The Sound of Silence: Translating the Auditory Landscape of the North

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Abstract

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In Quebec literature, the North has often been portrayed as a mythical, sacred, and elusive territory. Recent studies have suggested that literary representations of the North are not simply descriptions of a geographic location, but imagined spaces coloured by aesthetic, political, and ideological values. The present thesis examines my translation of twelve poems by three contemporary francophone authors from Quebec whose work explores the landscape of northern Quebec: Jean Morisset, Maude Smith Gagnon, and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine. In light of contemporary literary and multidisciplinary studies on the North, I will consider the difficulties encountered during translation. In particular, I will focus on how poetic representations of northern Quebec are problematic for writers and translators because poetry is fundamentally auditory, and the northern landscape is primarily associated with silence. Furthermore, I will discuss how the North is an imagined space that varies according to the authors' culture, gender, and individual experiences. Drawing from research on the poetics of translation, I will strive to preserve each author's auditory landscape, and thus maintain their varying and distinct perceptions of sound and silence in northern Quebec.

Résumé

Le son du silence : Traduire le paysage sonore du Nord

Megan Callahan

Dans la littérature québécoise, le Nord est souvent présenté comme un territoire mythique, sacré, et insaisissable. Des études récentes suggèrent que les représentations littéraires du Nord ne sont pas simplement des descriptions d'un lieu géographique, mais des espaces imaginaires teintées de subjectivité rattachée à des valeurs esthétiques, politiques, et idéologiques. Mon mémoire présente ma traduction de douze poèmes tirés de trois recueils portant sur le paysage du Nord québécois, écrits par trois écrivains francophones québécois contemporains: Jean Morisset, Maude Smith Gagnon, et Natasha Kanapé Fontaine. À la lumière des études littéraires et multidisciplinaires contemporaines sur le Nord, j'examinerai les difficultés rencontrées lors de la traduction. En particulier, je me concentrerai sur le fait que les représentations poétiques du nord du Québec posent problème pour les écrivains et les traducteurs, puisque la poésie est essentiellement auditive et le silence est une caractéristique première du paysage nordique. De plus, j'aborderai le Nord en tant qu'espace imaginaire qui varie selon la culture, l'ethnicité, et les expériences personnelles de chaque poète. Guidée par des études portant sur la poétique de la traduction, je tenterai de préserver le paysage sonore de chaque poète, et par conséquent, de maintenir les perceptions variables et distinctes du son et du silence au Nord québécois.

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Introduction

"And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking,
People hearing without listening,
People writing songs that voices never share
And no one dared
Disturb the sound of silence."

The Sound of Silence, Simon & Garfunkel

In the field of translation, poetry has long been the subject of discussion and debate. Translators have written extensively about the challenges associated with poetry and the seemingly impossible task of reproducing sound and sense, often questioning the inherent translatability of the poetic form. Despite divided opinions, many translators and writers agree that poetry is a separate and distinct branch of literature, characterizing it as "a music of words, as a way of seeing and interpreting the world" (Matiu 2008, 127). In fact, aspects of musicality, such as metre, rhyme, and rhythm, are often said to be what sets poetry apart from other literary forms (Folkart 2007, 60). Poets weave together speech sounds to capture and convey meaning, each word acting as a thread in a much larger pattern of sound.

The auditory nature of poetry is problematic, however, when writing about a space or landscape that is primarily associated with silence. In Quebec literature, the North has long been portrayed as an elusive, mythical, and fundamentally silent territory. This vision of the North is deeply rooted in our Canadian culture and identity, and can be traced back to our colonial origins. Recent studies have suggested that literary representations of northern Quebec are not mere descriptions of the region north of the 49th parallel; rather, they constitute a complex multicultural discourse, one that varies

depending on the authors' ethnicity, language, culture, and point of view. From this perspective, the North is an imagined space, one that confounds the known and the unknown, the real and the fictional (Chartier 2004, 10).

In the present thesis, I have translated a selection of poems from three French-Quebec collections exploring the northern landscape. These works include Jean Morisset's *Chants Polaires* (2002), Maude Smith Gagnon's *Une tonne d'air* (2014), and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine's *Bleuets et abricots* (2016). While all three poets have vastly different backgrounds and writing styles, the North is central to each collection. In their work, sound and silence are fundamental to their distinct and subjective perceptions of the territory. How should poetry so reliant on the auditory features of the source text (ST) be translated? Can a balance be struck between sound and sense?

