translation of the French beer names to illustrate Bombardier’s point that they refer to aspects of Quebec’s religious heritage, a fact that would be lost on readers with no relevant cultural background. In the case of *La Fleurdelisée* and *Le don de Dieu*, I also added explicitions to explain additional layers of information that would be implicit to a French reader. In the former case, this meant explaining that the *fleur-de-lis* is both a lily and the emblem of Quebec, and in the latter case, it involved not only translating *don de Dieu*, but also specifying that “Don de Dieu (Gift of God) was the name of the ship that Samuel de Champlain sailed on his mission to explore and discover the vast and perilous land of America in the name

of the King of France” (Unibroue.ca n.d.). My decision to add this supplementary information was based on the fact that the beer label features an image of the ship in question.

I applied the same strategy for the names of the coves that Bombardier lists in her entry on Anticosti Island, translating the sentence as: “Its evocatively named *anses*, or coves—*Anse de la Sauvagesse* (**Savage Woman’s Cove**), *Anse à la Vache-qui-pisse* (**Pissing Cow’s Cove**), and *Anse aux Ivrognes* (**Drunkards’ Cove**)...” (46). Since she prefaces her list with the phrase “Ses anses aux noms évocateurs,” I felt compelled to translate the names for unilingual Anglophone readers, to whom nothing about them would be evocative without an accompanying explication!

Throughout *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*, Bombardier also cites several book titles. While some of them have official translations, notably the titles of the Gabrielle Roy novels, I nevertheless chose to leave in the French titles, accompanied by the English translation in parentheses, for example, *La Détresse et l’Enchantement* (**translated into English as *Enchantment and Sorrow: The Autobiography of Gabrielle Roy***) (69). This is because, as Maurizio Viezzi states, “Titles are indicators. They provide information about the cultural products themselves, about the period to which they belong, about the linguacultural system in which they are produced or for which they are destined” (2011, 185). I wanted to be certain that my readers were aware that French was the original language of production of the Gabrielle Roy titles, as well as the other works cited. Replacing the French titles with English ones, even official translations, might have led to the presumption that the authors cited wrote in English, not to mention that it would have hindered a curious reader’s search for the original book titles.

Finally, in the entry on *Tutoiement*, Bombardier describes an interaction between François Mitterrand and a socialist activist: “I still recall French President François Mitterrand’s retort to a socialist activist who dared ask, ‘Camarade, on se tutoie?’ (**Comrade, shall we switch to *tu*?**): **a formal ‘Si vous voulez’ (‘If you wish’)** that landed with a deafening thud” (56). As explained earlier, English does not distinguish between two different forms of the second-person pronoun “you.” As such, I needed to insert explanatory information for the reader to illustrate both the familiar, casual nature of the militant’s request, and the stiff, formal tone of Mitterrand’s reply.

Since I had already used three footnotes in that particular entry, I opted for the parentheses as a less distracting way of providing this information to the reader.

Category 2: Cultural challenges

In dealing with the second category of translation challenges in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*, the use of references specific to the Québécois and/or French context, I had to return to my baseline assumption that my readers would have little knowledge of the latter. Therefore, in translating these references, I had to identify strategies that would preserve the references made in the source text, yet make them accessible and understandable to the English-speaking target-text reader. On this matter, Vermeer (1992, 45) reminds us: “Translation never is (as comparative linguistics may be said to employ) a transcoding of a source text into a target language.” In other words, the translator cannot simply translate the author’s words verbatim without considering the culture of the receiving audience.

Footnotes

There are several examples in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* where Bombardier refers to concepts that would be recognizable to French-speaking readers with a cultural grounding in Quebec or France, but that are likely to be lost on a unilingual English-speaking audience with no such cultural background. In these cases, she does not provide any accompanying explanation for the terms, but rather assumes that her readers know what she is talking about by virtue of their implicit knowledge gleaned from their cultural context. Faced with these challenges, I once again decided on a foreignizing strategy of leaving the French words in my translation, but adding the accompanying explanation in a footnote, since inserting the supplemental information directly into the translation would surely have earned me a failing grade on Heim’s aforementioned test (“the explanation must not sound like an explanation of a phenomenon that members of the source culture take for granted” (2013, 88)).

One such example is in the *Avant-propos*/Foreword, where Bombardier refers to “les héritiers du Québec d’hier, les « de souche », comme certains osent encore se définir...” (3). In my translation, I chose to render this as “the heirs of the Quebec of yesteryear, the *Québécois de souche*, as some still dare to call themselves” (42), accompanied by an explanatory footnote to

Québécois de souche, which reads: “A controversial expression meaning ‘old stock Quebecers,’ referring to the belief that Francophone Quebecers share physical, historical, and social traits and ties with their French colonist ancestors.” When deciding to add this information, I hesitated over using the word “controversial,” which certainly adds an element of subjectivity and interpretation to the text, and risks crossing the line into “dangereux supplément” or “illegitimate paraphrasing” territory. However, as Elena Gueorguieva-Steenhoute (2012, 12) says about the translator’s note: “Elle n’est pas neutre non plus : le traducteur présente les informations sous un éclairage qui reflète sa vision, le regard qu’il porte sur les réalités auxquelles la note se réfère.” The expression *de souche*, used to describe Quebecers who descend from the French settlers of New France, has become a loaded term over the years. While certain of these Quebecers use the term proudly to boast of their *pure-laine* ancestry and, by extension, their believed genetic and cultural superiority over fellow citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, others see it as an offensive, xenophobic and outdated term in a province that prides itself on welcoming immigrants from diverse races, cultures and walks of life. Moreover, its opponents would like to see it removed from the common usage, “parce que ceux qui s’attachent à cette expression refusent simplement de voir que le monde change et que les populations évoluent constamment” (Déry 2016). As a person of mixed cultural and linguistic heritage whose ancestors on both sides have lived in Quebec for several generations, I and my Anglophone sensibilities are somewhat rankled by the expression *de souche*, hence my decision to refer to it as “controversial” in my footnote, a choice made “sous un éclairage qui reflète [ma] vision,” as stated in Gueorguieva-Steenhoute (ibid.). On the one hand, I acknowledge that it was a subjective addition that could lead the reader to make assumptions about the contentious nature of a term that they might otherwise have considered innocuous. On the other hand, I do not feel it was excessively overstepping the boundaries of the translator’s presumed neutrality, given the phrase that immediately follows *de souche* in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*. Of the term, Bombardier herself writes “comme certains **osent** encore se définir” (3), or “as some still **dare** to call themselves” (42) (my emphasis), which I believe, in and of itself, would indicate an element of controversy to the reader. To illustrate this point, Buendía (2013, 157) writes, “To a certain extent, they (footnotes) do not add anything that was not implicit in the source text and that was not presupposed to be known by the source text reader.”

Another example where I used a footnote to explain a concept that would otherwise be unfamiliar to an English-speaking reader is the entry for *Cabane au Canada*. As I explained in my footnote (52), in the Quebec cultural context, a *cabane au Canada* is a log cabin that is typically built on the shores of an isolated lake, deep in the woods, away from civilization. Over the decades, the *cabane au Canada* has become mythologized by Quebecers seeking a tranquil haven from their busy urban lives, despite the fact that log cabins are neither part of the Quebec tradition (“Tout le monde croit, à tort, que l’architecture en bois rond est une tradition québécoise, bien ancrée dans nos gènes. Or, mis à part le camp de bûcherons vite fait, sombre et impossible à chauffer, les Québécois ne faisaient pas dans le bois rond” (Diotte 2009)), nor even very common in the province. It would seem the romanticized view of the rustic log cabin has even made its way across the Atlantic, having been immortalized in a 1948 song written by Louis Gasté and performed by his wife, French singer Line Renaud, entitled “Ma Cabane au Canada” (“Ma cabane au Canada / Tant que tu y resteras / Ce sera le paradis / Mon chéri / À quoi bon chercher ailleurs / Je sais bien que le bonheur / Il est là, dans ma cabane au Canada”). As a concept, however, the *cabane au Canada* is virtually unknown outside of Quebec and France. According to Margot, this would qualify as an “essential difference”—an item that is unknown by the target culture—that justifies cultural adaptation, and “he (Margot) includes footnotes as an aid to cultural adaptation” (Molina and Albir 2002, 503). Since Bombardier chose to write the entry for *Cabane au Canada* in the form of a first-person narrative, I decided that adding the explanatory information directly in the text, either in parentheses or as a paraphrase, would have either been visually disruptive or sounded out of place, hence my decision to use a footnote.

Explicitation

There are several other examples in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* where Bombardier uses French words in isolation to refer to cultural phenomena, with no accompanying explanations for her readers. In these cases, I opted against using footnotes, as their overuse can be a major distraction to the reader, causing them to constantly trip over tiny superscripted numbers that disrupt their attention. In her article entitled “Representation of Character in Translation: Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary*,” Irena Ragašienė (2006, 178) quotes literary translator Charles E. Landers, who points out that footnotes can be an effective means of bridging the gap between the source-language and the target-language cultures, but also cautions against their

overuse, and especially their use in the absence of footnotes in the original: “Footnotes break the flow, disturbing the continuity by drawing the eye, albeit briefly, away from the text to a piece of information that, however, useful, is still a disrupter of the ‘willing suspension of disbelief’” (2001, 93). Therefore, in these cases, I opted for the strategy of explicitation.

Elisabet Titik Murtisari defines explicitation as “a shift in translation from what is implicit in the source text to what is explicit in the target text” (2016, 64). The concept of explicitation appears to have originated with Vinay and Darbelnet in their previously cited influential work *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais*, in which the two scholars defined it as a “procédé qui consiste à introduire dans LA [langue d’arrivée] des précisions qui restent implicites dans LD [langue de départ], mais qui se dégagent du contexte ou de la situation” (ibid., 67). Vinay and Darbelnet also refer to the information added through the process of explicitation as a “gain,” whose intention is “the spelling out of pragmatic meanings to cater to the readership” (ibid.). In other words, an explicitation is where a translator adds information into their translation for the benefit of the target-text reader in places where such information did not exist in the source text, and, furthermore, would not have been needed by the source text reader due to the latter’s pre-existing, or implicit, knowledge. This supports Shoshana Blum-Kulka’s explicitation hypothesis, which “broadly states that a translation will be more explicit than a corresponding non-translation, which may be either the source text or a parallel text in the target language” (Pym 2005, 2).

Following on from the work done by Vinay and Darbelnet, Eugene Nida developed the concept of “techniques of adjustment,” of which “addition” refers to the insertion of elements “which may legitimately be incorporated into a translation” (1964, 226-227). One of the types of additions that Nida identifies is “amplification from implicit to explicit status,” which Murtisari describes as “explication of meaning derivable from context, which may be related to the text’s socio-cultural context, in order to enhance readability or to avoid misunderstanding when there is ambiguity” (2016, 67). It was precisely this misunderstanding by my readers that I sought to avoid by making clear in my translation information that Bombardier chose to omit from her original, based on a presumption of understanding by her source text readers.

A predominant type of Category 2 challenges encountered in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* was proper nouns—names used for individual people or organizations. Given the above-mentioned assumption of my unilingual readers' limited knowledge of the source culture, I decided that explicitation was the best course of action in translating these references.

People. What follows are some examples of Bombardier's references to people's names, along with my corresponding translations: “comte de Bougainville” (*Accent*, 5) / “**naval officer and explorer Count Louis-Antoine de Bougainville**” (43); “Claude Gauthier” (*Bière*, 13) / “**singer-songwriter Claude Gauthier**” (48); “Julien Duvivier” (*Bleuets*, 16) / “**French director Julien Duvivier**” (50); “Félix Leclerc” (*Cabane au Canada*, 19) / “**French-Canadian singer-songwriter, writer and actor Félix Leclerc**” (52); “le président Mitterrand” (*Tutoiement*, 26) / “**French President François Mitterrand**” (56); “gouverneur de l'époque, Montmagny (*Fête nationale*, 31) / “then-governor, **Charles de Montmagny**” (58); and “Fernand Dumont” (*Révolution tranquille*, 43) / “**prominent Quebec sociologist, philosopher, theologian and poet Fernand Dumont** (67).

Organizations. I employed the same strategy of explicitation in dealing with Bombardier's references to organizations or institutions that would likely be unknown to an Anglophone reader due to the latter's lack of implicit knowledge. These include: “Parti québécois” (*Bière*, 14) / “**nationalist political party, the Parti Québécois**” (49); “Unibroue, une entreprise québécoise” (*Bière*, 14) / “Unibroue, a Quebec-based **brewery**” (49); “l'Union des artistes” (*Bleuets*, 15) / “**Quebec-based artists' union, the Union des artistes** (50).

Bombardier also makes several literary references in her book, on the subject of which Heim writes: “Literary references to the source culture represent a [...] challenge for the translator, [...] because they assume knowledge taken for granted by the writer. Any works or authors that a serious writer cites will have a metaphoric resonance for the source culture, whereas for the target culture they may be just so many disembodied titles or names” (2013, 86). This was certainly the case in *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*. Based on my previous assumptions, I feared that these references would have been lost on my readers, hence my decision to assist them by providing some supplementary information in my translation. In her entry on *Accent*, Bombardier refers to the accent of people from Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean, “le pays de Maria

Chapdelaine” (6). *Maria Chapdelaine*, written in 1913 by expatriate Frenchman Louis Hémon, is a love story set in Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean against a backdrop of family, Church and rural life. It is described by publisher Pierre Filion as an “iconic, powerful, universal novel [that] has become the single most essential piece of Quebec literature” (Government of Canada 2015). In the source text, Bombardier refers simply to the character of Maria Chapdelaine, on the assumption that her readers will know who she is talking about and will be able to extrapolate her reference to Hémon’s novel. However, to most Anglophones, this reference would be no more than a “disembodied name,” since, despite being translated into more than 25 languages, including English, *Maria Chapdelaine* is likely unfamiliar to an English-speaker, or at least one who has never taken a course in Quebec literature! I therefore chose to add mostly unobtrusive information to my translation to make it more accessible to my readers, rendering it as: “land of Maria Chapdelaine, **protagonist of the novel of the same name**” (44).

Another example of a literary reference can be found in Bombardier’s entry on *Bleuets*, in which she likens the inhabitants of the Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean region to modern-day equivalents of two well-known characters from literature: “Ils ont la passion d’eux-mêmes et ils entretiennent leur singularité quitte à jouer les Cyrano ou les Figaro de la modernité québécoise” (17). Cyrano de Bergerac actually existed and was the inspiration for the 1897 play of the same name written by Edmond Rostand, and Figaro was a central character in the 1786 opera *The Marriage of Figaro*, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Although Cyrano is from French literature, Figaro was brought to life by Austrian composer Mozart and made famous in the world of Italian opera. Both are characters who are likely to be recognized by an English-speaking audience. What risks going over readers’ heads, however, is why Bombardier chose Cyrano and Figaro as examples that personify the nature of Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean citizens. For this reason, I chose to add information about Cyrano and Figaro to point out how they are similar to the *bleuets* in their bravado that nonetheless disguises a lack of self-confidence and a feeling of inferiority. Thus, the source text was rendered as: “They have a rather inflated opinion of themselves and, at the risk of being seen as Quebec’s modern-day Cyranos or Figaros—**those literary characters known for their larger-than-life, overly confident personalities that nevertheless hide insecurities**—they like to believe there’s no one else quite like them” (51). In adding this information, I allow my readers to understand what about the *bleuets* makes them the equivalent of Quebec’s modern-day Cyranos or Figaros, thereby achieving what Nida calls a dynamic (or

functional) equivalence, or the “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors” (1964, 200).

These are all examples of what Blum-Kulka first identified as pragmatic or optional explicitations, which “typically occur when a translator needs to add linguistic material in order to explain a concept specific to the source culture” (Becher 2010, 3). As Kinga Klaudy points out in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, “For example, names of villages and rivers, or of items of food and drink which are well known to the source language community may mean nothing to the target language audience” (1998, 83). In fact, Bombardier refers to two particular food items specific to the Québécois/French context, which I felt required a pragmatic explicitation in order to bring them closer to the reader: *hachis parmentier* and *pouding chômeur*.

In *Cuisine traditionnelle (La)*, Bombardier describes *pâté chinois*, the popular layered dish of ground beef, canned creamed corn and mashed potatoes that was declared the national dish of Quebec following a survey of about 500 people conducted by *Le Devoir* in November 2007 (Deglise 2007). She states: “Cela s’inspire du *shepherd pie* [sic] anglais, du *hachis parmentier* français, et [...]” (53). To most English-speaking readers, especially those raised in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the reference to the classic British comfort food shepherd’s pie would be instantly relatable. This is less likely to be the case, however, with *hachis parmentier*, a dish from French cuisine. To aid in my readers’ comprehension, I made the decision to list the ingredients in *hachis parmentier* in the text as a pragmatic explicitation, to illustrate its similarity to shepherd’s pie: “Inspired by the British shepherd’s pie and the French *hachis parmentier*, **a dish made with mashed potato, minced meat and onion gravy...**” (72).

Also in *Cuisine traditionnelle (La)*, Bombardier lists desserts worthy of accompanying the hearty dishes of Québécois cuisine. First on her list is “Du *pouding chômeur*, [...]” (55), the iconic Québécois dessert consisting of a basic white cake batter baked in a pool of hot syrup or caramel made from brown sugar or maple syrup. Once again, the name of the dish likely needs no explanation for a French-speaking reader, and while the source text author follows up with a description of the dessert, it is doubtful that anyone outside of Quebec with no knowledge of the provincial culture would be familiar with the sweet confection, let alone the meaning of the word

chômeur. I therefore decided to leave the name of the dessert in French, but to insert a translation of the term to illustrate its humble nature, which, “legend has it [...] was created by factory workers during the Great Depression, women making do with few ingredients, including butter, flour, milk and eggs” (Elton 2014). As such, the translation, with the pragmatic explicitation, reads as follows: “These include *pouding chômeur*, **literally, ‘unemployed man’s’ or ‘poor man’s’ pudding**, [...]” (73).

There are two other notable examples of instances where I chose to leave the French terms for references to the Québécois context. In doing so, I felt compelled to provide a pragmatic explicitation for my readers, a situation described by Ray Ellenwood in his chapter in *Culture in Transit*, entitled “Translating ‘québécois’ in Jacques Ferron’s *Le Ciel du Québec*”: “Once I had made my decision to use the French names, I could not avoid giving some sort of explanation of them to my English reader. I prefer not to use footnotes. The only solution I could see was to include some hints in the text itself [...]” (1995, 108).

The first example is in *Cabane au Canada (Ma)*, where Bombardier describes seeing her future log cabin for the first time, in the Upper Mauricie region, outside of La Tuque, a pulp and paper town, “et jadis de coureurs des bois et de draveurs” (19). *Coureurs des bois* is an historical term used to refer to the itinerant, unlicensed fur traders of New France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who “played an important role in the European exploration of the continent and in establishing trading contacts with Indigenous peoples” (Wien 2006). While the term is likely to be familiar to Anglophone Canadians, since *coureurs des bois* and their role in the fur trade are topics taught in Quebec’s high school History and Citizenship Education program (Gouvernement du Québec 2018, 75) and in Canadian history and social studies curricula across Canada, a reader without such an historical background might not understand *coureurs des bois* as a standalone French term. For clarification purposes, therefore, I decided to add an explanation of the term, such that my translation reads: “[...] once the domain of log drivers **and the unlicensed fur traders known as the *coureurs des bois*, or ‘wood-runners’**” (52).