Drawing from current and foundational research in translation studies, principally those exploring rhythm, prosody, and musicality, I will attempt to address this challenge in my translation of selected poems by Morisset, Smith-Gagnon, and Fontaine. In particular, Henri Meschonnic's poetics of translation, Barbara Folkart's *Second Finding: A Poetics of Translation*, and Ryan Fraser's doctoral thesis, "Sound Translation: Poetic and Cinematic Practice", will be fundamental sources, both to guide my translations and broaden my knowledge of language and speech sounds.

In my thesis, I will first give a general overview of space and place in literature, focusing on literary representations of the North in Quebec and the mythology surrounding Canada's northern territories. To further understand how sound and silence can infuse a specific space, Alain Corbin's notion of the auditory landscape will then be introduced and discussed. Furthermore, the idea of silence and its deep-seated,

paradoxical dependence on sound will be explored. I will then offer an in-depth discussion of my principal sources in translation studies and explain how they shaped and guided my own translation approach. Finally, I will introduce Morisset, Smith Gagnon, and Fontaine and provide a brief overview of their respective poetry collections. I will then discuss the main difficulties encountered during my translation of their work, focusing on how I attempted to capture and convey their singular auditory landscapes, and consequently, their subjective perceptions of the North.

Translating the North

1.1 The Imagined North

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in space and place in the fields of literary and cultural studies. Whereas the notion of time took precedence for decades, the end of World War II sparked a turning point in critical theory, and the first half of the 20th century saw space slowly pushed into the foreground. New concepts and practices were introduced in an attempt to address and interpret the spaces we inhabited and crossed through.

> The 'spatial turn' was aided by a new aesthetic sensibility that came to be understood as postmodernism, with a strong theoretical critique provided by poststructuralism, especially in French philosophy, but quickly extending into various countries and disciplines (Westphal 2007, ix).

Furthermore, postcolonialism, globalization, and the rise of advanced information technologies had transformative effects on the way we think about space and place. Consequently, postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari sought to break away from traditional ideas of spatial or geographic limits (Westphal 2007, ix).

In response to these new lines of thought, literary theorists Bertrand Westphal and Robert T. Tally began to think about how authors' perspectives affect their depiction of places and spaces, in an attempt "to understand the real and fictional spaces that we inhabit, cross through, imagine" (Westphall 2007, x). They questioned the relationship between real-world referents and their literary representations, "between the real world and fictitious words" (Westphal 2007, xii). Furthermore, they aimed to challenge the rampant Western-centric perspective and refute the simplistic notion of exotic 'Otherness' in favour of a more complex and diverse point of view. In 2007, Westphal

and Tally developed their theory of geocriticism, a "geo-centered approach to literature and cultural studies" (Westphal 2007, ix). Inspired by Kenneth White's theory of geopoetics, geocriticism is founded on the principle that literature should be geo-centred as opposed to ego-centred, meaning the narrative's landscape is the primary focus. Whereas geopoetics focuses on "the intertwining of the biosphere, poetry, and poetics [and] a certain ecological view life" (Tally 2011, xi), geocriticism seeks to develop a multifocal and multicultural vision of place. In other words, a geocritical literary analysis of a specific place requires a varied corpus of texts written by several different authors, each with their own social, political, and cultural biases, providing a broad and complex perspective of the place under scrutiny.

> A place is only a place because of the ways in which we, individually and collectively, organize space in such a way as to mark the topos as special, to set it apart from the spaces surrounding and infusing it. Our understanding of a particular place is determined by our personal experiences with it, but also by our reading about others' experiences, by our point of view, including our biases and our wishful thinking (Westphal 2007, x).

Many scholars in literature and interdisciplinary studies have been inspired by Westphal and Tally's theory of geocriticism and have contributed to the model in new and exciting ways. Professor and literary scholar Daniel Chartier has devoted much of his career to exploring representations of space and place in Quebec literature, particularly of northern Quebec. He argues that literary representations of the North are imagined spaces "constructed by cultural material—language, figures, metaphors, etc.—taken from different sources" (Chartier 2008, 29-30). The forming and shaping of these imagined spaces is a collective phenomenon that occurs over a long period of time, eventually forming a complex network of discourses that transcend the place itself, coloured by aesthetic, political, and ideological values. From this point of view, the North is not

simply a geographic referent; rather, it is a complex discursive system. Based on the premise that the North is an imagined space, northern Quebec can be examined as not only a geographical location, but also a fictional and subjective landscape that varies for each author.