The second example is in *Fête nationale (La)*, where Bombardier writes “Le fleurdelisé claqué au vent [...]” (33). The word *fleurdelisé* is likely to be completely foreign to an English-speaking non-Quebecer and, based on my initial assumption, some Anglophone Quebecers might even

struggle to understand the word. I therefore decided to use pragmatic explicitation to add several layers of information that Bombardier assumes her French-speaking readers would be able to infer from one word, namely that the *fleudelisé* is: 1) a flag, 2) the flag of Quebec, 3) named for the *fleurs-de-lys* featured on it (which is further clarified by the addition of the translation “lilies”). My translation therefore reads: “The **flag of Quebec, called the *fleurdelisé* for the four fleurs-de-lys or lilies that adorn it**, may flap in the breeze [...]” (59). It is my belief that this added contextual information is essential, because without it the meaning would be lost on an unfamiliar English-speaking reader who saw only the word *fleudelisé* alone in a sentence.

4. Conclusion

While the appeal of a neat and tidy translation, unencumbered by footnotes or parentheses, is undeniable, I decided that this approach was simply not feasible in my translation. *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* is rife with references to French-language usage, as well as people, places, objects and events specific to Quebec. In writing her book, Bombardier naturally assumed that her Francophone readers would possess the language skills and the cultural background required to understand these references without the need for further elaboration on her part. However, once I had determined that this was likely not the case with my readers, I felt a professional and moral obligation to produce a work that would not leave them with more unanswered than answered questions. After all, I had also made the assumption that English-speaking readers who chose to read *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* in translation would have done so because they were curious about the province and wanted to learn more about its “inner psyche,” so to speak. To have left all of Bombardier’s references in French with no attendant explanations or explicitations would have been a grave disservice to my readers, who would be lost amidst a sea of foreign-sounding words and references. And to have translated them into English, erasing all traces of the French-ness that makes Quebec unique, would have been a betrayal of the author, and indeed the province itself. For, after all, what makes Quebec distinct if not its use of the French language?

So, while it is my personal opinion that these paratextual concessions are somewhat less than esthetically pleasing and tend to interrupt the flow of the text, I believe they are nonetheless necessary to allow the reader not only to understand the words on the page, but also the cultural

and/or historic context that surrounds them, since, as Gueorguieva-Steenhoute states: “La rédaction de la note du traducteur n’est pas anodine; elle participe de cette deuxième visée d’institution d’un savoir plus ample que celui nécessaire à l’intelligence du texte” (2012, 12). In the current context where the “two solitudes” appear to still be very much alive and well, the fact that an Anglophone, and especially one in the rest of Canada or in Quebec, would feel compelled to pick up *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* in translation is already to be commended. Therefore, I felt a responsibility to my readers to bridge the historic, cultural and linguistic divide between Anglophones and Francophones in this country and in this province by giving them a complete reading experience that did not leave them more perplexed than when they started. If the only means of achieving this was through the use of footnotes and explications, then I can say that I am fully satisfied with my translation.

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II. *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec* in translation

1. Notes on style

As a preface solely intended for the readers of this thesis, I have outlined below the stylistic choices made in my translation of *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*.

Despite the Canadian government policy to the contrary, I decided to write Quebec and Montreal without an accent, as I felt that the amount of French left in the translation was already significant enough for my readers. I did not want to distract and overwhelm them with yet another foreign element. Furthermore, many English-language media outlets, for example, CTV News, CBC News, and *The Montreal Gazette*, tend to write Montreal and Quebec without an accent.

Similarly, I have anglicized toponyms (e.g., Quebec City, St. Lawrence River, Vauréal Falls), as well as certain institution names (University of Montreal, Laval University, etc.) and names of government departments (Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife, Ministry of Education) for the same reason as cited above.

Canadian spelling is used throughout. Years are written in numeric format (e.g., 1970), centuries are written out in full (e.g., nineteenth century), and numbers are also written out (e.g., two hundred kilometres). For emphasis, French words are indicated in italics and English words in quotation marks. Contractions have been used for readability (e.g., it's, won't, can't).

Finally, the English entries are presented in alphabetical order, as they would be in a published work. To facilitate the comparison of the two texts, the original French text has been reordered to match the English and repaginated accordingly.

2. English translation of *Dictionnaire amoureux du Québec*

Foreword

As a country, Quebec is more metaphorical than it is real. Not once, but twice—in the referenda of 1980 and 1995—Quebecers rejected the opportunity offered to them to become a legally recognized country. In shedding the yoke of religion with a speed never before seen in the history of a people, Quebec lost one half of its identity. French Canadians, as they referred to themselves until the 1960s, identified as Catholics and as French speakers. In a span of fifteen years, religious observance collapsed and the churches that remained standing—many having been converted (pun intended) into apartments for non-believers—began to draw so-called new Quebecers, devoutly Catholic immigrants from beyond our borders.

While our oversized geography makes up for our short history, we are forever conjuring up the spectre of capital-H History in our societal debates. After all, our motto is *Je me souviens*, or “I remember.” It’s even emblazoned on our license plates. According to Quebec’s outspoken poet Gaston Miron, the choice of our official motto was driven by one thing: the fact that we do not remember anything. Many members of the younger generation are quick to get their hackles up at the mere mention of the word “history,” viewing it as a terribly nostalgic roadblock to progress.

The majestic St. Lawrence River, glorious wide-open spaces, frigid winter, countless lakes, vast untamed wilderness, extreme temperatures and isolation are all elements that shaped our ancestors, the *habitants*, the independent landowners in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New France who built the country with their blood, sweat and icy tears.

The Quebec of today is no longer immune to the woes that plague the rest of the planet. Its shifting identity has resulted in a profound sense of unease. The language barrier, its seawall against the overwhelming Anglo-Saxon and North American tide, is slowly crumbling (can it even remain standing?) under the onslaught of global culture.

Francophones are lured to Quebec by the belief that its use of the French language makes it familiar territory. Little do they know they’re walking into a trap, which makes the culture shock they experience on their arrival even more brutal. It’s not the language, with its colourful

accent and its invented words, like *bancs de neige* and *poudrerie*¹, or its anglicisms, like *prendre une marche*², that creates distance, but rather fear of the outside world. The boundless spaces, harsh climate, brief history of the continent, and proximity to the United States are all factors that define Quebecers by inscribing them with a profound American-ness.

Quebecers don't think the same way as the French do. Their language—coarser, harsher, and more succinct—conveys a different belief system. The geography is a reflection of the people's mindset; the French language, a protective barrier, reflects a minority way of thinking. Quebecers aren't known for their arrogance, pretension or superiority; spontaneity, naïveté and a childlike enthusiasm are more their way. They don't sweat the details which, to foreigners, makes them very curious North Americans, indeed.

Quebecers aren't conquerors, imperialists or tyrants. The long Catholic tradition, forged by the heavy hand of the Church, left them vulnerable. They're quick to feel guilt, and rather than stand up for themselves or rock the boat, they can more often be heard apologizing. They're gripped with bursts of enthusiasm, flashes of regret and an almost obsessive impulse to laugh. In fact, Quebec boasts more comedians per capita than anywhere else in the Western world. It's possible that their good humour, nonconformist attitude, simple ways and jocularly are a smokescreen for a sense of anxiety and concern for their collective future. The sustainability of Quebec as a French-speaking entity in the northeastern corner of North America will never be guaranteed. Whether consciously or not, the heirs of the Quebec of yesteryear, the *Québécois de souche*³, as some still dare to call themselves despite the prevailing climate of political correctness, have always been and remain terrified of disappearing, taking with them the cultural “anomaly” that is Quebec within the Americas.

¹ These words for “snowbank” and “blowing snow” are specific to Quebec and French Canada. The words in common usage in France and Europe are “congère” and “chasse-neige” (Usito.com).

² A literal translation of the English expression “take a walk,” instead of the more grammatically correct *faire une promenade*.

³ A controversial expression meaning “old stock Quebecers,” referring to the belief that Francophone Quebecers share physical, historical, and social traits and ties with their French colonist ancestors.

Accent

Believing he was paying me a compliment, a French senator once said to me, “*Mademoiselle*, I must congratulate you. You’re the first Canadian I’ve met who doesn’t have an accent.” I think if I’d been black, he would have said to me, “*Mademoiselle*, I must congratulate you. You’re the first black person I’ve met who’s practically white.” That was a few decades ago, mind you.

Things have changed since then, if only thanks to the existence of the Francophonie, the peoples and communities around the world with French as their mother tongue, with its range of accents as numerous as they are colourful. “You don’t have much of an accent.” This comment, tinged with obvious disappointment, is one that I hear often in France. My usual answer is, “It all depends who I’m talking to and what time of day it is.” To the French, our “accent” no doubt also includes swear words, neologisms, anglicisms and errors of syntax like *l’homme que je marche avec*⁴—in short, the slangy language incomprehensible to the rest of the *Francophonie*, which forces producers to subtitle their movies.

Under the French regime in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, travellers arriving in Quebec City or Montreal remarked on the quality of the French spoken by the *habitants*. “A French purer than that spoken in any other province of France,” wrote the Swede Pehr Kalm in 1749. In 1757, naval officer and explorer Count Louis-Antoine de Bougainville stated that “the accent of the settlers of New France is as fine as that heard in Paris,” despite the fact that many settlers didn’t even know how to write. Everything seemed to change after the French Revolution, according to language experts. The increasingly powerful middle class began imposing its language—a highly refined language characteristic of a cultured upbringing—to the extent that foreign visitors (mainly French) to Canada in the nineteenth century had another opinion entirely of the Canadian accent. The comparison with the Parisian accent no longer held water. Instead, the French spoken in Canada was categorically described as provincial, coarse and heavy. Cut off from France since the Conquest, the settlers had in fact succeeded in preserving their language, while in the motherland, the spoken language was shaped by the cultural diktats of the bourgeoisie, namely the *Académie française*, or French Academy, the

⁴ Literally, “the man I am walking with,” instead of the more correct *l’homme avec qui je marche*, or “the man with whom I am walking.”

watchdog of the French language that would enshrine proper usage in its dictionary over the centuries.

According to Quebecers, it's the French who have an accent. When a Quebecer speaks "proper" French, he's suspected of being French or of trying to imitate a Frenchman and, in all cases, of being a snob. Thanks to the prevailing current of political correctness, Quebec men who speak elegantly are at least no longer accused of sounding like a fairy (homosexual), which was the case for far too long.

The differences in accents from one region to another throughout Quebec aren't as pronounced as those found between the north and the south of France. The Montreal accent, tinged with an English lilt, always draws comments from non-residents of the city, sheltered to some extent from the Anglophone influence, so much so that, contrary to popular belief, many of them do not speak English and have no exposure to the English-language media.

The Montrealer in me can easily pick out a resident of Quebec City or someone from Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean, land of Maria Chapdelaine, protagonist of the novel of the same name, based on their accent, which has preserved its particular cadence since the eighteenth century. The accent of the Magdalen Islands, so typical and harmonious to our ears, has been shaped by the Acadian dialect, as many islanders have Acadian roots. The same applies to Gaspesians, who share a border with New Brunswick, whose northern reaches are largely populated by Acadians.

What creates problems for Francophones in the rest of the world is their inability to understand what they call the "Quebec accent," which is actually a soft pronunciation that drops the final syllables from certain words. We say *vinaig* instead of *vinaigre*, *minis* instead of *ministre*, *trèf* instead of *trèfle*, *nationalis* instead of *nationaliste*, etc. But this lazy form of speech also cuts out vowel sounds and throws consonants out the window, resulting in sentences that are completely incomprehensible to the uninitiated.

The passionate debates that stir Quebecers aren't limited solely to our political future or to the left-right political dichotomy; they also focus on the spoken language. In the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, intellectuals and artists clashed over *joual*, a bastardized pronunciation of the word *cheval*, used to refer to the slangy language embraced by those who sought a language for Quebec that was distinct from standard French. However, the opponents of this movement,

myself included, believed that the veneration of *joual* and its recognition as the language of Quebec would lead to the creolization of the province. In this regard, *joual* is a cultural regression that leads to the closed-mindedness and clannish withdrawal that come from an exaggerated sense of Quebec-ness.

Anticosti Island

At two hundred and thirty-seven kilometres long, Anticosti Island is seventeen times the size of the island of Montreal. At its centre are the Vauréal Falls, higher than their famous counterparts in Niagara. Its ancient canyons, vertiginous cliffs and evocatively named *anses*, or coves—*Anse de la Sauvagesse* (Savage Woman’s Cove), *Anse à la Vache-qui-pisse* (Pissing Cow’s Cove), and *Anse aux Ivrognes* (Drunkards’ Cove)—have captivated everyone who’s ever visited the island.

Located at the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and home to just a few hundred people, Anticosti Island remains an enigma, and its delightful charms are reserved for the trickle of tourists who arrive at Port-Menier, the only port on an island surrounded by powerful, swirling currents. Over the centuries, hundreds of ships have foundered on its reefs or run aground on its rocky shores. The pristine island was purchased in 1895 by Henri Menier, a wealthy French chocolatier who dreamed of turning it into his own personal kingdom.

Thanks to the visionary Menier, Anticosti Island became a paradise for rich hunters and anglers, and for those less rich but lucky enough to have been extended an invitation over the years, such as myself some twenty years ago. I had the great pleasure of casting my rod in the Jupiter River (there are two hundred rivers and four hundred lakes and peat bogs on the island), where the salmon return to live out their final days in the same place they were born. I caught a fifteen-pound salmon after a gruelling battle that lasted almost an hour, which left me exhausted but full of admiration for the fighting spirit of that king of fish. When I finally pulled it from the water, I couldn’t resist giving it a kiss. As I write this, I can still feel the cold, slimy sensation of its head against my lips. It’s one of the most deeply moving fishing experiences I’ve ever had in my life.

Henri Menier also fished, pulled along in a canoe attached to horses that plodded along the river’s edge. Over the years, the chocolatier populated the island with animals shipped over from the mainland. Anticosti became home to beavers, moose, red foxes, caribou and white-tailed deer, which adapted so well to the environment that they reproduced in droves, the only predators being the hunters who pursue their passion for a few weeks each fall during the specific periods set out by Quebec’s Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife. In fact, scientists are now concerned about the overpopulation of deer, whose plant-heavy diet poses a

threat to biodiversity. Among other deer-proofing measures, authorities have had to fence off the airport runway, where the creatures like to graze. The deer on Anticosti Island have no fear of humans, approaching them without hesitation. Only in Kyoto, Japan, in the parks surrounding the temples, have I encountered deer as laid-back and carefree.

In 1899, Menier, whose excesses even prompted him to strike his own island coins, built himself a Scandinavian-style timber mansion worthy of both his fortune and his fantasies. The impressive home featured numerous spacious bedrooms, marble bathrooms, spectacular *fleur-de-lys* shaped stained-glass windows, and furniture imported from Norway. The floors were covered with luxurious Oriental rugs. One might easily imagine the lord of the manor arriving with his courtiers, the women clad in formal gowns against the backdrop of this place—stark, untamed, imposing, and just slightly disagreeable owing to the mosquitoes.

The businessman died in 1913 after sinking a sizeable portion of his vast fortune into the island, which he actually visited only six or seven times. Concerned for the well-being of its few inhabitants, he also had a hospital, a school and a handful of hotels built on the island. After Henri's death, his brother, Gaston, heir to the so-called kingdom, sold the island to the Wayagamack Pulp and Paper Company, which would become a subsidiary of Consolidated-Bathurst a few years later. The fifteen-bedroom mansion was made available to the company's executives to entertain clients and friends.

During my first trip to Anticosti, the few remaining elderly residents who'd lived through the extravagant Menier era told me, with tears in their eyes and anger in their hearts, about the demolition of the mansion in 1953 by Wayagamack. The island's inhabitants blamed this blasphemous act on the fact that the consortium was owned by the English. "They wanted to wipe out all traces of anything French here," I was told by a craggy-faced old man with a pronounced accent whose father had worked as the chocolatier's local intendant. On Anticosti Island, the Hundred Years' War still rages on.

Since 1974, the island has belonged to the government of Quebec, which is poised to authorize the drilling of test wells in the hopes of eventually discovering enough oil worth extracting. This remote paradise, reserved for hard-core nature lovers, fishermen and hunters, will no doubt soon become the subject of debates as turbulent as the ocean that holds fast to this treasure chest, a hidden gem to most Quebecers.

Beer

Although beer was already a beverage of choice in New France, the arrival of the British after the Conquest elevated the tradition to new heights. The first large-scale, modern brewery was founded by John Molson in 1786. He named his brew after himself, and Molson, or “Mol,” as it’s known in the *Québécois* vernacular, can still be found on store shelves today. Quebecers also managed to make beer—even the variety brewed by the English—a part of their identity. When offered a beer one day by a dedicated drinker whom I had the misfortune of declining with a “No, thanks, I don’t like the taste,” I was told in no uncertain terms, “Real Quebecers drink beer.”

Beer is the most popular alcoholic beverage in Quebec—even more popular than wine, although Quebecers still consume more wine than other Canadians, and definitely more than Americans. Blame it on our French heritage.

Beer is appropriate for any occasion, and it’s also associated with fun, flirtation between the sexes, and virility in jingles that have become sources of national pride. Advertising executive Jacques Bouchard, an expert on what makes Quebecers tick and a pioneer in French-language advertising in Quebec—a phenomenon that marked the end of English ads dubbed into French—came up with a slogan for Labatt beer in 1975. His jingle became a cult favourite, especially since it was sung by singer-songwriter Claude Gauthier, a talented troubadour of Quebec independence.

*On est six millions, faut s’parler,
Dis-moi, dis-moi comment tu t’appelles,
On est six millions, de presque parents, faut s’parler.
On est six millions, faut s’parler,
Du travail de nos mains, de c’qu’on fera demain.
On est six millions, c’est du monde à connaître,
Faut s’parler.⁵*

⁵ We’re six million strong, we need to talk / Tell me, tell me, please, what is your name, / We’re six million strong, like a family, we need to talk. / We’re six million strong, we need to talk, / Of our labours and toils, of what tomorrow holds. / We’re six million strong, so very many to meet, / We need to talk.

This jingle was sung by people throughout the province as a sort of national rallying cry and an ode to good times. It was just before René Lévesque's nationalist political party, the Parti Québécois, came to power in 1976, and drinking Labatt beer (which was shattering sales records at the time) seemed almost like swallowing a little bit of nationalist magic potion.

As they have elsewhere, microbreweries have been flourishing for the past few decades across Quebec, prompting even the king of 1960s protest songs Robert Charlebois to turn businessman by purchasing shares in Unibroue, a Quebec-based brewery founded in 1990. The rocker's name and likeness were a boon to the company's financial success. Beers were baptized *L'eau bénite* ("Holy Water"), *La Maudite* ("The Damned"), *La Fleurdelisée* (for *fleur-de-lis*, the stylized lily that is the emblem of Quebec), and *Le don de Dieu* ("Gift of God," also the name of explorer Samuel de Champlain's ship), all references to Quebec's religious heritage. Other microbreweries upped the ante with *Le trou du diable* ("The Devil's Hole") and *Dominus Vobiscum* (Latin for "The Lord be with you"). Despite wanting nothing to do with religion these days, Quebecers down these iconic symbols in communion with a distant past.

Whereas beer was once a drink reserved for men—respectable ladies sipped dessert wines—the generations of women raised on feminism have allowed themselves to be won over by the beverage, no doubt in the name of gender equality. They now bend their elbows, bottle in hand like the guys, to imbibe the world's most democratic drink whose effects set heads and hearts spinning—sometimes a little too much.

Bleuets

The word *bleuet* has two different meanings. The first refers to the fruit of the blueberry plant. In 1870, in the aftermath of major fires that tore through the boreal forest surrounding Lac Saint-Jean, blueberry bushes took over the peat bogs and the fruit became a staple of the local inhabitants' diet. Dubbed the "blueberry capital of the world," the town of Dolbeau-Mistassini holds a festival each year in celebration of the small blue fruit.

Bleuet is also the name given to residents of the Lac Saint-Jean region, who, as circumstances would have it, have eaten more than their fair share of blueberries in the past century. The citizens of Lac Saint-Jean are people of their word—a proud, blunt, convivial group with tremendous pride in their roots. *Bleuets* have a keen sense of solidarity and are quick to band together against the rest of the province. *Bleuets* are creative people, with a large proportion of members of the Quebec-based artists' union, the *Union des artistes*, hailing from the region. Grouped into communities located along the shores of Lac Saint-Jean, Quebec's third-largest lake at over one million square kilometres, the region's inhabitants suffer from few complexes. Instead, they are imbued with a sense of superiority that can be put down to their resourceful nature, their grit and determination as workers, and their unique capacity to tackle obstacles, cut off as they are from the province's major urban centres. To get to the Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean region, one has to drive over two hundred kilometres through the Laurentides wildlife reserve. The wild animals that roam the reserve make driving at night a perilous undertaking, and collisions with moose and deer are often fatal. In winter, when the snow, wind and freezing rain turn the highway into a sheet of ice, overconfident locals have been known to pay for the drive with their life. To a one, every family in this region of over two hundred and seventy-five thousand inhabitants has a tragic tale of a close family member or a distant relative who has perished on the two hundred-kilometre stretch of forest road linking the region to Quebec City. The *bleuets* were immortalized by French writer Louis Hémon in his novel *Maria Chapdelaine* and in the movies it inspired: the first, in 1934, directed by French director Julien Duvivier, and starring Madeleine Renaud and Jean Gabin, and the most recent, in 1983, by Quebec filmmaker Gilles Carles, starring Carole Laure in the role of Maria.

The *bleuets* are divided in their opinion of Hémon's work, which portrays their ancestors as a meek people, ground down by poverty, condemned to work the barren land and chop down

trees in the forest. Nevertheless, this rural novel, written by a Frenchman rather than a French Canadian, is an accurate snapshot of the spirit of a Quebec people in pursuit of an elusive freedom.

Today's *bleuets*, however, fear neither God nor man, and the promise of prosperity is what keeps them going. They have a rather inflated opinion of themselves and, at the risk of being seen as Quebec's modern-day Cyranos or Figaros—those literary characters known for their larger-than-life, overly confident personalities that nevertheless hide insecurities—they like to believe there's no one else quite like them. Finally, they tend to think that other Quebecers speak with an accent and not themselves. Indeed, their dialect, peppered with colourful local expressions, is as amusing as it is bewildering, rife with made-up words and expressions that say one thing and mean another.

Natives of Saguenay–Lac Saint-Jean want others to like them better than everyone else in Quebec. Quite frankly, they're the most needy of all Quebecers.

Cabane au Canada⁶

It was a long-time dream of mine—to own not just a country home, but an actual log cabin like you’d see on a calendar. To be absolutely perfect, this dwelling had to be far from civilization: in the middle of the woods, in the back of beyond, hard to get to, on a lake (not artificially stocked, but still teeming with fish), and with only the local wildlife for neighbours—wolves, lynxes, bears, fishers, red and silver and mixed foxes, brown and red sables, minks, white ermines, long-tailed weasels. And, of course, those tricky beavers, whose spectacular dams play havoc with the water levels in our lakes.

I spent years distractedly browsing real estate sites. I’d type “fishing camp” into the search engine, enter a nearby region that I figured was about four or five hours’ drive from Montreal, cross my fingers and click “Search.” No luck. One day, I typed in “Mauricie,” the region surrounding the city of Trois-Rivières, between Montreal and Quebec City on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River. To be honest, I’d given up hope, so much so that the houses scrolling by on my computer screen barely registered anymore. Then, suddenly, it appeared. It was a log cabin just rustic enough to suit my tastes and obviously not a prefab, as most of them are nowadays. It was located in the Upper Mauricie region, an hour outside of La Tuque, a pulp and paper town once the domain of log drivers and the unlicensed fur traders known as the *coureurs des bois*, or “wood-runners.” Its most famous native is French-Canadian singer-songwriter, writer and actor Félix Leclerc, who was born there but moved away at a young age.

I made the real estate agent describe the property to me down to the tiniest detail and it seemed to be exactly what I’d dreamed of. There was no way I was going to drive ten hours round-trip to discover a log cabin next to a garage or a corner store. The agent gave me her word that this was the perfect log cabin for me.

It was a long drive, but the highway between Trois-Rivières and La Tuque follows the course of the Saint-Maurice River, a tributary of the St. Lawrence. The further north you travel, the more the river meanders and widens out, dark and churning in places, and tamed by small sandy beaches in others. In La Tuque, a town reminiscent of the Far West, where there are zero tourist attractions and the air is ripe with the emissions from the pulp and paper plant, I met up with my agent, a jovial *Québécoise* accustomed to driving for hours across vast expanses in

⁶ Traditionally, a log cabin built in the forest, typically on the shores of an isolated lake.

search of her next sale—a female *coureur des bois*, if you will. The last hour of our journey, to my astonishment, took us down a paved road—paved because it led to Rapide-Blanc, a major hydroelectric generating station made famous in a song by La Bolduc, a popular singer during the Great Depression. We made our way onto the bridge that runs along the La Trenche dam, spanning the Saint-Maurice River, where you can still see the detritus of the *pitounes*, the felled logs that log drivers would leap-frog between and dance a jig upon as they careened down the rivers at break-neck speeds.

Finally, we turned off onto a rocky, bumpy dirt road. Then, after twenty-four kilometres, the road became a trail. The agent didn't seem to mind the tree branches clawing at her car doors. After four hundred metres, we came to a halt at a gate. The woman handed me the keys. I got out to unlock it but still saw no sign of either cabin or lake. I climbed back into the car; we rounded a corner and there it was. It was even more beautiful and impressive than in the picture. Hanging over the front porch was a carved sign that read *Camp des bûcherons*, or “Loggers’ Camp,” framed by carvings of animal heads and fish. Then, walking around to the front of the house, I came upon the lake: still, dark, surrounded by mountains thick with fir and spruce trees.

My mind was made up before I even crossed the threshold. From the moment I stepped inside, I never again wanted to leave. Animals surveyed me from their mounts on the walls. I locked eyes with a lynx, and in his gaze I detected a look of approval.

A *cabane au Canada*, a real log cabin and not one of those hideous suburban bungalows that people pick up and transplant in the countryside, is no relaxing getaway for an urbanite who's ignorant of the laws of the forest, the perils of isolation, and the hazards of the extreme cold. A city-dweller hasn't the first clue about how to chop firewood to heat the house, fix a broken water pipe, do basic home repairs, mend equipment, boats, motors or CB radios. My log cabin was already fully wired, but the pump was drawing water directly from the lake, so I had to have a basement dug out, a concrete foundation poured, and a system installed to prevent the pipes from freezing and bursting during the winter. At minus forty degrees Celsius, things explode. Even ceramic toilet tanks can't withstand temperatures that cold; I've replaced mine three times already.

I did all the work myself, or had it done, I should say. And in such remote areas, people still stick together like they did in the old days. The neighbours, meaning the people five or ten

kilometres down the road, are always pleasant and ready to lend a hand, especially during the deep-freeze of winter. Late one January afternoon a few years ago, one of my neighbours was pinned under his snowmobile after crashing into a tree. Darkness falls quickly during the winter. He was alone—not a wise move in the woods in winter—not more than two kilometres from the nearest house, with no means of communication and a broken ankle. It started to snow. He was found only the next morning. I saw him the next summer; his left leg had been amputated and he was in a wheelchair. Winter can be cruel to those who fall under the spell of its snowy silence.

Most Quebecers who live in large cities are oblivious to the forest and unfamiliar with the northern parts of the province, where you can drive for hundreds of kilometres without seeing another living soul. A log cabin is at once familiar and exotic. It's a link to our ancestors—those brave, silent, sometimes reclusive land-clearers who were more comfortable around bears than people, and whose rough, hard-working and frugal lives were also enlivened by heart-wrenchingly sad *rigodons* and *mélopées*, traditional French folk songs and melodies.

At my cabin, I fight with the resident mice for supremacy. My terrible phobia of the tiny rodents sends me shrieking and scrambling onto chairs. I also share the cabin with squirrels, which are in the process of systematically tearing out the chinking between the logs, which insulates against the cold and keeps the place cool during the hottest days of July. In my cabin, I feel safe from my neighbours, the bears, drawn by the smell of food, especially when the peat bogs are empty of fat blueberries.

This place, still sheltered from the hustle and bustle of the outside world, is where I came to understand the force of the elements—especially in the winter, when the mercury dips to minus forty and the sun dazzles but contains no warmth, when the trees creak eerily, and when the ice on the lake cracks under your feet in a series of noises that are terrifying to a novice but reassuring to those who know that silence can be a sign of the imminent danger of plunging through the ice into the inky depths below.

The isolation, the inescapable presence of nature, the indescribable joy of logs crackling in the fireplace while a blizzard swirls madly outside, and the keen awareness of being a part of this wilderness within a cocoon of honey-coloured wood has a powerfully calming effect. A *cabane au Canada*, in sum, is a refuge for tortured urban souls.

Familiar *tu* form of address (The)

The systematic use of *tu*⁷ has been the norm in Quebec for the past few decades, and its use is always striking to any Francophone arriving for the first time in *la belle province*, or “the beautiful province” as Quebec is dubbed, where they’re confronted with choruses of “*Sens-toi bien à l’aise*” or “*Tu t’appelles comment?*”⁸ mere hours after first wading into this overwhelming sea of Quebec-ness.

Traditionally, Quebecers used the more formal *vous* form of address, in the manner of French-speaking Europeans. My mother addressed her own parents using the formal *vous*. When I was younger, I referred to all adults as *vous*, except for my grandmother and close family members, who were *tu*, but I tended to also use *vous* for great aunts and uncles because of their venerable age. Quebec gradually drifted toward the use of *tu* and *toi* in the wake of the cultural revolution of the 1960s, and the phenomenon truly took hold when teachers began insisting that students refer to them as *tu* and call them by their first names—all based on a philosophy inspired by leading-edge educators who postulated that teachers and students were partners in the learning process and that the use of the formal *vous* created a barrier between the two.

One day, when my son was about thirteen or fourteen, I was called in to a meeting at his private secondary school, where the principal informed me that he was causing trouble. You never know what to expect with a teenager... “What’s the problem?” I asked, both annoyed and concerned.

“Your son refuses to call the teachers by their first names and refer to them as *tu*. It’s his way of being different. Does he maybe think he’s better than everyone else because you’re famous?”

I couldn’t believe my ears. I’d been called to the principal’s office over a *vous*. I had to explain to the man that I’d raised my son to use the formal form of address with adults, all adults, except for a few close family members. “You’re using *vous* with me right now,” I pointed out to the educator, who believed himself to be at the forefront of social equality.

⁷ “Tu” or “toi” rather than “vous” for the singular subject pronoun “you” is a form of address that is more familiar or intimate, used by certain groups and in certain settings.

⁸ Instead of the formal “*Sentez-vous bien à l’aise*” (“Make yourself at home”) and “*Vous vous appelez comment?*” (“What’s your name?”).

“The day that social classes are eradicated is the day *vous* will fall by the wayside,” he replied ironically.

Quebec is the land where purportedly “everyone is born equal.” A bright young reader once accused me of being arrogant for referring to him as *vous* in my reply to his email. I discovered that he’d been taught in school that *vous* had a pejorative connotation and was a form of condescension. No one had ever told him that the use of *vous* was polite and respectful.

In Quebec, we’re *tu*-ed by waiters, sales clerks, even civil servants. Young people use *tu* when speaking to their elders, who give it right back to them.

Once they’re over the surprise, foreigners and immigrants find the practice endearing, exotic even, and embrace it themselves, no doubt as a way of fitting in. Many people are still uncomfortable with *tu*-ing their superiors, but bite the bullet and do it anyway.

In recent years, more forward-thinking educators have warned against the overuse of *tu*, which deprives children of the sense of distance between generations necessary to their learning and development. In some schools in underprivileged neighbourhoods, the children are now *vous*-ing their teachers as a way of reinforcing the difference between them and adults. Police officers, not exempt from this linguistic “democratization” and liberal in their use of *tu* with citizens, changed their tack after police authorities concluded that the powder-keg relationship between a repressive officer and a citizen risked being set off by the use of *tu*. As an official for the Montreal police department pointed out at the time, “‘Mange donc de la merde’ rolls off the tongue much better than ‘Mangez donc de la merde.’”⁹ Since then, police officers have been ordered to use the formal *vous* with citizens, on threat of disciplinary action for switching to *tu*.

I still recall French President François Mitterrand’s retort to a socialist activist who dared ask, “Camarade, on se tutoie?” (“Comrade, shall we switch to *tu*?”): a formal “Si vous voulez” (“If you wish”) that landed with a deafening thud.

Quebecers are more forthright, more familiar and less formally polite than Francophones from Europe or Africa, which is also part of their charm. It’s unfortunate, however, that the widespread use of *tu* among the younger generations has supplanted the *vous*, that marvellous nuance of the French language that affords one the option of creating immediate distance from

⁹ Literally, “eat shit.” *Mange* is the *tu* form, whereas *mangez* is the *vous* form of the verb *manger* (to eat).

the other person and, more subtly, that allows the adept speaker to choose between one form or the other: a more remote *tu* or a warmer *vous*.

The fact remains that the pervasive use of *tu* in Quebec has not actually done away with social inequalities, in that it doesn't guarantee respect for others or the absence of discrimination. Foreigners shouldn't assume that by *tu*-ing them, Quebecers are being naturally friendly or benevolent. In short, being greeted with a *tu* does not necessarily mean that a foreigner is welcome in Quebec.

*Fête nationale (The)*¹⁰

The feast of St. John the Baptist was an event marked for centuries in New France. In fact, the first French colonists perpetuated the pre-revolutionary tradition by celebrating the extremely popular holiday with large bonfires named for the saint. The *Relations des Jésuites* (*The Jesuit Relations*), the annual chronicles of the Jesuit missions in New France, contain references to celebrations in Quebec City as early as 1636, organized by then-governor, Charles de Montmagny.

The tradition of the *Fête nationale* parade, which continued until the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, began in 1842, as an opportunity for Canadiens, as they were known at the time, to manifest their deep religious convictions. In 1908, Pope Pius X officially declared John the Baptist the patron saint of French Canadians.

Prior to the Quiet Revolution, it was a holiday during which Church and State stood shoulder to shoulder as part of the traditional procession in Montreal. As a child, I loved that parade—for the marching bands, but especially for the last float that marked the end of the event. It was always the most ornate and the most highly anticipated of all the floats. On a throne of blue and white reminiscent of the colours of the Quebec flag sat St. John the Baptist, played by a little boy with a halo of curly blond hair, smiling beatifically. A tiny white lamb, fleece as curly as young John's hair, lay at his feet. This tableau was the climax of a day dedicated to the expression of both religious and patriotic zeal.

For decades, no one took exception to the procession, which was in essence a reflection of Quebec itself: docile, inward-looking, a good-natured and pious child. A small group of artists and intellectuals criticized the display of over-the-top, religious, right-wing nationalism, for which they were relegated to the margins of society, where they were happy to revel.

It was only during the years of Quebec's awakening that the winds of change would transform the holiday into a day of national self-affirmation.

The new, more combative and socially progressive brand of nationalism was solidified with the creation of the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale*, or the Rally for National Independence. The movement attracted a younger, idealistic, rowdy generation fuelled by

¹⁰ National holiday of Quebec, celebrated annually on June 24.

anticlericalism and a hatred of the parade glorifying the little blond boy and his sheep, which many said was symbolic of the docile French Canadians. In 1965, the boy and his lamb were retired, replaced with a three-metre-tall statue of a sullen-looking adult John the Baptist bringing up the rear of the parade, to the dismay of the more nostalgic spectators.

In 1968, St. John the Baptist's Day ended in a riot following the decision by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the flamboyant antagonist of sovereigntists, to watch the parade from the grandstand with other lay and religious dignitaries in attendance. A group of agitators looking to pick a fight with Trudeau heckled him with chants of "Trudeau the Traitor" and other names. Bottles, rocks and other dangerous objects were hurled in the direction of the future Prime Minister of Canada, who, as it happened, would be elected to office the very next day. Panic-stricken officials fled the stands while Trudeau remained in his seat, refusing to leave, dodging the objects raining down around him. Once the shock wore off, police charged into the enormous crowd and the national holiday erupted into a full-scale riot.

The following year, demonstrators attacked the giant statue of John the Baptist, toppling it to the ground amidst celebratory shouting. I witnessed the saint's death by decapitation, even picking up one of his plaster fingers as a souvenir of that iconoclastic time in a Quebec marching toward its own identity.

Over the past few decades, the *Fête nationale* has evolved to reflect prevailing tastes and trends.

There have been electrifying June the 24th parties on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City and on Mount Royal in Montreal, with performances by legendary contemporary Quebec musicians, including Félix Leclerc, Gilles Vigneault, Claude Léveillée, Claude Dubois, Diane Dufresne, Robert Charlebois, Paul Piché, Ginette Reno, and of course Céline Dion. Other, more intimate national holiday celebrations now take place in neighbourhoods throughout Montreal, where Quebecers of all backgrounds mix and mingle, a reflection of our changing society. The flag of Quebec, called the *fleurdelisé* for the four *fleurs-de-lys* or lilies that adorn it, may flap in the breeze, but the traditional *Québécois* tunes are now facing competition from songs sung in English, a heresy to those who know that without constant vigilance the battle for the French language could be lost. Now celebrated by all of the province's minority cultural groups, the

Fête nationale has become a multi-coloured, multi-ethnic party celebrated under the banner of the *fleurdelisé*.

Joual

The word *joual* is a bastardized pronunciation of *cheval*, the French word for horse. *Joual* has become the term used to describe the spoken language of Quebec, which Brother Jean-Paul Desbiens, known as Brother Anonymous, harshly criticized in his book *Les Insolences du frère Untel* (*The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous*), published over fifty years ago now. The brave brother attacked the borderline-creole language, which he believed was holding back the cultural evolution of Quebec society.

I grew up in a family where *joual* was the lingua franca. On my mother's side, my favourite aunts and my grandmother all spoke this mix of archaic expressions, curse words, sentence fragments and anglicisms. To me, it was a highly emotional language that my mother warned me against speaking, associating it with ignorance and stupidity, hence the diction classes she enrolled me in starting when I was just three and a half years old.

Joual reached its zenith, so to speak, in the 1960s, when the staunchly nationalist artists and intellectuals of the time transformed it into a political symbol of Quebec's identity. Completely nonsensical to anyone outside of Quebec, the language was elevated to almost religious status, becoming the lynchpin of the redefinition of Quebec's identity. Supporters of *joual* called for a break with the French cultural colonialism that plagued Quebec's Old Guard.

The subject of heated debates, *joual* divided people into two camps. Even linguists couldn't agree, with some who would today be considered fundamentalists stating that *joual* was the language of Quebec, free from the yoke of the French language. Some of the most talented writers seized upon, or rather appropriated, the language, and the 1970s were a time of artistic production in *joual*, on Quebec's stages and in television series.

I have a personal anecdote that illustrates the striking effect of *joual* in the theatre. I'd invited my favourite aunt, a lifelong garment factory worker who toiled eight hours a day ironing fabric pieces with a two-kilogram steam iron, to a performance of the play *Les Belles-soeurs*, by Michel Tremblay. My aunt invited a friend who, like herself, spoke *joual*, but sprinkled with a hefty dose of ear-curdling curse words—to her, everything was *décocrissé*, people were *hosties toastées*, and when the spirit moved her, a good *tabarnaque* would serve just fine.¹¹

¹¹ These curse words correspond approximately to “fucked up,” “fucking morons,” and “shit” in English.