In the present thesis, I chose to translate the works of three authors who vary in ethnicity, age, and gender in order to explore how these aspects influenced their portrayal of the North. Furthermore, during translation, I examined how their individual perceptions of the region were captured and conveyed through poetry, particularly through the interplay of sound and silence.

For decades, studies on the Canadian North have discussed the myths and misconceptions surrounding Western literary representations of the northern territory, and have recognized "the difference between the north imagined by outsiders and the north experienced by its inhabitants" (Hulan 1996, 3). To this day, the majority of Canadian literature exploring the northern territories depicts "an imaginary north created by and for southern Canadian audiences" (Hulan 1996, 3). Consequently, the North – much like the Orient – exists primarily as a construct of Western culture. Such Euro-centric narratives generally portray the North and its indigenous communities as exotic and primitive, a trend often seen in Orientalist literature. "The Other culture embodies ideas of primitivism, savagery, and the exotic, all of which are excluded from the carefully constructed realm of high culture" (Borella 2009, 134). These narratives reinforce the cultural hierarchy already in place and help shape our individual and collective notion of the territory.

> Dans la plupart des oeuvres de l'imagination, le "Nord" est donné comme un monde partiellement ou complètement inconnu, qu'on cherche à atteindre, à

> comprendre et à saisir. Sa définition est donc prospective, mais inscrite dans un processus continu de réduction, à mesure qu'il est découvert dans l'histoire par l'exploration, la colonisation, et l'exploitation (Chartier 2015, 2).

The myth of the North has been present in representations of Canadian and Quebecois identity since at least Confederation, and is intrinsically linked to Canadian patriotism and national unity. In a famous lecture delivered to the Montreal Literacy Club in 1869, R. G. Haliburton, member of the Canada First movement, declared that northern people would "unite to form a New Dominion in this Northern Land," bound by "national ties of blood, and language" (Haliburton 1869, 3-9). The North as a representation of Canadian nationalism helped bridge the political and cultural divide between English Canada and French Quebec. "La différenciation appuyée sur le bilinguisme ou la culture québécoise apparaissait de plus en plus problématique à défendre en raison de divisions politico-culturelles manifestes" (Chartier 2004, 11). Furthermore, the myth of the North helped counter the out-migration towards the United States, inspiring "a sense of national unity by creating a unique identity in an America dominated continent" (Grant 1989. 17).

Haliburton's idea of a collective northern identity excited the imaginations of Canadians "with that distant, terrific fascination, a fearful attraction to the unknown" (Hulan 1996, 10). The geographical north – and consequently, its indigenous inhabitants – became conflated with the imagined north: a mysterious, mythical wilderness beyond the limits of civilization. Thus, most 19th century literary representations of the North, such as travel and adventure narratives, were based on a physical appropriation of land and indigenous territory. During the 1970s, the Canadian government's relationship with to the North was exposed as neo-colonial, and signalled "the importance of territorial sovereignty in the relationship between the Canadian nation and the Canadian north"

(Hulan 1996, 11). However, the myth of the North is still imbued in our Canadian heritage and culture. Stereotypes such as polar bears, igloos, and Inukshuks remain representative of Canadian identity, a modern form of colonialism that continues to this day (Chartier 2004, 11).

In Quebec, the politics of recognition have also played a role in our perception of the North as separate and 'Other'. Until recently, francophone Quebecers were a linguistic minority struggling against anglophone acculturation and fighting to be recognized as a distinct nation. Indigenous communities in Quebec have been fighting a similar battle for decades and continue to resist assimilation into the stronger, dominant English and French cultures, maintaining that they are the only original founding nation. Consequently, francophone nationalists have felt competitive and antagonistic toward indigenous peoples, and the current relationship between francophone Quebec and its northern communities continues to be fraught with tension and resistance.

> For over three decades now, the French-speaking majority of Quebec has striven to assert its ethnocultural distinctiveness and laid claims to a special status within the Canadian political and constitutional framework. Today, both Quebecers and Aboriginals are recognition seekers within the Canadian policy. As a result, their relationship is inevitably marked by their respective but competing attempt to draw the attention of the Canadian state to their particular identity claims. In recent years, this has led to a highly conflictual dynamic which considerably strains any hope of social and cultural coexistence (Salée 1995, abstract).