The two women were delighted to be attending the theatre, a hallowed place that they associated with the upper class.

By the time the curtain fell, the friends were completely scandalized. “That kind of moronic talk is disgusting. The guy who wrote that is a son of a bitch.” They simply couldn’t abide having their own language reflected back at them by the characters on the stage. So, in *joual*, they expressed their outrage at that selfsame language recreated by our most famous playwright, the brilliant Michel Tremblay.

While the debates about *joual* have died down, there’s still an aversion, even among the cultural elite, to speaking an elevated level of language with a less pronounced accent. In Quebec, I’m frequently told, “You must’ve been born in France,” simply because I speak more eloquently and enunciate more clearly than the average Quebecer. In France, however, I’m very often met with disappointment: “It’s a shame you don’t have the accent,” to which I reply, “If you’re nice to me, maybe I’ll do it for you.” But I never rise to the bait; as an intellectual, I refuse to be neatly packaged into their box labelled “Country bumpkin.” Because, despite making some progress by shrugging off chauvinism and a glamourized form of cultural imperialism, the Parisian intelligentsia continue to scorn or mock the way Quebecers speak. “If you hadn’t sworn that that producer, your fellow Quebecer, was an educated and cultured man, I’d have said he was an ignorant fool because of the way he talks,” a friend—and resident of the Saint-Germain-des-Prés district of Paris—once admitted to me.

But, *joual* does have its uses. It’s even come in handy in France for conducting conversations with fellow Quebecers meant to confound the French—sweet revenge for the countless times I had to listen to them complain about how they couldn’t understand a word we were saying to them during their trips to Quebec.

Legendary teaching brothers (The)

Up until the 1960s, all French-Canadian families of modest means gave sons to the Church. The recruitment campaigns took place mainly in the countryside, and many farmers were happy and proud to be the parents of a brother. Happy, because it meant one less mouth to feed for a large family, and proud, because having a son who joined a religious community, even as a brother, had long been considered a step up the social ladder.

Like many nuns, brothers were given the basic training needed to teach primary and secondary school. The Christian Brothers, the Marist Brothers and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, had no trouble recruiting new members, with young candidates being singled out in their late teens. Their training, less extensive than that of priests, prepared them to teach boys from poorer areas how to read, write and express themselves with a minimum of mistakes. The brothers were always low in the pecking order. Unable to be ordained as priests, these devout men, like the nuns, were to some extent under the thumb of the all-powerful clerics. Becoming a brother was a sign of a humble upbringing, whereas joining the priesthood meant taking a step closer to the middle class. So, it came as no surprise during the Quiet Revolution when brothers left their communities in droves to accept teaching positions, lured by a salary and the prospect of finding a wife and starting a family.

Quebecers thrive on the shocking stories of the things that took place in the schools run by the brothers. Quite obviously, these men, who entered the brotherhood at seventeen or eighteen years old, received no sex education other than warnings against that national obsession: the sins of the flesh. It was many a Baby Boomer who, as a teenager, received the “Golden Wrist Award” at the end of the year, handed out by “Brother Wanker.” Jokes like this one made the rounds until the religious communities found themselves bled dry from a gradual depletion of their ranks and a lack of new candidates.

However, just below the surface of these tasteless jokes lurked a more disturbing reality. As in so many Catholic societies, these schools, along with the ones run by the priests, were a hunting ground for sexual predators. Having never been around women other than their mothers and sisters, since primary and secondary schools only became mixed-gender in Quebec in the 1960s, these naïve young men entering a religious order in the prime of their life were too often left to their own devices in dealing with their sexual impulses. Many of them satisfied their

desires with the young boys under their moral, spiritual and intellectual authority. In recent years, former victims have come forward and, under legal or out-of-court settlements, certain communities have paid tens of millions of dollars in “damages,” that euphemistic term used to describe the often repeated rape of terrified, ashamed, disgusted young boys trapped in a silent prison whose destructive effects linger long into adulthood.

Quebecers, who crave transparency, are no longer afraid to “call a spade a spade,” to speak out against intolerable situations, and to denounce the guilty parties. But even despite the abuses perpetrated by too many of them, the teaching brothers succeeded in bringing education to very poor communities where learning was not a priority. They also had a hand in teaching boys in public schools. But it was the spectacular acts of one of these men, Jean-Paul Desbiens, a Marist Brother, that turned him into an intellectual icon for them.

In 1960, Desbiens, or Brother Pierre-Jérôme, anonymously penned a scathing attack as brilliant as it was controversial: *Les Insolences du frère Untel (The Impertinences of Brother Anonymous)*. In his hard-hitting book, the young, highly educated author described the failure of the education system, reserving special criticism for *joual*, a bastardized pronunciation of *cheval*, the French word for horse, which he characterized as a boneless tongue spoken by a servile race and which he claimed symbolized our collective ignorance.

His tract, which sold over one hundred thousand copies, had a bombshell effect in Quebec. “Our pupils speak *joual* because they think *joual*, and they think *joual* because they live *joual*. [...] All our civilization is *joual*. Efforts on the level of language don’t accomplish anything [...]”¹² the brother wrote. The consequences were severe for Brother Desbiens, who had underestimated the impact of his publication. His community exiled him to Switzerland the following year, where he studied philosophy and theology. Although hard-headed, Brother Desbiens was nevertheless respectful of his vows and in no way sought to make waves among the Marist Brothers. He would remain a member of the order for the rest of his life. Upon his return to Quebec in 1964, he joined the Ministry of Education, where he became one of the architects of education reform. He then moved on to the prestigious position of editorialist at the *La Presse* newspaper in Montreal but would never feel at home in the media world, which he left behind without regret to become a school principal and a sardonic observer of the Quebec that caused him so much suffering. Jean-Paul Desbiens’ censure of the crass ignorance of his fellow

¹² Desbiens, 1962. [My translation.]

citizens would pave the way to an endless debate about language, which reached its apex in the late 1960s with numerous writers and intellectuals claiming *joual* as an identity and a language separate from French. A fiercely intelligent lone wolf, Desbiens died a bitter man, overcome by the feeling that the Quiet Revolution had failed and that the battle to defend and represent the French language had been lost. In the end, the man who had been so vocal about the virtues of culture and respect for language quite ironically succumbed to respiratory failure.

Another brother, this one illiterate and much more unassuming, reached the pinnacle of glory when he was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. Brother André, born Alfred Bessette in 1845, doorman at Montreal's Notre-Dame College, owned at the time by the Holy Cross Brothers, is credited with a number of healings, and for decades his purported gift drew the sick and ailing by the thousands to the door of his school. In 1914, his community decided to build a basilica modeled after Sacré-Coeur in the Montmartre district of Paris; it was completed in 1956. Baptized Saint Joseph's Oratory, in honour of the little brother's devotion to Mary's husband, the basilica has gone on to become a tourist attraction for millions of visitors from across Canada, the United States and South America.

After her father died, one of my favourite aunts went to see Brother André in the 1930s (he died in 1937) for her debilitating asthma attacks. My aunt, a non-believer by nature, heeded the brother's advice when he suggested that she leave her wedding ring at the feet of the statue of St. Philomena in her parish church. Several years later, the church was officially stripped of its name when Philomena's status as a martyr was called into question. In 1961, the saint was stricken from the liturgical calendar. By then a sceptical Catholic, my aunt, swept up in the tide that had begun turning against the Catholic Church, came to deeply regret parting with her wedding ring and declared that she no longer believed in Brother André. Over the years, she'd come to realize that alcohol did wonders for her asthma, and it was with no regrets that she turned her back on the Church and all its saints.

Quiet Revolution (The)

It's quite ironic that the first person to use the expression that would come to refer to the brutal break with the past that reshaped Quebec society in the 1960s and 1970s was a journalist from the Toronto daily *The Globe and Mail*. This English-Canadian observer with a finger on the pulse of contemporary Quebec perfectly captured the essence of the movement when he named it "the Quiet Revolution."

More than fifty years later, Quebec intellectuals are still far from unanimous about their interpretations of the great upheaval that took place in the province, set in motion by the election of the Liberal Party in 1960. One of the most distinguished among them, cultural sociologist and professor at Laval University in Quebec City Fernand Dumont (1927-1997) devoted part of his academic career to understanding the lethargy and turbulence of the tightly knit Quebec society. As one of the architects of Bill 101, which declared French as the sole official language of Quebec in 1977, Dumont never fell into the trap of ideology. His dedication to the cause of sovereignty didn't prevent him from maintaining a critical distance from the radical and swift changes rocking the entire province. In 1971, in *La Vigile du Québec*, Dumont wrote: "From a long history described using that dangerous word 'miraculous,' it would seem that we awoke as though from a long slumber. Refreshed and energized like no other people in the Western world and haunted by the many dreams of a long night, we wasted no time in sweeping out the house and getting on with our business. That was the extraordinary day the dawn broke on the Quiet Revolution."¹³

The Quiet Revolution was my twentieth birthday present. Every day was more intoxicating than the one before, with our dreams coming true before we'd even had time to dream them. In the heady aftermath of the collapse of the Church, I wrote an editorial in the *Quartier latin*, the student newspaper at the University of Montreal, demanding that our student association no longer be forced to pay half of the chaplain's salary (the other half was paid by the university). Two days later, to the amazement of myself and my comrades in arms, the student association passed a motion that was enthusiastically upheld by a majority of its council. We'd lobbed that particular grenade assuming it would tick quietly for the next few years. Instead, it set off an instant revolution. A week later, I was summoned by Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, Archbishop of Montreal, who greeted me from his throne, decked out in his splendid red

¹³ My translation.

vestments. He stretched out his ring for me to kiss, but I declined. “You’re breaking my father’s heart,” he told me in a voice filled with sadness and emotion rather than reproach. Defiantly, but politely, I explained to His Eminence our vision of a society freed from the yoke of the clergy. After a half-hour of talking at cross-purposes, he dismissed me, this time extending his hand for me to shake. That’s what things were like during that crazy time, the consequences of which no would have imagined at the time.

In the space of a few years, we went from being a culture subjugated by religion to a welfare state, with one of the major changes involving the creation of entirely new state-run institutions that met the objective of social justice advocated by the Liberal Party, led by the aptly named Jean Lesage.¹⁴ The people enthusiastically greeted the creation of a Ministry of Education and a Ministry of Culture, as well as the implementation of a modern public service, free of the political influence exerted under the paternalistic government of Maurice Duplessis. In hindsight, several analysts would say that the groundwork was being laid for the future technocratization of Quebec. Professor Gilles Paquet of the University of Ottawa went to great lengths to try to demystify the Quiet Revolution, which, in the wake of our messianic Catholic culture, was framed as a collective resurrection. In his book *Oublier la Révolution Tranquille*, published in 1999 by Éditions Liber, Paquet asserted that by making the State the driver of progress in all sectors of activity, the Quiet Revolution had had highly negative effects on the growth of the economy and even on progress itself.

While intellectuals disagree on how to interpret the Quiet Revolution, prominent Quebec sociologist, philosopher, theologian and poet Fernand Dumont was the one to most accurately diagnose the deep tremors rocking the foundations of the institutions that formed the pillars of a society culturally distinct from the rest of the continent.

Truth be told, Quebec had already begun its foray into the modern era with industrialization and the resulting phenomenon of urbanization. Never to be forgotten, the traditional values that had always sustained the people of Quebec—rural values that protected Quebec’s identity built at the time on language and faith—were destroyed. One day, at a UNESCO conference, I ran into the great sociologist Elihu Katz. As I was explaining to him the challenges that Quebec was facing in the wake of its break from religion, I was struck by his off-the-cuff response: “But, now you’re left with only half your identity.” Fernand Dumont, who

¹⁴ *Le sage* means “the wise one” in English.

also had a doctorate in theology, expressed concern in his writings about this sense of forlornness. Because, in some ways, were we not witnessing our cultural foundations being sold off, piece by piece, at bargain basement prices?

How, then, was it possible, in the ensuing frenzy, to replace secular values which, up until that point, had been translated into a coherent cultural discourse? Of course, in the quest for modernity, traditional values are always called into question. And not without some bumps along the way, as we well know. But, in Quebec, where we lack the rich and storied history of the old European countries, it's impossible to recreate a new collective memory, new myths and new milestones in just a few decades. In that sense, there's a steep price to be paid for our repeated ruptures over the course of several noisy, exhilarating, but disturbing decades, when change itself was the only constant in Quebec. In the former society, a sense of solidarity bound the citizens to their institutions: the Church, the family unit, the local parish, the school, and what they referred to as the nation. Politically, Quebec was divided along party lines between the Union Nationale and the Liberal Party, both nationalist leaning, contributing to a feeling of solidarity. Neo-nationalism, which emerged after 1960, was part of a broader, more progressive movement, stripped of the defensive and inclusive traditions characteristic of the old Quebec. Nationalism took on a radical bent and new political parties like the Parti Québécois competed for Quebecers' allegiance. At the same time, the prevailing climate in the Western hemisphere was ripe for the emergence of individualism and self-reliance, eventually leading to the implosion of the collective society that had existed up to that point in Quebec.

Our way of processing this revolution was to gradually elevate it to mythical status and to view everything it had achieved as sacred. How could we go about divorcing ourselves from religion when secularism was such a completely foreign concept with no ties whatsoever to our identity?

While Quebec has finally been exorcised of its old demons, it remains inhabited by shadows and voids crying out to be filled. To this day, our identity is a key point of all social debates and, in that sense, the Quiet Revolution is intricately tied to the memory of a Quebec undergoing a profound shift and seeking new paradigms.

Roy (Gabrielle)

Gabrielle Roy was awarded the *Prix Femina*, a French literary prize, in 1947 for her novel *Bonheur d'occasion* (*The Tin Flute*), a Canadian literary classic set in a working-class neighbourhood of Montreal, in which the author paints a realistic, but not unkind, portrait of the “little people”—poor, ignorant, humble, but also vividly alive. She is unquestionably the most accomplished writer in the French-Canadian literary world. She was a French Canadian and not a Quebecer, born in 1909 in St-Boniface, a Francophone enclave of Winnipeg, Manitoba, which has since been virtually swallowed up by that same city.

Acclaimed throughout Canada and translated into several languages, her collection of works is sadly underrated, or even completely unknown, in France. Yet, Gabrielle Roy remains one of the greatest writers of the French language—a language that she molded, polished, showcased and venerated like all other Francophones who stand in solidarity with her.

Before turning her hand to writing, Gabrielle Roy worked as a teacher in remote rural schools, an experience that would later inspire elegantly written novels steeped in silence, humility and restrained passion, such as *La Petite Poule d'Eau* and *Ces enfants de ma vie* (translated into English as *Where Nests the Water Hen* and *Children of My Heart*). In 1937, Europe beckoned and Gabrielle Roy, despite the protests of her loved ones, quit her job and left Canada to travel to England and France. However, her trip was cut short by the imminent outbreak of the Second World War.

Upon her return, she settled in Montreal, where she earned a living as a freelance journalist. But her path had already been carved out. The two years she spent in Europe solidified her desire to write. And her decision to live in Quebec wasn't a random one. To some extent, she was returning to the fold, to the place where the majority of French Canadians lived. In her autobiography, *La Détresse et l'Enchantement* (translated into English as *Enchantment and Sorrow: The Autobiography of Gabrielle Roy*), published one year after her death, she wrote: “When did it first dawn on me that I was one of those people destined to be treated as inferiors in their own country? I don't think it was during any of the frequent forays that Maman and I made to Winnipeg, leaving our little French city of St-Boniface and crossing the Red River by the

Provencher Bridge. It would be easy to suppose so, since our capital city never really received us otherwise than as foreigners [...].”¹⁵

As I was reading *Enchantment and Sorrow*, one of the only books that I’ve ever reread three times, I was astonished to realize that I’d experienced exactly the same shock during my first trip to Paris and London that Gabrielle Roy had felt twenty-five years earlier. In her autobiography, the author describes the feeling of familiarity she encountered in London, where everything from the architecture to the culture and the polite interactions of the people felt completely familiar to her. It was when she arrived in France, despite the common language, that she felt completely out of her element. In my case, this realization saddened me because I understood that it meant the British cultural influence had shaped our way of being. I remember walking into a bakery in Oxford and being delighted to discover all the cakes that I’d loved as a child and that I prefer to French pastries. Cakes and cream puffs are cultural markers that keep me anchored to my Anglo-Saxon surroundings. By virtue of her Manitoba birth, Gabrielle Roy was more conscious that a part of her was strongly shaped by her Franco-Manitoban and Anglo-Saxon heritage. As for me, this truth was difficult to swallow given how much the motherland should have felt like home.

Gabrielle Roy later moved to Quebec City, but withdrew from the public eye. She made her home in the Charlevoix region, on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, in the quiet village of Petite-Rivière-Saint-François. The breathtaking hamlet was home to artists and ordinary people with whom she forged friendships as she continued to practise her craft. Constantly sought after, she wasn’t a recluse but she chose to keep mostly to herself, far from the gawkers seeking a piece of her fame.

Gabrielle Roy brought to French-language literature a fresh, sweeping perspective reflective of her inner landscape. Through her writing, her characters were brought to life; readers fell in love with them, identified with them, and embraced them. She also represents one of the biggest disappointments of my career as a journalist. She detested giving televised interviews, granting them only rarely to a few close friends who didn’t work in broadcasting for a living. Yet, I’ll still admit that not only do I love her deeply as a writer, I also admire her for spending her whole life above the literary fray, alone in front of her blank page.

¹⁵ Roy, 1987. *Enchantment and Sorrow: The Autobiography of Gabrielle Roy*, page xv.

In *Enchantment and Sorrow*, she also wrote: “My books have taken a lot of time that I might have given to friendship, love—to obligations of the heart. But friendship, love, personal obligations have also taken a lot of time that I might have given to my books. The result is that neither my books nor my life is well pleased with me these days.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Roy, 1987, p. 135-136.

Traditional cuisine

Quebecers take pride in eating better than their English Canadian counterparts. They spend more money on food, drink more wine and go out to restaurants on a regular basis. And they don't turn their noses up at fast food, particularly of the ethnic variety.

Quebec's traditional cuisine, the food served up at family dinners, has been shaped by the province's harsh climate. Quebecers like their meals heavy and fattening. Vegetables have long been shunned, except by practitioners of vegetarianism, a phenomenon that's recently become trendy. When I was a child, our vegetable repertoire consisted of potatoes—boiled, mashed, or fried—carrots, turnips, and canned peas and corn. As an older teen, I was introduced to asparagus, artichokes and cauliflower at the homes of my middle-class friends. My mother didn't cook. We ate a type of homemade stew made with ground beef and boiled potatoes, with a can of tomatoes thrown in—a concoction that swam in our plates. On Sundays, happiness came in the form of roast chicken, a real treat that we devoured with rice and canned mushrooms. My mother became an accomplished cook later on, after we kids had all grown up and left home. “Why are you such a good cook now?” I asked her one day. “Because I don't have to cook for anyone anymore,” she replied.

The traditional recipes of Quebec are passed down from generation to generation of women. Nowadays, they can be found in the kitchens of our grandmothers. Meat, chicken and salmon pies, pork hock and meatball stew, *pâté chinois*, pea soup, Christmas turkey and Easter ham, along with their regional variants, make up the bulk of this cuisine, originally meant to feed manual labourers.