This political divide has contributed to Quebec's distorted and biased perception of indigenous communities in northern Quebec, and of the territory as a whole.

Historically, Quebec authors have favoured exotic interpretations of the North, often portraying the region as not only mythical, but also sacred, primordial, and transcendental. "Dans plusieurs oeuvres, nous retrouvons le terme 'au-delà' pour designer la frontière qui sépare le Sud d'un Nord marqué par l'inconnu, l'absolu, et parfois même

la transcendance" (Chartier 2015, 3). Literary scholar Nelly Duvicq has explored representations of the North in Quebec literature and how they are traversed by the sacred and the divine. Firstly, due to the North's vast territory and scattered inhabitants, the idea of borders, limits, and distances take on a particular resonance in poetry and literature. "Les distances disparaissent, la réalité géographique avec elles, et le Nord devient un espace mythique. Riche de représentations, il appartient à la fois au réel et à l'image" (Duvicq 2012, 42). Furthermore, in many cultures, the desert is a sacred landscape, a liminal space for initiatory journeys or conversations with the divine. The Quebec North is a boreal desert, immense and unvarying and deceptively infinite. "Dans de nombreuses traditions, le Nord est considéré comme la maison des dieux, et devient dès lors la direction où l'idée du sacré est la plus accomplie" (Duvicq 2012, 41).

However, in recent years, Quebec contemporary narratives have attempted to break away from exotic interpretations of the North, to "map a geography of resistance" (Borella 2009, 133) against the common discourse and challenge pre-existing notions of the territory and its indigenous communities. According to literary scholar Michel Nareau, several Quebec authors have attempted to transform and open up our idea of the North by conveying plurality and blurred borders as opposed to reaffirming the boundaries imposed by colonization and land registration. "Plusieurs écrivains québécois contemporains utilisent, afin d'inscrire le Nord dans leurs oeuvres, des stratégies aptes à transformer l'imaginaire nordique en le confrontant au territoire referential" (Nareau 2004, 42). By confronting the myth of the North, these narratives form a counter-discourse – "un contre-discours qui agit comme une prise de position politique," (Chartier 2015, 3).

Literary studies have suggested that this political shift in Quebec literature reflects the province's changing mindset regarding the North and its indigenous communities, and that the territory has come to have a different connotation in French Quebec compared to the rest of the country. Chartier has argued that the North is becoming a symbol of shared experience and united identity in Quebec, one that encompasses all languages and cultures.

> Pour le Québec, la considération du Nord apparaît moins comme la nécessité de se distinguer par rapport aux autres cultures que celle de définir un nouveau symbole identitaire rassembleur dans lequel pourraient se réconcilier Inuit, Autochtones, majorité de langue française et immigrants, qui voient dans l'expérience du froid, de la neige et de l'hiver le symbole d'une épreuve et d'une expérience collectives (Chartier 2004, 12).

Undeniably, Quebec's perception of the North and its communities remains steeped in colonization and cultural appropriation, but contemporary literature suggests that authors are becoming aware of such biases and working against them, "normalizing and moving away from exotic interpretations" (Borella 2009, 133). Regardless of writers' different perceptions and individual biases, the North continues to be a fundamental part of Quebec identity. "Positif ou négatif, le Nord est, pour la littérature québécoise, un déclencheur identitaire" (Duvicq 2012, 14).

The three poets I chose to translate each have their own understanding of the region, their very own imagined North. The territory they depict is influenced by their age, ethnicity, and gender, as well as their different social, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. While their opinions and beliefs are not explicitly described, each poem is infused with emotion, meaning, and music, elements that paint a portrait of the landscape and reveal the author's point of view. In their work, sound inarguably plays a crucial role.

1.2 The Silent North

According to Alain Corbin's research on sensory experiences, sound can infuse a particular landscape with emotions, meanings, and aesthetics, creating what he calls the auditory landscape.

> If one can agree that landscape is a way of analyzing space, of loading it with meaning and emotions, and of making it available for aesthetic appreciation, the landscape defined by various kinds of sound fits this definition particularly well. […] The auditory landscape, the elaboration of collective and territorial identities, the emotions aroused by the environment and the modes of construction of the individual personality all intersect (Corbin 1998, xii-xiii).