Pâté chinois, decreed the national dish of Quebec in 2007 following a public survey, is a dish of unknown origins. Inspired by the British shepherd's pie and the French *hachis parmentier*, a dish made with mashed potato, minced meat and onion gravy, it's definitely something that tastes better the next day than straight out of the oven. It's made with a mixture of ground beef seasoned with savory, mashed potatoes, and canned creamed corn. The trick to a great *pâté chinois* is the proper layering of the ingredients: the beef on the bottom of the dish, smothered with a thick layer of creamed corn, topped with mashed potatoes, dotted with several knobs of butter, and browned under the broiler. It's eaten with ketchup or any number of other ways particular to each family. It's a comfort food that brings back happy memories of childhood

and leaves one with a satisfyingly full belly. *Pâté chinois* has become a part of the Quebec identity. Personally, it's the first thing I whip up whenever I get home from a long trip. It instantly reminds me I'm back in Quebec.

Pork hock and meatball stew is not a warm weather dish. The pork hocks are first boiled and the meat is stripped from the bones. Then, the meatballs, previously fried in butter, are left to simmer in the broth with the pork for several hours. The secret to this recipe is in the spices. Personally, I enjoy the flavours of cinnamon and ginger, which I add liberally, ignoring the suggested quantities in the recipes. My friends all rave about my stew, but I refuse to share this spicy secret with them. The trick to the gravy is first browning the flour in a cast-iron skillet. These days, pork hock and meatball stew is only eaten at home, prepared by grandmothers or great aunts, and is rarely seen on restaurant menus.

A calorie nightmare, traditional Quebec cuisine is hazardous to the health of sedentary city dwellers and fitness buffs. It also takes a very long time to digest and transports us back to the days of the lumberjacks, log drivers and manual labourers. It's a cuisine that also demands to be accompanied by desserts that won't disappoint. These include *pouding chômeur*, literally, "unemployed man's" or "poor man's" pudding, a white cake soaked in a thick syrup, which the poor made with brown sugar, and the more fortunate, who were generally not unemployed, with maple syrup; pies made from apples, seasonal fruits, raisins soaked in maple syrup, and *tarte à la farlouche*, made with equal parts molasses and brown sugar, a pie so sweet that one slice too many will give you the jitters; three-layer cakes and English-style white or chocolate cakes dripping with vanilla, chocolate or cherry frosting. A favourite cake, despite its name, which brings to mind the Conquest, is the *Reine Élisabeth*, or Queen Elizabeth cake, a white cake enhanced with dates, walnuts and candied fruit, and topped with mounds of coconut flakes. Many Quebecers wash down their Queen Elizabeth cake with tall glasses of milk, happy to forget their nationalism for a moment.

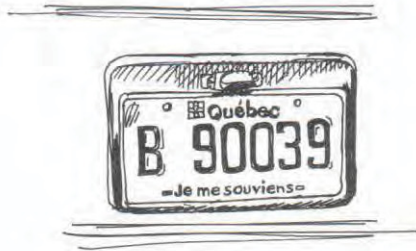
It makes me sad to see this cuisine vilified by today's foodies, who shun dishes high in fat and sugar or served with gravy or sauce of any kind. But, thankfully, a new generation of food lovers has stepped up to recreate a cuisine as distinctly *Québécois* as it is creative and casual.

Appendix: Original French text

Avant-propos

Le Québec est un pays qui est plus métaphorique que réel. Les Québécois ont décliné deux fois plutôt qu'une, en 1980 et 1995, l'offre qui leur a été faite par référendum de devenir un pays légal. Le Québec, en se délestant de la religion avec une fulgurance jamais enregistrée dans l'histoire d'un peuple, a perdu la moitié de son identité. Les Canadiens-français, comme ils se désignaient jusque dans les années soixante, se définissaient catholiques et franco-phones. En quinze ans, la pratique religieuse s'est effondrée, et les églises qui demeurent debout – de nombreuses ayant été converties (c'est le cas de le dire) en appartements pour mécréants – sont fréquentées par ceux que l'on appelle les Néo-Québécois, ces immigrants fervents catholiques qui nous viennent d'ailleurs.

Nous compensons notre courte histoire par une géographie surdimensionnée, mais nous n'avons de cesse de convoquer l'Histoire dans nos débats collectifs. Notre devise n'est-elle pas « Je me souviens » ? Nous l'avons même inscrite sur les plaques minéralogiques de nos voitures. Gaston Miron, notre poète tonitruant, affirmait que l'adoption de la devise officielle s'expliquait par une



seule chose : nous ne nous souvenons de rien. Une partie des nouvelles générations est prête à dégainer quand elle entend le mot histoire, la considérant comme un frein dégoulinant de nostalgie au progrès en marche.

La majesté du Saint-Laurent, la magnificence de nos espaces vierges, la froidure hivernale, les millions de lacs, la vastitude de la nature indomptée, les températures extrêmes et l'isolement ont façonné nos ancêtres, ces « habitants » qui ont bâti le pays en s'échinant, en gelant et en suant jusqu'au sang.

Le Québec actuel n'est plus à l'abri des tourmentes planétaires. Il se vit mal, car son identité est en redéfinition. La barrière de la langue, protectrice de l'envahissante mer anglo-saxonne et nord-américaine, résiste mal (et peut-elle y résister ?) aux assauts de la culture mondiale.

Le Québec est un piège pour tous les francophones qui y débarquent en se croyant en pays de connaissance grâce à la langue française. Le choc anthropologique y est d'autant plus brutal. Et ce n'est pas la langue avec son accent coloré, ses néologismes (*bancs de neige, poudrerie*), ses anglicismes (*prendre une marche*, calque de l'expression anglaise *take a walk*, c'est-à-dire « faire une promenade ») qui crée la distance, mais bien l'appréhension du monde. L'espace, la dureté du climat, la jeunesse du

continent et la proximité des États-Unis définissent les Québécois en les inscrivant profondément dans l'américanité.

Les Québécois ne pensent pas comme les Français. Leur langue, plus directe, plus drue, plus brutale aussi, rend compte d'une autre éthique. La géographie modèle l'espace mental ; le français, barrière de protection, renvoie à une sensibilité de minoritaires. Les Québécois ne se caractérisent pas par l'arrogance, la prétention ou la supériorité. La spontanéité, une forme de naïveté, un enthousiasme bon enfant seraient plutôt leur lot. Ils « ne s'enfargent pas dans les fleurs du tapis », ce qui fait d'eux aux yeux des étrangers de curieux Nord-Américains.

Les Québécois ne sont ni conquérants, ni impérialistes, ni dominateurs. La longue tradition catholique, où le poids de l'Église a pesé lourdement, les a rendus vulnérables. Ils se culpabilisent facilement, s'excusent presque de s'affirmer et de déranger. Ils ont des emballements successifs, des remords épisodiques et une envie de rire qui frôle l'obsession. Les humoristes y sont d'ailleurs plus nombreux en proportion qu'ailleurs en Occident. Leur bonne humeur, leur anticonformisme, leurs manières simples, leur jovialité recouvrent peut-être un malaise et une inquiétude rattachés à leur avenir collectif. La pérennité de l'identité québécoise en français au nord-est de l'Amérique du Nord ne sera jamais assurée. Consciemment ou non, les héritiers du Québec d'hier, les « de souche », comme certains osent encore se définir malgré la rectitude politique ambiante, ont toujours et encore peur de disparaître, et avec eux cette « anomalie » culturelle qu'est le Québec en terre d'Amérique.

Accent (L')

Un sénateur français croyant me complimenter me déclara un jour : « Mademoiselle, je vous félicite ; c'est la première fois que je rencontre une Canadienne qui n'a pas d'accent. » J'ai compris que si j'avais été noire il m'aurait dit : « Mademoiselle, je vous félicite. C'est la première fois que je rencontre une Noire qui est presque blanche. » C'était il y a quelques décennies.

La situation a changé depuis. Ne serait-ce que grâce à la francophonie qui s'exprime avec des accents aussi multiples que colorés. « Vous n'avez pas beaucoup d'accent. » Cette remarque, où je devine la déception, je l'entends souvent en France. J'ai l'habitude de répondre : « Ça dépend de l'interlocuteur et de l'heure de la journée. » En fait, dans cet « accent », l'on inclut sans doute les jurons, les néologismes, les anglicismes, les erreurs syntaxistes du genre « l'homme que je marche avec », bref cette langue argotique, incompréhensible au reste de la francophonie et qui d'ailleurs oblige les réalisateurs à sous-titrer leurs films.

Sous le régime français aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, tous les voyageurs débarquant à Québec ou Montréal remarquaient la qualité du français parlé par les habitants. « Un français plus pur qu'en n'importe quelle province de France », écrira en 1749 Pehr Kalm le Suédois. Quant au comte de Bougainville, il assure en 1757 que « l'accent des Canadiens est aussi bon qu'à Paris », et ce bien qu'un grand nombre de Canadiens ne sache pas écrire. Tout semble basculer après la Révolution française. Les spécialistes de la langue constatent que la bourgeoisie qui s'installe au pouvoir impose sa langue, une langue très soutenue qui témoigne d'une éducation cultivée. À tel point que les visiteurs étrangers, français au premier titre, qui voyageaient au Canada, au XIX^e siècle, portent alors un tout autre jugement sur l'accent canadien. La comparaison avec celui de Paris ne tient plus la route. On parle d'un accent provincial, paysan, lourd, et le verdict est définitif. En fait, coupés de la France depuis la Conquête, les Canadiens ont préservé leur langue pendant que dans la mère patrie celle-ci se modelait sur le diktat culturel bourgeois dont l'Académie française, cette police de l'usage, confirmera la pratique dans son dictionnaire au fil des siècles.

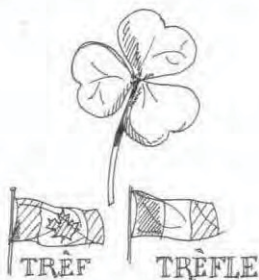
Pour les Québécois, ce sont les Français qui parlent avec un accent. D'ailleurs, lorsqu'un Québécois s'exprime dans une langue soutenue, on le soupçonne d'être un Français ou de le singer, et dans tous les cas de figure d'être snob. Aujourd'hui, rectitude politique oblige, on ne dit plus cependant des hommes québécois qui s'expriment bellement qu'ils parlent en fifi (homosexuel), comme ce fut trop longtemps le cas.

À travers le Québec, l'on ne retrouve pas de différences d'accent aussi marquées que ce que l'on observe en France

entre le Nord et le Sud. À vrai dire, l'accent montréalais teinté de musicalité anglaise suscite les remarques des non-Montréalais, protégés en quelque sorte de l'influence anglophone, d'autant plus qu'une proportion très importante ne parle pas l'anglais, contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait croire, donc n'est pas exposée aux médias anglophones.

La Montréalaise que je suis détecte facilement les habitants de la ville de Québec, ceux du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, le pays de Maria Chapdelaine, à leur accent qui a conservé une musique datant du xviii^e siècle. Quant à l'accent des habitants des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, si typique et poétique à nos oreilles, il a subi l'influence du parler acadien puisqu'une partie des Madelinots sont de souche acadienne. Comme celui des Gaspésiens d'ailleurs, qui partagent leurs frontières avec le Nouveau-Brunswick où les Acadiens sont majoritaires au nord de la province.

Ce qui pose problème aux francophones du reste du monde, c'est leur incapacité à comprendre ce qu'ils appellent l'accent des Québécois mais qui est plutôt une prononciation molle et qui escamote les dernières syllabes. On dit du *vinaig* pour vinaigre, un *minis* pour



ministre, un *trèf* pour trèfle, un *nationalis* pour nationaliste, etc. Mais le parler mou télescope aussi les voyelles et se fiche des consonnes, ce qui donne des phrases incompréhensibles aux non-initiés comme « ça là l'air de s'en venir » pour « il semble que cela arrive ».

Le débat passionnel des Québécois entre eux ne porte pas que sur l'avenir politique de la province ni sur l'orientation gauche-droite, mais aussi sur la langue parlée. Dans les années soixante et tout au cours des années soixante-dix, les intellectuels et les créateurs se sont déchirés autour du joul*¹, déformation du mot cheval, cette langue argotique revendiquée par les supporters d'une langue québécoise en rupture avec la langue française. Pour les adversaires de cette thèse dont je suis, cet éloge du joul et sa reconnaissance comme langue du Québec entraînerait la créolisation du Québec. Le joul en ce sens est une régression culturelle qui entraîne la fermeture et le repli clanique d'une québécoisité exacerbée.

Anglophones (Les)

Dans le passé, on les désignait d'un mot : les Anglais. Mon père répétait avec une ironie caverneuse qu'ils étaient nos maîtres donc qu'il était normal qu'ils imposent leur loi. L'expression « les Anglais » incluait dans l'esprit des Québécois les Écossais et les Irlandais. En principe, ils étaient tous du même bord, c'est-à-dire contre nous. Cela manquait de subtilité mais simplifiait les analyses.

1. Les astérisques renvoient aux entrées correspondantes.

Anticosti (Île d')

L'île d'Anticosti, 237 kilomètres de long, est dix-sept fois plus étendue que l'île de Montréal. On y découvre en son centre les chutes Vauréal, plus hautes que les célèbrissimes chutes du Niagara. Ses anses aux noms évocateurs, anse de la Sauvagesse, anse à la Vache-qui-pisse, anse aux Ivrognes, ses canyons qui remontent à la nuit des temps, ses falaises à éviter lorsque l'on souffre de vertige, ont ébloui tous ceux qui y ont séjourné.



L'île d'Anticosti, à l'entrée du golfe Saint-Laurent, peuplée de quelques centaines d'habitants, conserve encore ses mystères, et son charme envoûtant est réservé aux trop rares touristes qui débarquent à Port-Menier, seul accès fluvial à l'île balayée par de puissants courants. Au cours des siècles, des centaines de navires ont été éventrés sur ses récifs ou se sont échoués sur ses battures de roches. L'île, paradisiaque, fut achetée en 1895 par Henri Menier, chocolatier français richissime qui rêva de s'y installer pour en faire son royaume.

Grâce à Henri Menier et sa vision, Anticosti devint la terre de prédilection des chasseurs et pêcheurs argentés, et de ceux moins riches mais chanceux qui y furent invités au cours des décennies. Ce fut mon cas, il y a une vingtaine d'années. J'eus le bonheur de lancer mes mouches dans la rivière Jupiter – l'île compte deux cents rivières et quatre cents lacs et tourbières – où les saumons viennent finir leurs jours dans le lieu même où ils ont commencé leur vie. J'y ai capturé un saumon de 15 livres après un combat acharné de près d'une heure d'où je suis sortie exténuée mais admirative de la combativité du roi des poissons. Lorsque je l'ai extrait de l'eau, je n'ai pu m'empêcher de l'embrasser, et la sensation froide et gluante de sa tête sur mes lèvres me revient en mémoire en écrivant ces lignes. Ce fut un des souvenirs de pêche les plus bouleversants de ma vie.

Henri Menier, lui, pratiquait la pêche, installé dans des canots tirés par des chevaux qui marchaient au bord de la rivière. Le chocolatier, au fil des ans, peupla l'île d'animaux transportés depuis le continent. Castors, orignaux, renards roux, caribous et cerfs de Virginie en firent leur habitat. Ces derniers s'adaptèrent si bien qu'ils se sont reproduits en très grand nombre sans contrainte car les seuls prédateurs sont les chasseurs qui s'adonnent à leur passion en automne durant quelques périodes très réglementées par le ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec. En fait, les scientifiques sont aujourd'hui préoccupés par la trop grande quantité de cerfs bouffeurs de plantes qui représentent un danger pour la biodiversité. Le troupeau oblige, entre autres, à clôturer la piste d'atterrissage, terrain de broutage des chevreuils. Ceux-ci ne craignent guère les humains qu'ils

approchent sans aucune nervosité. Ce n'est qu'à Kyoto, au Japon, dans les parcs entourant les temples, que j'ai retrouvé des cerfs aussi détendus et insouciants.



Henri Menier, dont l'extravagance l'amena même à frapper sa propre monnaie anticostienne, s'offrit un château qu'il fit construire à la mesure de sa bourse et de ses fantasmes en 1899. Il s'inspira des grandes propriétés de bois que l'on découvre dans les pays scandinaves. Il y installa de nombreuses et vastes chambres, des salles de bains en marbre, des vitraux spectaculaires en forme de fleurs de lys, et le mobilier fut importé de Norvège. Les sols étaient recouverts de luxueux tapis orientaux. On imagine le châtelain débarquant avec sa cour, les femmes en robes d'apparat sur ce territoire austère, sauvage, grandiose et rebutant, ne serait-ce qu'à cause des moustiques.

L'industriel mourut en 1913 après avoir investi une partie importante de sa colossale fortune dans l'île où il ne séjourna vraisemblablement que six ou sept fois. Préoccupé par le bien-être de ses rares habitants, il avait fait aussi construire un hôpital, une école et quelques hôtels. Par la suite, le frère d'Henri, Gaston, qui hérita

de ce « royaume », le vendit à une firme forestière, la Wayagamack Pulp and Paper Company, transformée quelques années plus tard en filiale de la Consolidated-Bathurst. La résidence d'une quinzaine de chambres fut alors mise à la disposition des cadres supérieurs de l'entreprise et leurs amis-clients.

Lors de mon premier passage à Anticosti, les rares vieux témoins de l'époque flamboyante de Menier me racontèrent, les yeux humides et la rage au cœur, la destruction du château en 1953 par la Wayagamack. Les habitants de l'île demeuraient convaincus que ce sacrilège s'expliquait par le fait que ce consortium était composé d'Anglais. « Ils ont voulu éradiquer la présence française chez nous », m'a dit un vieux au teint buriné et à l'accent cristallin dont le père avait servi d'intendant local au chocolatier. À Anticosti, la guerre de Cent Ans n'a jamais cessé.

Depuis 1974, le gouvernement du Québec est propriétaire de l'île. Et ce dernier s'apprête aujourd'hui à permettre une exploration dans le but éventuel de découvrir suffisamment de pétrole pour en faire l'extraction. Ce paradis difficilement accessible et réservé à des adeptes de la nature extrême, aux pêcheurs et aux chasseurs, suscitera, on l'imagine, des débats aussi houleux que la mer quienser cet écrivain, trésor inconnu de la majorité des Québécois.

homme de près de quinze ans son cadet, sous les applaudissements des femmes. Non sans faire tiquer les hommes, car elle eut tendance à généraliser leurs comportements fautifs.

Féministe populiste donc maniant peu la nuance et usant de l'outrance, son impact social est cependant inégalé. D'ailleurs, on ne la désigne plus, malgré son grand âge, que par son prénom, Janette, devenu un nom pour désigner une féministe combattante. Car sous des dehors douxereux, Janette est redoutable. Une vraie Québécoise !

Bière (La)

L'on buvait de la bière en Nouvelle-France. Mais l'arrivée des Britanniques après la Conquête a permis de développer bien davantage cette tradition. La première grande brasserie moderne fut fondée par John Molson en 1786. Il baptisa sa bière de son nom, et la Molson, la Mol dans le langage populaire, est encore sur le marché. Les Québécois ont aussi réussi à faire de la bière, même brassée par des Anglais, un élément identitaire. « Un vrai Québécois, ça boit de la bière », m'a déclaré un jour un gros buveur qui m'en avait offert une et à qui j'avais eu le malheur de répondre : « Non merci, je n'aime pas le goût. »

La bière est la boisson alcoolisée la plus consommée au Québec. Plus que le vin, que les Québécois boivent pourtant en quantité plus importante que dans le reste du Canada. Et, bien sûr, plus qu'aux États-Unis. Tradition française oblige.