Following Corbin's theory, the North can be perceived as having its own auditory landscape. Furthermore, literary scholars have argued that poetry, more than any other kind of literature, creates a subjective and imagined landscape through sound. This sonic experience is at once vocal and mental, literal and metaphorical, and adds layers of meaning to the poem itself. "The poet's eye is endowed with a freedom to observe and record sensations in addition to those that make up the concrete landscape" (Yeung 2011, 209). Thus, poets, more than any other kind of writer, bring their own perceptions, personal experiences, and biases to their work. "This freedom of vision and voice […] produces a blurring between landscape and voice that the reader of the poem must subsequently negotiate" (Yeung 2011, 209). When writing or translating representations of the North, however, the importance of sound in poetry becomes strangely problematic; in Western literature, the northern landscape is one primarily associated with silence.

What is a silent space? Many would say it is one devoid of any sound. And yet, absolute silence does not exist in the natural world. "Le bruissement du monde ne s'arrête jamais" (Le Breton 1999, 12). Leaves rustle, footsteps echo, a single dog howls in the distance. Even our bodies make subtle sounds as we live and move through the world.

“Le silence finalement, au sens littéral, n’existe ni dans l’homme ni dans la nature. Tout milieu résonne de manifestations sonores particulières mêmes si elles sont espacées, ténues, étouffées, lointaines, à la limite de l’audible” (Le Breton 1999, 11).

Undeniably, we all experience impressions of silence. But rather than a complete and utter absence of sound, these are subjective interpretations of our surroundings, of heightened listening when sound dims to a barely audible decibel. Some spaces evoke silence more than others: a dark street at midnight; an empty church; an open field blanketed with snow. In such spaces, silence becomes deeply intertwined with the physical realm. They evoke feelings of peace and tranquility, and are often associated with the divine and the sacred. “Le silence sonne comme la signature d’un lieu, substance presque tangible dont la présence hante l’espace et s’impose constamment à l’attention” (Le Breton 1999, 13).

In Western literature, the North has long been considered an inherently silent space. Like other desert landscapes, northern regions are often associated with emptiness and isolation. The vast, unbroken territory, frigid weather, and chromatic monotony of the boreal desert all reflect an absence of sound. “L’absolu du silence, l’immensité et l’uniformité des paysages dans lequel il s’étend, lui accordent un caractère surnaturel, souvent évoqué par les explorateurs et romanciers” (Chartier 2013, 26). Silence is also a common characteristic of the sacred, and as previously mentioned, Western literary representations of the North often portray the desert territory as transcendental and divine. “Le silence du désert aride ou du désert arctique est un élément constitutif de l’imaginaire qu’il suscite et participe à la manifestation du sacré” (Duvicq 2012, 50).

Chartier has studied various representations of the North and the cold in contemporary Quebec literature, and has discussed the interplay of sound and silence in great detail. He points out that certain physical characteristics of the northern landscape contribute to the impression of silence in Western literature and symbolize an absence of sound. For example, snow is an integral part of the North and has a direct effect on the landscape, as it absorbs, blankets, and muffles sound. “Les lieux enneigés sont caractérisés par le silence et appellent à la contemplation” (Duvicq 2012, 51). After a heavy snowfall, the ground is completely white, blending with the cloudy sky and creating the illusion of pure, limitless space. While the silence of snow is often depicted as peaceful and calming, the muffling of sounds can also be perceived as stifling and oppressive. “Le silence qu’elle induit finit par devenir oppressant, puisque la neige absorbe en elle toutes le sonorités, étouffant les voix et les cris” (Chartier 2013, 29).

Furthermore, the North is often depicted as empty, isolated, and devoid of human life, all of which contribute to the impression of silence. However, in reality the territory is far from empty. Various indigenous peoples live all over northern Quebec, including Cree, Inuit, Innu, and Métis communities, and the description of the North as “empty” is rooted in Western perceptions and representations of the region – “un lieu défini par la culture occidentale comme celui d’une absence humaine” (Chartier 2013, 25). Chartier has also suggested that the indigenous oral tradition has contributed to our perception of the North as silent. He states that the first European settlers were fascinated above all by the silence of the Amerindian and Inuit peoples. “Le mutisme serait l’une des caractéristiques des Amérindiens et des Inuits, et ces derniers auraient appris à s’en servir pour se protéger” (Chartier 2013, 28). He points out that, in various narratives exploring

the Canadian North, silence is depicted by Europeans as mythical, unattainable, and unknown. “L’Occidental serait en sorte un *analphabète du silence*, incapable d’en saisir la signification et la richesse” (Chartier 2013, 28). Thus, while the northern landscape does have physical characteristics that evoke an absence of sound, Western-centric views of the North and its indigenous communities have largely contributed to the perception of the territory as silent.