La bière est de toutes les fêtes, et on l'associe au plaisir, à la séduction entre hommes et femmes et à la virilité également dans les publicités dont certaines sont devenues des rengaines de fierté nationale. Le publicitaire Jacques Bouchard, fin connaisseur de l'âme québécoise et qui a créé la publicité en français au Québec, mettant ainsi fin aux publicités anglaises que l'on présentait au public québécois en traduction, a inventé un slogan pour la bière Labatt en 1975. Sa pub est devenue une référence culte, d'autant qu'elle était chantée par Claude Gauthier, un troubadour talentueux de l'indépendance du Québec.



*On est six millions, faut s'parler,
 Dis-moi, dis-moi comment tu t'appelles,
 On est six millions, de presque parents, faut s'parler.
 On est six millions, faut s'parler,
 Du travail de nos mains, de c'qu'on fera demain.
 On est six millions, c'est du monde à connaître,
 Faut s'parler.*

Cette publicité fut chantée à travers la province comme un hymne de rassemblement national et de convivialité. C'était à l'aube de l'arrivée au pouvoir en 1976 du Parti québécois dirigé par René Lévesque*, et en buvant de cette bière Labatt qui battit des records de ventes, on l'imagine bien, l'on ingurgitait un peu de potion magique nationaliste.

Comme ailleurs, depuis quelques décennies, les micro-brasseries font florès à travers le Québec. Même la superstar de la contestation en chanson des années soixante, Robert Charlebois*, s'est transformé en homme d'affaires en prenant des actions dans Unibroue, une entreprise québécoise créée en 1990. Le nom et l'image du rocker ont contribué au succès financier de l'entreprise. Des bières furent baptisées « L'eau bénite », « La Maudite », « La Fleurdelisée », « Le don de Dieu », toutes ces références à la culture religieuse du Québec. D'autres micro-brasseurs renchériront avec « Le trou du diable », « La Dominus Vobiscum ». Boudant désormais la religion, le Québec avale ses symboles en communion avec un passé révolu.

La bière fut jadis une boisson réservée aux hommes. Des femmes bien sous tous rapports sirotaient plutôt du vin doux. Mais les générations de filles du féminisme se sont laissé conquérir, au nom de l'égalité des sexes sans doute, et elles lèvent le coude, bouteille à la main comme les mecs, pour déguster la boisson alcoolisée la plus démocratique et dont l'effet fait virevolter, un peu trop parfois, les têtes et les cœurs.

Bleuets (Les)

Le mot possède deux sens. Le premier désigne le fruit qui s'apparente aux myrtilles. En 1870, à la suite d'importants feux dans la forêt boréale sur les pourtours du lac Saint-Jean, les myrtilles envahirent les tourbières et devinrent un élément caractéristique de l'alimentation des gens de la région. La ville de Dolbeau-Mistassini porte même le titre de capitale mondiale du bleuets, et un festival s'y déroule chaque année.



Mais le bleuets est aussi le nom que l'on donne aux habitants du lac Saint-Jean, gros mangeurs de bleuets par la force des choses depuis un siècle. Les « gens du Lac », comme on les désigne, sont gens de parole, gens de fierté régionale, gens orgueilleux, abrupts et ricaneux. Les « bleuets » ont un sens aigu de la solidarité, ils sont prompts à faire front commun contre le reste du Québec. Les « bleuets » sont créatifs, et une partie importante du Bottin de l'Union des artistes est originaire de la région. Regroupés autour du lac Saint-Jean, le troisième plus grand lac du Québec qui fait plus d'un million de kilomètres carrés, ses habitants sont moins complexés, ou plus exactement possèdent un sentiment de supériorité qui s'explique sans doute par leur esprit de débrouillardise, une tradition de vaillance au travail et cette capacité

à affronter les obstacles, eux que la géographie isole des grands centres. Pour rejoindre le Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean en voiture, il faut rouler à travers le parc des Laurentides sur une distance de plus de 200 kilomètres. La route est dangereuse la nuit à cause des animaux sauvages qui la traversent. Les collisions avec des orignaux et des chevreuils sont souvent mortelles. Et l'hiver, lorsque la neige, le vent et le verglas transforment la chaussée en patinoire, les gens du lac trop intrépides peuvent y laisser leur vie. D'ailleurs, chaque famille de cette région, qui compte plus de 275 000 habitants, a perdu un membre proche ou éloigné sur ces 200 kilomètres à travers la forêt qui relie la région à la ville de Québec. Les bleuets ont été immortalisés par Louis Hémon dans son roman *Maria Chapdelaine* et par des films qui s'en sont inspirés. Le premier, en 1934, fut réalisé par Julien Duvivier avec Madeleine Renaud et Jean Gabin, et le dernier, du cinéaste québécois Gilles Carles, avec Carole Laure dans le rôle de Maria, fut présenté en 1983.



Les « bleuets » sont partagés sur l'œuvre de Louis Hémon qui peint leurs ancêtres comme des gens soumis, écrasés par la misère, confinés à cultiver une terre stérile et à bûcher les forêts. Mais ce roman du terroir, écrit par un Français et non un Canadien-français, cerne avec acuité l'âme du peuple québécois à la recherche d'une liberté qui lui échappe.

Cependant, les « bleuets » d'aujourd'hui ne craignent ni Dieu ni personne, et la prospérité est leur credo. Ils ont la passion d'eux-mêmes et ils entretiennent leur singularité quitte à jouer les Cyrano ou les Figaro de la modernité québécoise. Enfin, ils auraient tendance à croire que ce sont les Québécois qui ont un accent et non pas eux. Car leur manière de parler, truffée d'expressions locales, est aussi réjouissante que surprenante. L'on dira qu'une décision est « songée » lorsqu'on pense le contraire, d'une personne agréable de compagnie on estime qu'elle est « d'adon », de quelqu'un qui se croit drôle qu'il « fait simple », et d'une personne qui a l'air faible qu'elle est une « feluette ».

Les gens du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean veulent qu'on les aime plus que ceux de partout ailleurs au Québec. Ce sont, à vrai dire, les Québécois les plus insatiables.

Bombardier

Il m'arrive très souvent, au cours de mes voyages à travers le monde, de me faire interpellé par des douaniers qui, découvrant mon nom, me croient associée à l'entreprise Bombardier. Pour ne pas les décevoir, je précise

Cabane au Canada (Ma)

J'en ai longtemps rêvé. Non pas d'une maison de campagne, mais de la cabane en rondins qu'on trouve sur les calendriers. Pour que cette habitation prenne tout son sens, je la souhaitais éloignée de la civilisation : au fond des bois, au bout du monde, difficile d'accès, au bord d'un lac non ensemencé mais poissonneux, avec comme voisins les animaux du pays. Des loups, des lynx, des ours, des pékans, des renards roux, argentés, hybrides, des martres brunes ou rousses, des visons, des hermines blanches, des belettes à longue queue et inévitablement des castors qui se jouent de nous en déstabilisant le niveau d'eau de nos lacs par leurs barrages spectaculaires.

Durant des années, j'ai jeté un coup d'œil distrait sur les sites immobiliers. J'inscrivais « camp de pêche », j'indiquais une région pas trop éloignée que j'estimais être à quatre ou cinq heures de Montréal, et je pesais sur la souris de l'ordinateur avec espoir. En vain. Un jour, j'ai écrit « Mauricie », la région autour de la ville de Trois-Rivières,

entre Montréal et Québec sur la rive nord du Saint-Laurent. À vrai dire, je n'y croyais tellement plus que je regardais à peine les maisons qui défilaient sous mes yeux. Soudain, je le vis. C'était un camp en bois rond, rustique à souhait, qui n'était à l'évidence pas préfabriqué à la mode d'aujourd'hui. Il se situait en Haute-Mauricie, à une heure de La Tuque, une ville de pulpe et de papier, et jadis de coureurs des bois et de draveurs. Son plus célèbre citoyen est Félix Leclerc*, qui y est né mais l'a vite quittée.



J'exigeai que l'agente immobilière me décrive exactement l'environnement qui semblait correspondre à mon rêve. Je n'allais pas faire dix heures de voiture aller-retour pour me retrouver devant une cabane entourée d'un garage ou d'un dépanneur. Elle me donna sa parole que ce camp était pour moi.

Le voyage fut long mais la route de Trois-Rivières à La Tuque serpente la rivière Saint-Maurice, un des affluents du Saint-Laurent. Plus on monte vers le nord, plus la rivière prend ses aises, large, agitée parfois, sombre ou se laissant apprivoiser par de petites plages de sable fin. À La Tuque, ville sans attractions mais avec des airs

de Far West et où l'odeur de l'usine de pâte à papier est prégnante, j'avais rendez-vous avec mon agente, une Québécoise joviale, habituée à rouler des heures à travers d'immenses territoires à la découverte de transactions à réaliser. Une coureuse des bois à sa manière. La dernière heure, à mon étonnement, nous avons circulé sur une route pavée parce que menant à un important barrage hydroélectrique, le barrage du Rapide-Blanc, célèbre grâce à La Bolduc, une chanteuse populaire des années de crise, entre les deux guerres, qui l'a immortalisé dans une chanson. Nous nous sommes engagées sur le pont barrage de la Trenche au-dessus de la rivière Saint-Maurice où l'on aperçoit encore des épaves de pitounes, ces billots de bois sur lesquels les draveurs jouaient à saute-mouton et dansaient la gigue en descendant les cours d'eau à des vitesses folles.

L'on a enfin bifurqué sur une route de terre incertaine et cahoteuse. Puis, au kilomètre 24, l'on s'est engagées sur une piste. Les branches des arbres égratignaient la carrosserie du véhicule mais l'agente y semblait indifférente. Après 400 mètres, il fallut s'arrêter devant une barrière. La dame me donna les clefs. Je m'avançai pour ouvrir mais je ne voyais encore ni camp ni lac. Je remontai en voiture et, après un tournant, il m'est apparu. Plus impressionnant qu'en image, plus attirant encore. Sur le fronton avait été sculptée une enseigne qui annonçait le « Camp des bûcherons ». Le nom avait été encadré de têtes de bêtes et de poissons qu'on avait aussi sculptées. Et à l'avant, je découvris le lac. Immobile, sombre, dominé par des montagnes noires de sapins et d'épinettes.

Avant même d'entrer à l'intérieur, ma décision était prise. Une fois sur place, je ne voulais plus repartir. Sur

les murs, des animaux empaillés me surveillaient. Je dévisageai le lynx et lu dans son regard comme une approbation.

La cabane au Canada, la vraie et non pas ces bungalows de banlieue transplantés dans la nature pour la défigurer, n'est pas une sinécure pour un urbain handicapé, c'est-à-dire ignorant la loi du bois, de l'isolement et de la froidure extrême. Un urbain est incapable de scier du bois pour chauffer la maison, de raccorder un tuyau de plomberie défectueux, de bricoler, de réparer les équipements, bateaux, moteurs, C. B. Dans ma cabane, l'électricité y était installée, mais la pompe à eau était branchée dans le lac. Il fallut donc faire construire un sous-sol, couler du béton, installer un système pour que, l'hiver, l'eau ne gèle pas et ne fasse éclater toute la tuyauterie. À moins 40 °C, ça pète, et même la cuvette en céramique des toilettes explose. C'est la troisième fois que je la change.

J'ai tout fait les travaux. Fait faire, à vrai dire. Et dans ces lieux éloignés, la solidarité ancienne demeure. Les voisins, c'est-à-dire des gens qui habitent à 5 ou 10 kilomètres, sont toujours serviables et corvéables. Surtout l'hiver, avec le froid mortel. Un de ces voisins s'est retrouvé sous sa motoneige après avoir heurté un arbre une fin d'après-midi de janvier il y a quelques années. Il fait noir rapidement, l'hiver. Il était seul, une imprudence en forêt en cette saison, à 2 kilomètres au plus d'une habitation, mais sans moyen de communiquer et la cheville brisée. Il s'est mis à neiger. On ne l'a retrouvé que le lendemain matin. Je l'ai revu l'été suivant, en fauteuil roulant, amputé de la jambe gauche. L'hiver a de ces cruautés pour ceux qui se laissent séduire par sa blancheur silencieuse.

La plupart des Québécois des grandes villes ignorent la forêt et le nord du territoire où l'on peut rouler sans voir âme qui vive durant des centaines de kilomètres. La cabane au Canada enracine mais dépayse. Elle nous relie aux anciens, ces défricheurs courageux, gens de silence, parfois ermites, plus à l'aise avec les ours qu'avec les hommes dont la vie rugueuse, besogneuse, frugale laissait place aussi à la musique folklorique de rigodons et des mélopées d'une tristesse à fendre l'âme.

Ma cabane, je la dispute aux mulots qui y résident, me faisant pousser des cris d'orfraie et monter sur les chaises car j'ai une peur phobique de ces petits rongeurs. Je la partage aussi avec les écureuils qui me la déconstruisent en retirant systématiquement l'étope entre les rondins qui isole contre le froid et rafraîchit les jours de canicule en juillet. Dans ma cabane je me sens protégée de mes voisins les ours rôdeurs, attirés par l'odeur de la nourriture, surtout lorsque les bleuets*, ces myrtilles obèses, se font rares dans les tourbières.

C'est grâce à ce lieu encore protégé de l'agitation du monde que j'ai pris la mesure de la force des éléments. Surtout l'hiver lorsque le mercure indique moins 40 °C et que le soleil éblouit mais ne réchauffe pas. Lorsque les arbres hurlent avec des sons stridents et secs. Et lorsque, sous nos pas, la glace sur le lac craque en un enchaînement de bruits inquiétants pour les novices mais rassurants pour ceux qui n'ignorent guère que le silence peut être un signe du danger de s'enfoncer soudain dans ses eaux noires.

L'isolement, la confrontation permanente avec la nature, le bonheur indescriptible de la chaleur des foyers où crépitent les bûches alors que dehors la poudrière

mène le bal, et la conscience aiguë d'être partie de cette sauvagerie dans ce décor de bois couleur de miel est un puissant calmant. La cabane au Canada, en ce sens, est un refuge pour âmes urbaines tourmentées.

Canadiens

Dès le début de la colonie, les Français installés en Nouvelle-France se sont distingués des Français de France. « Un Canadien est un homme né en Canada mais de parents français établis en Canada. » Telle est la définition du terme « Canadien » que l'on retrouve dans le *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* en 1734. J'appartiens à une génération qui a changé trois fois de nom. Dans mon enfance, j'étais canadienne au sens du XVIII^e siècle, et les « autres », tous les autres, étaient des Anglais. D'ailleurs, on les définissait aussi du nom de « conquérants ». C'était indissociable. Et dans le parler populaire, nous étions des Canayens.

À l'adolescence, j'étais canadienne-française. Les Canadiens-français établissaient ainsi la différence entre eux et les Canadiens-anglais, lesquels se sont toujours considérés *Canadians*. Nous avons vécu jusqu'en 1960 environ dans la nostalgie, en quelque sorte, d'un territoire qui nous avait été subtilisé par la conquête de 1759 et les politiques anglaises qui par la suite avaient tracé les frontières des provinces de ce pays, continent couché littéralement au nord du 45^e parallèle. Dans ma tête d'enfant, le Canada nous appartenait. Les Anglais nous l'avaient tout simplement volé.

intimidante, d'un sang-froid remarquable et d'un non-conformisme surprenant, le Premier ministre incarnait un pays qui se laissait charmer, ébloui par son dirigeant et sa jeune épouse d'une frêle beauté, et qui ploiera sous le fardeau de son image mythifiée.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau retirera, à vrai dire, plus d'avantages personnels de sa fonction que le Québec, qui lui avait servi de tremplin. Dans son duel permanent avec les souverainistes dirigés par René Lévesque*, il remportera la victoire. Les Québécois voteront non aux référendums sur l'indépendance. Mais le Canada sortira épuisé de sa gouvernance flamboyante, et, surtout, Trudeau laissera en héritage un pays divisé, épuisé par ses antagonismes et un nationalisme québécois affaibli. Paradoxalement, le Québec, ayant cessé d'être l'enfant terrible du Canada, regarde désormais le Canada anglais avec une sidérante indifférence.

Tutoiement (Le)

La pratique du tutoiement systématique s'est instaurée au Québec depuis quelques décennies, et son usage frappe tout francophone qui débarque dans la belle province en se faisant interpeller par des « Sens-toi bien à l'aise » ou des « Tu t'appelles comment ? » quelques heures après avoir mis les pieds dans cette québécoïté assez étonnante.

Traditionnellement, les Québécois usaient du vouvoiement, à la manière des francophones européens. Ma mère vouvoyait ses parents. Je tutoyais ma grand-mère mais

vouvoyais tous les adultes, sauf mes proches, et j'avais tendance à vouvoyer les grands-oncles et tantes à cause de leur âge canonique. Le Québec s'est peu à peu mis au tu et à toi dans la foulée de la révolution culturelle des années soixante. Et le tutoiement a pris véritablement son envol lorsque les enseignants ont exigé d'être prénommés et tutoyés par les enfants. Cela au nom d'une philosophie inspirée par des pédagogues de pointe qui assuraient que maîtres et élèves s'éduquaient ensemble et que, par conséquent, vouvoyer l'enseignant représentait une barrière entravant le contact avec l'élève.

Je fus un jour convoquée au collège de mon fils alors âgé de treize ou quatorze ans. Le directeur m'expliqua que ce dernier leur causait un problème. À l'adolescence, on s'attend souvent à tout de la part de nos enfants. « Quel est le problème ? demandai-je, à la fois ennuyée et inquiète. – Votre fils refuse d'appeler ses profs par leur prénom et de les tutoyer. C'est une façon pour lui de refuser de s'intégrer au groupe. Il se pense peut-être supérieur à cause de votre notoriété ? »

Je n'en croyais pas mes oreilles. Ainsi, j'avais été convoquée pour un vous. Je dus expliquer à ce monsieur que mon fils était éduqué à user du vous avec les adultes, tous les adultes, sauf quelques intimes. « Vous me vouvoyez, fis-je remarquer à ce pédagogue qui se croyait à la fine pointe de l'égalité sociale. – Le jour où nous aurons aboli les différences sociales, le vous sera désuet », répondit-il avec ironie.

Le Québec est le pays du « on naît tous égaux ». « Tu me prends de haut », m'a dit un jour un jeune lecteur, brillant par ailleurs, qui me reprochait d'avoir usé du vous dans une réponse à son courriel. J'ai découvert qu'on lui

avait appris en classe que le vous avait une connotation péjorative. C'était une façon d'écraser l'interlocuteur. Personne ne lui avait dit que le vous est une marque de politesse et de respect.

Au Québec, on se fait tutoyer par les serveurs, les vendeurs, les fonctionnaires souvent. Les jeunes tutoient les vieux qui par ailleurs tutoient tous ceux qui leur disent tu.

Les étrangers et les immigrants, une fois la surprise passée, trouvent l'usage sympathique, exotique à vrai dire, et s'y mettent eux-mêmes sans doute par effort d'intégration. Plusieurs cependant sont mal à l'aise de tutoyer leurs supérieurs hiérarchiques, mais ils y parviennent en se faisant violence.

Cependant, des pédagogues plus clairvoyants ont mis en garde dans les années récentes contre ce tutoiement qui prive les enfants de la distance générationnelle nécessaire pour apprendre et grandir. Dans certaines écoles de quartiers défavorisés, les enseignants se font désormais vouvoyer par les petits afin de les rendre conscients de la différence entre un adulte et eux. Les policiers qui n'échappèrent pas à cette « démocratisation » verbale et ne se privaient pas de tutoyer les citoyens ont changé leur fusil d'épaule. Les autorités policières ont fini par constater que la relation toujours délicate entre un agent de répression et un citoyen s'exacerbait avec le tu. Comme le déclara alors un dirigeant du service de la police de Montréal : « C'est plus difficile de dire "Mangez donc de la marde" que "Mange donc de la marde" ». Depuis, les policiers ont reçu ordre de vouvoyer les citoyens, et si d'aventure ils passent au tu, ils peuvent être l'objet de réprimandes.

J'ai encore en mémoire la réponse qu'avait faite le président Mitterrand à un militant socialiste qui avait osé

un « Camarade, on se tutoie ? » : « Si vous voulez », avait laissé tomber, comme une pierre dans un puits, François Mitterrand.

Les Québécois sont plus directs, plus familiers, moins polis formellement que les francophones européens ou africains. Cela fait aussi partie de leur charme. On peut regretter cependant que le tutoiement si généralisé dans les nouvelles générations ait écarté le vous, cette merveilleuse nuance de la langue française qui offre le choix d'établir la distance avec l'autre et, plus subtilement, qui permet à celui qui use du tu et du vous de choisir l'un ou l'autre. Un tu qui peut être distancé et un vous plus affectif.

Il n'en demeure pas moins que le tutoiement généralisé au Québec n'a pas, on l'imagine bien, aboli pour autant les inégalités sociales. Il n'est en ce sens garant ni du respect de l'autre ni de l'absence de discrimination. Les étrangers ne devraient pas croire qu'en les tutoyant les Québécois font obligatoirement preuve d'amitié et de bienveillance. Bref, l'étranger n'est pas nécessairement le bienvenu au Québec si on l'accueille en lui disant tu.

Fête nationale (La)

Depuis des siècles, l'on a fêté la Saint-Jean-Baptiste en Nouvelle-France. En fait, les premiers colons français célébraient la Saint-Jean, comme en France sous l'Ancien Régime où c'était une fête très populaire avec ses grands feux auxquels on a donné le même nom. L'on trouve dans les *Relations des Jésuites* des références à des célébrations à Québec même, vers 1636, à l'initiative du gouverneur de l'époque, Montmagny.

La tradition du défilé qui se poursuivra jusqu'à la Révolution tranquille* des années soixante prit son envol dès 1842, et c'est l'occasion pour les Canadiens, comme on les désignait à l'époque, d'afficher leurs profondes convictions religieuses. D'ailleurs, en 1908 le pape Pie X décréta officiellement saint Jean-Baptiste patron des Canadiens-français.

Ce fut donc jusqu'à la Révolution tranquille une fête où l'Église et l'État se retrouvaient côte à côte lors du défilé traditionnel à Montréal. Enfant, j'adorais cette parade, comme on l'appelait. Pour les fanfares qui la composaient mais surtout pour le dernier char allégorique qui clôturait l'événement. C'était le plus fleuri et le plus attendu des chars. Sur un trône blanc et bleu en rappel du drapeau québécois, saint Jean-Baptiste, personnifié par un garçonnet blond aux cheveux très bouclés, souriait béatement. Un petit mouton blanc à la laine aussi bouclée que les cheveux du petit Jean-Baptiste reposait à ses pieds. Cette scène représentait l'apothéose de cette journée où s'exprimait la ferveur à la fois religieuse et patriotique.

Durant des décennies, personne ne trouvait à redire à cette procession à l'image du Québec, docile, replié sur

lui-même, bon enfant et pieux. Certains artistes, des intellectuels, critiquaient ce nationalisme de droite, dégoulinant de religiosité, mais ils étaient condamnés à vivre dans une marginalité dans laquelle ils se complaisaient eux-mêmes.

Il a fallu attendre le grand coup de vent des années du réveil pour que la fête nationale se transforme en une journée d'affirmation nationale.

Le nouveau nationalisme, plus combatif, plus progressiste socialement, s'exprime à travers la création d'un mouvement, le Rassemblement pour l'indépendance du Québec, qui attire une nouvelle génération, idéaliste, tapageuse, qui carbure à l'anticléricisme et abhorre ce défilé à la gloire d'un enfant blond et de son mouton symbole, affirment plusieurs des Canadiens-français dociles. En 1965, *exit* le garçonnet et l'agneau. C'est une statue d'une hauteur de 10 pieds, soit environ 3 mètres, représentant un Jean-Baptiste adulte à la tête plutôt bourrue qui ferme alors le cortège, au grand dam des nostalgiques.

En 1968, le jour de la Saint-Jean se terminera en émeute à la suite de la décision de Pierre Elliott Trudeau*, le flamboyant pourfendeur des indépendantistes, d'assister au défilé, depuis la tribune des dignitaires laïcs et religieux. Un groupe d'agitateurs cherchant à en découdre avec P. E. Trudeau l'interpellèrent en scandant des « Trudeau le traître » et autres noms d'oiseaux. Des bouteilles, des pierres et autres objets dangereux furent lancés en direction du futur Premier ministre du Canada qui sera de fait élu dès le lendemain. L'on vit alors les dignitaires paniqués quitter en courant les gradins pendant que P. E. Trudeau refusait de s'enfuir, accroché à son siège et évitant les objets qui atterrisaient autour

de lui. Les policiers, une fois leur stupeur passée, foncèrent dans la foule immense, et la fête nationale vira à l'émeute.

L'année suivante, des manifestants s'attaquèrent à la gigantesque statue de saint Jean-Baptiste et réussirent à la jeter par terre sous les cris et les bravos. J'étais présente lors de cette mise à mort où Jean-Baptiste fut décapité. J'ai ramassé un de ses doigts en carton recouvert de plâtre que j'ai gardé comme une relique de cette période iconoclaste du Québec en marche vers son affirmation.

Depuis plusieurs décennies, la fête nationale s'est transformée au goût du jour, pourrait-on dire.

Il y eut des 24 juin électrisants sur les Plaines d'Abraham* à Québec et sur le Mont-Royal* à Montréal, avec les chanteurs mythiques du Québec contemporain : Félix Leclerc*, Gilles Vigneault*, Claude Léveillée, Claude Dubois, Diane Dufresne, Robert Charlebois*, Paul Piché, Ginette Reno, et bien sûr Céline Dion*. D'autres fêtes nationales plus conviviales se dérouleront désormais dans les quartiers de Montréal où, à l'image de la société en mutation, se côtoient désormais les Québécois de toutes origines. Le fleurdelisé claque au vent, mais les chansons québécoises font désormais face à la concurrence des chansons en anglais, une hérésie aux yeux de ceux qui savent que, sans vigilance, le combat pour la langue pourrait être perdu. La fête nationale est soulignée aussi par toutes les minorités culturelles. C'est devenu une fête multicolore, multiethnique sous la bannière du drapeau fleurdelisé.

Nord québécois devra dorénavant prendre en compte cette dimension politique. Pendant ce temps, dans cette sauvagerie harnachée par l'homme où, selon la légende, même les moustiques sont recouverts de fourrure à cause du froid, les rares habitants des lieux regardent le Sud en plaignant ceux qui y habitent.

Joual (Le)

Le mot *joual* est une déformation de la prononciation du mot *cheval*. Le terme *joual* est devenu la façon de décrire la langue populaire du Québec que le frère Jean-Paul Desbiens, dit le frère Untel, a vigoureusement dénoncé dans son pamphlet, *Les Insolences du frère Untel*, publié il y a tout de même plus de cinquante ans ! Le courageux frère s'était attaqué à cette langue à la limite de la créolisation et qui à ses yeux empêchait l'évolution culturelle de la société québécoise.

Je suis issue d'un milieu où l'on parlait joual. Dans ma famille maternelle, mes tantes adorées, de même que ma grand-mère, s'exprimaient en joual, ce mélange d'archaïsmes, de jurons, d'éclatements syntaxiques et d'anglicismes. Une langue pour moi affective contre laquelle ma mère m'a mise en garde puisqu'elle l'associait à l'ignorance et à l'indigence intellectuelle. D'où ces cours de diction où elle m'inscrivit dès l'âge de trois ans et demi.

Le joual a atteint son apogée, si l'on peut dire, lorsque les artistes et les intellectuels au nationalisme

vibrant l'ont transformé dans les années soixante en symbole politique de l'identité québécoise. Cette valorisation quasi religieuse de cette langue incompréhensible en dehors des frontières du Québec fut au cœur de la redéfinition de l'identité québécoise. Aux yeux des tenants du joual, il fallait rompre avec le colonialisme culturel français dont étaient atteintes les élites québécoises.

Le joual nous a divisés, déchirés par des débats passionnels où chacun choisissait son camp. Les linguistes eux-mêmes se sont affrontés, certains que l'on qualifierait aujourd'hui de fondamentalistes affirmant que le joual était la langue québécoise, affranchie de la langue française. Les créateurs parmi les plus talentueux s'emparèrent, ou plutôt s'approprièrent cette langue, et les années soixante-dix furent celles de la création en joual, sur les scènes québécoises et dans les feuilletons télévisés.

Une anecdote personnelle illustre de façon éclairante l'impact du joual au théâtre. J'avais invité ma tante préférée – ouvrière toute sa longue vie dans une manufacture de vêtements où elle s'épuisait à repasser avec un fer à vapeur de 2 kilos huit heures par jour – à assister aux *Belles-Sœurs*, la pièce de Michel Tremblay*. Ma tante était accompagnée d'une amie qui comme elle s'exprimait en joual, mais en saupoudrant ses phrases de jurons spectaculaires. Avec elle, ça « décocrissait », c'étaient des « hosties toastées », ça « tabarnaquait ».

Les deux femmes se faisaient une fête d'aller au théâtre, c'est-à-dire, dans leur esprit, de pénétrer dans un lieu sacré qu'elles associaient à une classe sociale supérieure.

À la fin de la pièce, les deux amies étaient traumatisées. « C'est écœurant de parler un "chuton"¹ pareil. C't un enfant de chienne celui qui a écrit ça. » En fait, il leur avait été intolérable de subir cet effet de miroir en entendant sur une scène des personnages s'exprimer dans cette langue qui était la leur. C'est donc en joual qu'elles se scandalisaient de cette langue recréée par le très talentueux Michel Tremblay, notre plus célèbre dramaturge.

Les débats sur le joual se sont estompés, mais subsiste une allergie, même parmi les élites culturelles, à s'exprimer dans une langue soutenue où l'accent est moins prononcé. « Vous êtes née en France » est une remarque que j'entends régulièrement au Québec du simple fait de mon niveau de langage et d'une articulation plus marquée que la moyenne des Québécois. Mais, en France, il m'arrive très souvent de provoquer une déception chez mes interlocuteurs. « Dommage, vous n'avez pas l'accent. – Si vous êtes gentil avec moi, je l'aurai », que je réponds. Mais je ne suis pas dupe et je refuse en tant qu'intellectuelle d'être enfermée sous l'étiquette folklorique. Car malgré l'évolution pour sortir du chauvinisme et d'une forme glamourisée d'impérialisme culturel, l'intelligentsia parisienne dédaigne ou se moque du parler « québécois ». « Si ça n'était pas toi qui m'assurais que ce metteur en scène, ton compatriote, est instruit et cultivé, je le croirais ignare et demeuré, à cause de la façon dont il s'exprime », m'avoua un jour un ami, membre à plein temps de la faune germanopratine.

1. *Chuton* pourrait se traduire par « débile », « ignorant », « pas éduqué »...

Mais le joul se révèle utile, et il m'a même servi en France dans des conversations avec des compatriotes pour confondre des Français. Jolie revanche contre ceux qui m'ont si souvent seriné que, lors de séjours au Québec, ils n'avaient absolument rien compris de ce que les Québécois leur racontaient.

Juifs hassidiques de Montréal (Les)

Le Québec compte un peu moins de 100 000 Juifs concentrés presque exclusivement à Montréal. Les Ashkénazes venus d'Europe centrale sont des Québécois de vieille extraction, si l'on peut dire. Ils représentent près des trois quarts de la communauté, et l'anglais est leur langue. S'ajoutent à eux les Séfarades, 25 000 environ, venus du Maghreb et parlant français, ce qui simplifie leur période d'adaptation. Car la plupart d'entre eux sont débarqués au Québec depuis les années cinquante. Enfin, près de 12 000 Juifs hassidiques sont les plus remarquables parce que visibles avec leurs boudins et leurs habits noirs d'un autre siècle.

À Montréal, les juifs hassidiques sont regroupés dans quelques rues d'Outremont, le quartier de la bourgeoisie francophone. Ils appartiennent au paysage urbain. Les femmes portent perruque, sont couvertes d'amples vêtements plus que modestes, ce qui les fait ressembler aux religieuses d'après Vatican II lorsqu'elles avaient troqué leurs longues robes noires et leurs cornettes contre des vêtements civils, ternes et sans attrait. Mais ces femmes

Frères enseignants célèbres (Des)

Chaque famille canadienne-française modeste a donné des fils à l'Église, jusque dans les années soixante. Le recrutement se faisait surtout dans les campagnes, et nombre de cultivateurs étaient heureux et fiers d'être les parents d'un frère. Heureux, car cela signifiait une bouche de moins à nourrir dans les grandes familles, et fiers, car un fils religieux, même frère, fut longtemps considéré comme un signe d'élévation sociale.

Comme plusieurs religieuses, les frères recevaient une formation sommaire en vue d'enseigner dans le primaire et le secondaire. Les frères des écoles chrétiennes, les Frères maristes, les frères du Sacré-Cœur n'avaient aucun problème de recrutement, et les jeunes candidats étaient choisis dès la fin de l'adolescence. Leur formation, inférieure à celle des prêtres, les destinait à enseigner aux garçons des milieux plutôt pauvres à qui ils apprenaient à lire, à écrire et à s'exprimer avec un minimum de correction. Les frères ont toujours fait profil bas. Ces religieux qui ne pouvaient bénéficier du statut de prêtre étaient d'une certaine façon soumis comme les religieuses au pouvoir des clercs tout-puissants. Être frère révélait l'origine sociale modeste et être prêtre signifiait l'élévation sociale vers la bourgeoisie. Pas surprenant que, lors de la Révolution tranquille*, des frères quittèrent en grand nombre leurs communautés et se recyclèrent immédiatement dans l'enseignement avec des salaires afférents, avant de trouver femme et de fonder une famille.

Les Québécois sont friands des histoires scabreuses qui se déroulaient dans les institutions dirigées par les

frères. À l'évidence, ces religieux, entrés dans les ordres à dix-sept, dix-huit ans, ne recevaient aucune éducation sexuelle autre que des mises en garde contre le péché de la chair, l'obsession nationale. Parmi les baby-boomers, nombreux sont ceux qui dans leur jeunesse recevaient à la fin de l'année le « trophée du poignet d'or » décerné par le « frère mets ta main ». Ce genre de blague a perduré jusqu'à ce que les communautés se retrouvent exsangues, faute de candidats et selon la règle de l'attrition.

Cependant, ces blagues douteuses recouvrent une réalité plus dérangeante. Comme dans tant de sociétés catholiques, ces collèges, et ceux dirigés par des prêtres également, étaient un terrain de chasse de prédateurs sexuels. Ces hommes entrés dans les ordres sans aucune expérience, dans la fleur de l'âge, et qui avaient vécu à l'écart des femmes, hormis de leur mère et leurs sœurs, car les écoles primaires et secondaires ne sont devenues mixtes que dans les années soixante au Québec, ces hommes étaient trop souvent laissés à eux-mêmes face à leurs pulsions sexuelles. Ils furent nombreux à assouvir leurs désirs sur de jeunes garçons sur lesquels ils exerçaient une autorité morale, spirituelle et intellectuelle. Depuis quelques années, d'anciennes victimes se sont manifestées, et par des règlements de cour ou hors cour, certaines communautés ont déboursé des dizaines de millions de dollars de « dédommagement », cet euphémisme pour décrire le viol souvent répété de garçonnetts traqués, honteux, dégoûtés et enfermés dans un silence qui a plombé leur vie d'adulte.

Les Québécois, assoiffés de transparence, craignent moins de nommer les choses, de dénoncer l'intolérable et de démasquer les coupables. Mais les frères

enseignants, malgré les dérives d'un trop grand nombre, ont accompli une œuvre d'éducation et de scolarisation dans des milieux très modestes où l'importance de l'éducation n'était pas une priorité. Ils ont aussi contribué à la formation des garçons dans les écoles publiques. Mais c'est grâce à l'action spectaculaire de l'un de ces frères enseignants, Jean-Paul Desbiens, de l'ordre des Frères maristes, que les frères ont trouvé leur icône intellectuelle.

En 1960, Jean-Paul Desbiens, frère Pierre-Jérôme, écrit sous l'anonymat un brûlot aussi brillant que provoquant : *Les Insolences du frère Untel*. Dans cet ouvrage coup de poing, cet homme encore jeune et très lettré décrit l'échec du système scolaire. Il y dénonce en particulier « le joual* », déformation du mot cheval, cette langue désosée parlée par une race servile, écrit-il, et qui à ses yeux symbolise notre ignorance collective.



Son ouvrage, vendu à plus de 100 000 exemplaires, a l'effet d'une bombe. « Nos élèves parlent joual parce qu'ils pensent joual et ils pensent joual parce qu'ils vivent

joual. [...] C'est toute notre civilisation qui est joual. On ne réglera rien en agissant au niveau du langage lui-même », écrit le frère. Ce dernier, qui n'a certes pas évalué la force de frappe de son pamphlet, en subit les contrecoups. Sa communauté l'expatrie en Suisse dès l'année suivante, où il poursuivra des études de philosophie et de théologie. Le frère Desbiens, forte tête mais respectueux de ses vœux, ne cherche nullement à ébranler l'ordre des Frères maristes. D'ailleurs, il ne quittera jamais sa communauté. À son retour au Québec en 1964, il fera une incursion au ministère de l'Éducation, devenant ainsi un des architectes de la réforme scolaire. Puis il occupera le poste prestigieux d'éditorialiste du journal *La Presse* à Montréal, mais ne se sentira guère à l'aise dans ce monde des médias qu'il quittera sans regret pour devenir directeur d'école puis observateur vitriolique de ce Québec qui le fait souffrir. Jean-Paul Desbiens, en déplorant l'ignorance crasse de ses compatriotes, ouvrira un débat sans fin sur la langue, et qui connaîtra son apogée avec la revendication du joual comme identité et langue distincte du français par nombre d'écrivains et d'intellectuels à la fin des années soixante. Cet homme éclatant d'intelligence, ours solitaire, mourra dans l'amertume avec le sentiment d'un échec de la Révolution tranquille et du combat pour la défense et l'illustration de la langue française. Celui qui avait tant crié à tue-tête les vertus de la culture et du respect de la langue mourra, quelle ironie, d'insuffisance respiratoire...

Un autre frère, illettré et plus qu'effacé celui-là, le frère André, né André Bessette en 1845, portier au collège Notre-Dame de Montréal, propriété à l'époque de la communauté des frères de Sainte-Croix, est parvenu au sommet de la

gloire en étant canonisé par le pape Benoît XVI en 2010. On lui attribue de nombreuses guérisons, et son « don » attirera durant des décennies des milliers de malades à la porte de son collègue. Sa communauté décidera en 1914 de construire une basilique, achevée en 1956 et copie du Sacré-Cœur de Montmartre à Paris. Cet oratoire Saint-Joseph, nom dont on baptisera la basilique à cause de la dévotion du petit frère pour l'époux de Marie, attirera des millions de touristes canadiens, américains et sud-américains.

Une de mes tantes adorées avait consulté le frère dans les années trente (il est mort en 1937) suite au décès de son père, car des crises d'asthme la terrassaient. Cette tante, iconoclaste de tempérament, obéit au frère qui lui suggéra de se départir de son alliance en allant la déposer devant la statue de sainte Philomène dans son église paroissiale. Plusieurs années plus tard, l'église fut débaptisée officiellement car l'existence de Philomène en tant que martyre fut mise en doute. En 1961, la sainte fut rayée du calendrier liturgique, et ma tante, devenue catholique sceptique, emportée par le courant de la décatholisation, regrettera son alliance et doutera du frère André. Elle avait constaté au cours des ans que l'alcool calmait son asthme, et c'est sans remords qu'elle s'éloigna de l'Église et de ses saints.

de la solidarité, de la compassion et de la mémoire historique, toutes ces qualités dont sont souvent dépourvus ceux qui, aveuglés par le poids d'un passé aujourd'hui dépassé, semblent incapables de reconnaître l'héritage que le Québec actuel a reçu de ces femmes qui ont tenté dans les limites de l'époque d'aider les femmes à s'affranchir et à refuser le statut de victimes.

Révolution tranquille (La)

N'est-ce pas ironique que le premier à utiliser l'expression qui désigna cette rupture brutale transformant le Québec dans les années soixante et soixante-dix fut un journaliste du quotidien torontois *The Globe and Mail* ? Il qualifia ce mouvement de *Quiet Revolution*. La Révolution tranquille fut ainsi définie dans sa pertinence par un observateur canadien-anglais attentif au Québec contemporain.

Plus de cinquante ans plus tard, les interprétations sur ce grand bouleversement du Québec, mis en place par l'élection du Parti libéral du Québec en 1960, sont loin de faire l'unanimité parmi les intellectuels québécois. Un des plus remarquables d'entre eux, le sociologue de la culture, professeur à l'Université Laval, Fernand Dumont (1927-1997), consacra une partie de sa carrière magistrale à comprendre cette société « tricotée serrée » dans ses léthargies et ses turbulences. Celui qui sera un des initiateurs de la loi 101 qui fit de la langue française la seule langue officielle en 1977 n'est jamais tombé dans le piège de l'idéologie. Son engagement envers la souveraineté ne

l'empêchera pas de conserver une distance critique face aux changements radicaux et expéditifs que le Québec tout entier s'est imposés. Déjà en 1971, dans *La Vigile du Québec*, Fernand Dumont écrivait : « D'une longue histoire que l'on appelait jadis du mot déjà dangereux de miracle, nous étions apparemment sortis comme on surgit d'un long sommeil. Frais et dispos comme aucun autre peuple de l'Occident, hantés par les rêves accumulés d'une longue nuit, nous avons empilé les projets dans une maison hâtivement balayée. Ce fut l'extraordinaire matin de la Révolution tranquille. »

La Révolution tranquille fut pour moi le cadeau de mes vingt ans. Nous vivions dans l'enivrement quotidien car nos rêves les plus fous se réalisaient avant même que nous ne l'ayons souhaité. Dans l'euphorie du renversement du pouvoir de l'Église, j'avais signé un éditorial dans le *Quartier latin*, le journal étudiant de l'Université de Montréal, réclamant que notre association étudiante cesse de payer la moitié du salaire de l'aumônier (l'université payant l'autre moitié) qui nous était imposé d'office. Deux jours plus tard, à ma stupéfaction et celle de mes camarades de combat, l'association étudiante fit voter une résolution adoptée dans l'exubérance par une majorité du conseil. Nous avons lancé cette grenade croyant qu'elle allait être dégoupillée dans les années à venir. Ce sera plutôt la révolution instantanée. Une semaine plus tard, je fus convoquée par le cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, archevêque de Montréal, qui me reçut assis sur son trône et fastement vêtu de ses habits rouges. Il me tendit son anneau à baiser mais je me défilai. « Vous faites pleurer mon cœur de père », me dit-il avec une voix remplie d'émotion et de tristesse plutôt que

de reproche. Frondeuse mais néanmoins polie, j'exposai à Son Éminence notre vision de la société à libérer du pouvoir clérical. Après une demi-heure d'échanges d'incompréhension mutuelle, il me donna congé, cette fois en me tendant la main afin que je la serre. Telle était l'atmosphère en cette période folle dont personne n'imaginait alors les conséquences futures.

En l'espace de quelques années, nous sommes passés d'une culture sous l'emprise de la Providence à l'État-providence. Car un des changements majeurs consista à créer de toutes pièces des structures étatiques répondant à l'objectif de justice sociale portée par le Parti libéral dirigé par Jean Lesage, le bien nommé. La création d'un ministère de l'Éducation, d'un ministère de la Culture, la mise en place d'une fonction publique moderne, dégagée de l'influence politique telle qu'elle existait sous le gouvernement paternaliste de Maurice Duplessis furent accueillies dans l'enthousiasme. Avec le recul, plusieurs analystes estimeront que s'installèrent les éléments qui mèneront plus tard à la technocratisation du Québec. Par ailleurs, le professeur de l'Université d'Ottawa Gilles Paquet n'a eu de cesse de tenter de démystifier la Révolution tranquille présentée, dans la foulée de notre culture catholique messianique, comme une résurrection collective. Dans un ouvrage, *Oublier la Révolution tranquille*, publié en 1999 aux Éditions Liber, Gilles Paquet assure qu'en faisant de l'État le moteur du progrès dans tous les secteurs d'activités la Révolution tranquille a eu des effets très négatifs sur la croissance économique, donc sur le progrès lui-même.

Les intellectuels divergent donc sur les interprétations à donner de cette Révolution tranquille, mais Fernand

Dumont est celui qui a su cerner avec le plus d'acuité les perturbations souterraines auxquelles ont été soumises les institutions qui constituaient les piliers de cette société culturellement distincte du reste du continent.



À vrai dire, le Québec avait déjà amorcé son entrée dans la modernité avec l'industrialisation et sa conséquence, l'urbanisation. Les valeurs traditionnelles qui ont assuré la survie du peuple québécois, il ne faut jamais l'oublier, ont été mises à mal, car les valeurs rurales protégeaient l'identité québécoise qui se définissait alors par la langue et la foi. Je fus frappée un jour, tandis que j'expliquais au grand sociologue Elihu Katz, rencontré dans un colloque de l'Unesco, les enjeux au Québec suite au recul de la religion, de la réponse spontanée qu'il me fit : « Mais il ne reste donc que la moitié de votre identité », affirma-t-il. Fernand Dumont, qui avait également un doctorat en théologie, s'inquiétait dans ses écrits de ce passage à vide. Car ne peut-on pas parler de braderie des assises culturelles, d'une certaine façon ?

Comment, dans la frénésie, remplacer des valeurs séculaires traduites jusque-là en un discours culturel cohérent ? Certes, la modernité impose partout une remise en question des valeurs traditionnelles. Et non sans heurts, on le sait. Mais au Québec, l'absence d'épaisseur historique telle qu'on l'observe dans les vieux pays européens ne permet pas de se réinventer une nouvelle mémoire, de nouveaux mythes et de nouveaux repères en quelques décennies. En ce sens, le prix à payer pour nos ruptures successives durant les décennies bruyantes, exaltantes mais inquiétantes où la seule permanence au Québec fut le changement est très élevé. Dans l'ancienne société, une solidarité cimentait en quelque sorte les citoyens à ses institutions. Qu'il s'agisse de l'Église, de la famille, de la paroisse, de l'école et de ce que l'on appelait la nation. Politiquement, le Québec se partageait entre deux partis, l'Union nationale et le Parti libéral, tous deux nationalistes, ce qui élargissait la solidarité. Le néonationalisme, défini après 1960, s'inscrivit dans un mouvement plus progressiste, plus universel, dépouillé des oripeaux grégaires, défensifs et inclusifs de l'ancien Québec. Le nationalisme se radicalisa et divisa les Québécois à travers de nouveaux partis politiques comme le Parti québécois. Et le contexte occidental permit en même temps à l'individualisme de se déployer, avec comme conséquences futures de faire imploser le « nous » collectif.

Nous avons vécu cette révolution en la transformant peu à peu en mythe et en sacralisant ses acquis. Comment pouvions-nous créer une laïcité qui nous était étrangère puisque sans lien avec notre identité ?

Le Québec d'aujourd'hui, dégagé des anciens démons, est habité d'ombres et de vides qu'il lui faut combler. Son identité demeure au cœur de ses débats collectifs, et, en

ce sens, la Révolution tranquille appartient à la mémoire d'un Québec en voie de transformation profonde et à la recherche de nouveaux paradigmes.

Roy (Gabrielle)

Elle reçut le prix Femina en 1947 pour son roman *Bonheur d'occasion*, un classique de la littérature canadienne dont l'action se déroule dans un quartier ouvrier de Montréal et dans lequel l'auteur trace un portrait réaliste mais non sans tendresse du « petit peuple » pauvre, ignorant, humble mais aussi terriblement vivant. Gabrielle Roy est sans doute l'écrivaine la plus accomplie de la littérature canadienne-française. Canadienne-française et non Québécoise, car elle est née en 1909 à Saint-Boniface, une enclave francophone, aujourd'hui quasi disparue et intégrée à Winnipeg, dans la province du Manitoba.

Son œuvre, encensée à travers le pays et traduite dans plusieurs langues, est pourtant méconnue, pour ne pas dire inconnue, en France. Or, Gabrielle Roy demeure un des plus grands écrivains en langue française, cette langue qu'elle cisèle, polit, fait chanter, et qu'elle vénère à la manière de tous les francophones qui se battent pour elle.

Gabrielle Roy fut d'abord institutrice dans de petites écoles rurales isolées, et cette expérience inspira plus tard des romans éblouissants de finesse, de silence, d'humilité et de passion contenue tels *La Petite Poule d'eau* et *Ces enfants de ma vie*. En 1937, l'appel de l'Europe se fait sentir, et Gabrielle Roy, malgré l'opposition de ses

proches, abandonne son emploi et quitte le Canada pour l'Angleterre et la France. Or son séjour tourne court devant l'imminence du déclenchement de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Elle s'établit alors à Montréal où elle devient journaliste pigiste afin de gagner sa vie. Mais sa voie est tracée. Ces deux années en Europe ont conforté son désir d'écrire. Et son choix de vivre au Québec n'est certes pas le fruit du hasard. Elle revient dans la famille en quelque sorte, là où se trouve la majorité canadienne-française. D'ailleurs, dans son autobiographie, *La Détresse et l'Enchantement*, qui sera publiée un an après sa mort, elle écrit : « Quand donc ai-je pris conscience pour la première fois que j'étais dans mon pays, d'une espèce destinée à être traitée en inférieure ? Ce ne fut peut-être pas, malgré tout, au cours du trajet que nous avons tant de fois accompli, maman et moi, alors que nous nous engagions sur le Pont Provencher au-dessus de la Rouge, laissant derrière nous notre petite ville française pour entrer dans Winnipeg, la capitale, qui jamais ne nous reçut tout à fait autrement qu'en étrangères. »



En lisant *La Détresse et l'Enchantement*, un des seuls ouvrages dans ma vie que j'aie relus trois fois, j'ai été renversée de constater que, lors de ma première expérience en Europe où je visitai et Paris et Londres, j'avais éprouvé le même choc que Gabrielle Roy vingt-cinq ans plus tôt. En effet, la romancière décrit dans son autobiographie le sentiment de familiarité ressenti à Londres où l'architecture, les rapports de civilité, la culture, somme toute, ne lui étaient aucunement étrangers. C'est en débarquant en France que, malgré la langue commune, elle se sent dépaysée. Dans mon cas, cette révélation m'a attristée car je comprenais que l'influence culturelle anglaise avait modelé notre façon d'être. Je me souviens être entrée dans une pâtisserie à Oxford, et je fus ravie d'y retrouver tous les gâteaux de mon enfance, que je préfère à la pâtisserie française. Les « cream puffs », les cakes sont des marqueurs culturels qui me rattachent aussi à mon environnement anglo-saxon. Gabrielle Roy prend davantage conscience, du fait de son origine manitobaine, qu'une part d'elle-même s'inscrit fortement dans l'héritage franco-manitobain et anglo-saxon. Quant à moi, cette vérité me fut difficile à accepter tant j'aurais cru être chez moi dans la mère patrie.

Gabrielle Roy a vécu par la suite à Québec, mais retirée de la vie sociale. Elle choisit son refuge dans Charlevoix*, au bord du fleuve Saint-Laurent, à Petite-Rivière-Saint-François, un village alors paisible, intimidant de beauté naturelle, habité par des artistes et des gens ordinaires auxquels elle se liera d'amitié et où elle poursuivra son œuvre. Sollicitée de toutes parts, elle vivra non pas cachée mais dans une discrétion qui éloignera les badauds à la recherche de sa notoriété.

Gabrielle Roy a apporté à la littérature de langue française un regard neuf, vaste, comme son pays intérieur. Son écriture enveloppe les personnages qu'elle nous offre à aimer et qui sont souvent une partie de nous-mêmes. Enfin, elle demeure une des grandes déceptions de ma carrière de journaliste. Elle abhorrait les entrevues télévisées qu'elle a accordées au compte-gouttes à quelques personnes amies qui n'en faisaient pas métier. Mais, je l'avoue, non seulement j'aime passionnément l'écrivaine mais j'aime aussi qu'elle soit restée toute sa vie à l'écart de l'agitation littéraire, seule devant sa page blanche.

Elle écrit aussi, dans *La Détresse et l'Enchantement* : « Mes livres m'ont pris beaucoup de temps dérobé à l'amitié, à l'amour, aux devoirs humains. Mais pareillement, l'amitié, l'amour, les devoirs m'ont pris beaucoup de temps que j'aurais pu donner à mes livres. En sorte que ni mes livres ni ma vie ne sont aujourd'hui contents de moi. »

guère à la modernité. Le grand vent de la démocratisation fit disparaître les collèges classiques, une institution deux fois centenaire, et en 1967 les collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP) furent instaurés. Une réforme en profondeur des programmes eut lieu, et l'on peut constater rétrospectivement que la vision humaniste du cours classique fut liquidée au fil des ans au profit des approches pédagogiques dites « scientifiques ».

Les Québécois du cours classique, qui ont occupé les postes de commande de la société québécoise et sont donc les responsables à tous niveaux des mutations successives que le Québec a traversées, assistent depuis quelques décennies à un changement de la garde. Le Québec de la Révolution tranquille et du nationalisme revendicateur fut animé par ces élites. Le Québec du *xxi*^e siècle est désormais entre les mains des générations formées dans les CEGEP publics et privés. Cependant, ces derniers ressemblent étrangement au cours classique d'antan en perpétuant le système élitiste. En ce sens, le Québec a un taux de diplomation dont il se vante, mais la valeur des diplômes varie selon les institutions qui les décernent.

Cuisine traditionnelle (La)

Les Québécois se targuent de mieux manger que les Canadiens-anglais. D'ailleurs, ils dépensent davantage pour se nourrir, boivent davantage de vin et fréquentent régulièrement les restaurants. Et ils ne dédaignent pas le fast-food, en particulier s'il est ethnique.

La cuisine traditionnelle, celle que l'on mange en famille, a subi l'influence du climat rigoureux. Les Québécois aiment manger gras et lourd. Les légumes, sauf pour les végétariens – phénomène récent mais devenu tendance –, ont longtemps été boudés. Dans ma jeunesse, l'on se contentait de pommes de terre, bouillies, pilées ou frites, de carottes, de navets, de maïs et de petits pois en conserve. J'ai découvert les asperges, les artichauts, le chou-fleur chez mes amies bourgeoises, tard à l'adolescence. Ma mère ne cuisinait pas. Nous mangions de la fricassée maison, un mélange de bœuf haché et de patates bouillies arrosé en quelque sorte d'une boîte de tomates. Cela flottait dans l'assiette. Le dimanche, le poulet rôti nous transportait de bonheur. C'était un luxe qui se devait d'être accompagné de riz et de champignons en conserve. Ma mère est devenue plus tard une bonne cuisinière. En fait, une fois que nous les enfants avons tous quitté le foyer. « Pourquoi cuisines-tu si bien maintenant ? lui ai-je un jour demandé. – Parce que je ne suis pas obligée », a-t-elle répondu.

La cuisine traditionnelle est maternelle, et on la mange désormais chez les grands-mères. Le pâté à la viande, au poulet, au saumon, le ragoût de pattes de cochon et de boulettes, le pâté chinois, la soupe aux pois, la dinde au temps des fêtes et le jambon à Pâques composent, avec des variantes selon les régions, l'essentiel de cette cuisine conçue pour des gens qui travaillent physiquement.

Le pâté chinois, décrété en 2007 suite à une consultation populaire le mets national des Québécois, est un plat dont on ignore l'origine. Cela s'inspire du *shepherd pie* anglais, du hachis parmentier français, et c'est un mets dont on assure qu'il est meilleur le lendemain que sortant du four.

Il s'agit d'un mélange de bœuf haché, parfumé de sarriette, de pommes de terre en purée et de maïs en crème qu'on trouve en conserve. Le génie du pâté chinois est l'ordre dans lequel l'on superpose les ingrédients. Le bœuf au fond du plat, le maïs bien épais, étalé sur la viande, le tout recouvert de purée de pommes de terre décorée de noisettes de beurre, que l'on met sous le gril. On le mange avec du ketchup ou selon la façon dont on le servait dans la famille. C'est un plat réconfortant qui fait régresser de manière agréable et donne le sentiment d'avoir le ventre bien rempli. Le pâté chinois s'inscrit désormais dans l'identité québécoise. Pour ma part, c'est le plat que je m'empresse de cuisiner au retour de chacun de mes longs voyages. Cela me ramène instantanément au Québec.

Le ragoût de boulettes et de pattes de cochon s'acclimata mal à l'été. Les pattes sont d'abord bouillies puis désossées, et les boulettes grillées dans du beurre mijotent dans le bouillon avec la viande des pattes durant plusieurs heures. Ici, le secret réside dans les épices. Ma préférence va à la cannelle et au gingembre dont j'use plus que suggéré dans les recettes, pour le bonheur de mes amis à qui je refuse de confier cette astuce parfumée. Ce plat se mange en sauce, une sauce brune grâce à la farine qu'on aura fait roussir dans un poêlon en fonte. On ne le mange désormais qu'en famille, cuisiné par les grands-mères ou les vieilles tantes, car il est rare que ce ragoût se retrouve sur les menus des restaurants.

La cuisine traditionnelle est dévastatrice pour les urbains sédentarisés et les obsédés de la mise en forme car elle fait exploser les calories. C'est aussi une cuisine qui se digère lentement et qui nous ramène au temps des bûcherons, des draveurs et des travailleurs manuels. C'est

une cuisine qui commande aussi des desserts à la hauteur des attentes. Du pouding chômeur, un gâteau à pâte blanche noyé dans un lourd sirop à base de cassonade pour les pauvres et de sirop d'érable pour les mieux nantés, généralement non chômeurs. Et des tartes, des *pies* à l'anglaise aux pommes, à tous les fruits de saison, aux raisins secs qu'on gave dans le sirop d'érable, et des tartes à la farlouche, un mélange égal de mélasse et cassonade, une tarte si sucrée qu'on en tremble si on en abuse. Et des gâteaux à trois étages, des cakes à l'anglaise à pâte blanche ou au chocolat dégoulinant de glaçage à la vanille, au chocolat, à la cerise. Le gâteau préféré de plusieurs, malgré son nom qui rappelle la conquête, est le Reine Élisabeth, une pâte blanche à laquelle on ajoute des dattes, des noix de Grenoble, des fruits confits et qu'on recouvre abondamment de copeaux de noix de coco. Nombre de Québécois dévorent le Reine Élisabeth accompagné de grands verres de lait et en oubliant leur nationalisme.



Je regrette cette cuisine aujourd'hui mise à mal par la nouvelle philosophie alimentaire qui boude les aliments gras, sucrés, en sauce. Mais heureusement, une nouvelle génération, des fous de bouffe, s'est imposée afin de prendre le relais tout en récréant une cuisine aussi québécoise qu'inventive et décontractée.