When the North is explored in literature, its association with silence becomes problematic. Undeniably, the written word evokes speech sounds. Poetry in particular plays with the intrinsic rhythm and musicality of language, elements that fundamentally oppose the silence of the North.

> Lorsqu’elle se voit intégrée à la narration, la musicalité littéraire du monde froid pose problème: elle surgit dans un imaginaire où est valorisé non la sonorité, mais le silence, lui-même lié aux signes de l’étendue de l’espace, de l’immobilité et de l’uniformité chromatique (Chartier 2013, 25).

Creating silence through sound may seem like a paradox, but in truth, one cannot exist without the other, just as light cannot exist without darkness. In his research, Chartier has explored the literary techniques used to convey the auditory landscape of the North and has found that, in many cases, authors use sound to highlight and contrast the silence of the territory, like a stroke of black paint against a backdrop of white. “La ‘musicalité’ du Nord et de l’hiver […] apparaît comme un contre-discours: elle devient bruit, fracas et grincement dans l’univers horizontal du silence” (Chartier 2013, 25). This amplification of sound creates a sense of discordance, where noise disrupts the landscape’s peace and tranquility. “Le silence nordique multiplie, étend et dramatise le moindre bruit” (Chartier 2013, 29). Thus, by emphasizing certain sounds, the author effectively communicates silence to the reader.

Another technique used in literary representations of the North is creating the illusion of an echo. Literary scholar Julie Gagné has explored the sounds of the North in two contemporary Quebec plays, focusing on how the authors evoke silence through cyclical repetitions of dialogue. Echoes are an intrinsic part of the northern landscape; sound bounces and reverberates across the snowy desert, amplified by the vast territory and immense structures of ice. "Cette ritournelle perpétuelle rendue possible grâce à ce phénomène de réverbération devient mémoire des égarés et hante éternellement le silence paisible du Nord" (Gagné 2013, 38). An echo is the ghost of a sound, an illusion of something that has already ceased and faded. Echoes depend on silence to exist, and as such, the use of repetition and sound patterns is an extremely effective way of communicating silence, as well as transcendence, immortality, and infinity. "L'écho devient lieu de mémoire. Il rappelle au Nord ses morts et apparaît comme les restes audibles d'une présence humaine" (Gagné 2013, 38).

Finally, researchers such as Gagné and Chartier have shown that music can be used to conjure silence in literature pertaining to the North. "De manière générale, la nature nordique inspire les écrivains qui la décrivent en termes musicaux" (Chartier 2013, 27). While snow absorbs and muffles sound, elements like wind, water, and ice are often sources of noise, and can be described in musical terms to convey a silence that is joyful and transcendental, furthering the idea that the North is a sacred, liminal space. The pulse of the wind, the sharp collision of glaciers, and the trickle of melting icicles become instruments in a symphony.

> Le froid du grand silence à perte de vue qui grince, craque, ricane, hurle dans la nuit des loups, et on croirait entendre une étrange symphonie, une musique irréelle, dodécaphonique, en stéréophonie dont les sons viendraient de partout, se rapprochant à toute allure, s'éloignant comme des inquiétudes, fuyant jusqu'à

> perte de vue, provenant de partout, d'ailleurs, de plus loin, de tous les vents de la rose (Perrault 1999, 248).

Thus, literary representations of the North often use sound to communicate silence to the reader. Through emphasis, repetition, and musicality, authors are able to convey a landscape that is steeped in silence. In translation, these texts give rise to certain problems. How does a translator approach literature so dependent on the author's use of sound?

When translating poetry, translators are invariably faced with certain decisions. Should the meaning of the ST be given priority, even if it disrupts the flow of language? Should sound take precedence over sense? Linguistic rules, including syntax, phonetics, and prosody, vary from one language to the next. These rules contribute to the production and perception of speech sounds and give each language an individual musicality. Thus, the auditory features of the ST cannot be wholly preserved in translation without fundamentally disrupting structural elements of the target text (TT), thereby forcing a compromise solution. Regardless of the translator's approach, the overemphasis of one element will necessarily be detrimental to another.

In the works of Morisset, Smith Gagnon, and Fontaine, sound comes into play in various ways. Firstly, all three authors use language's natural musicality with purpose and intention, adopting poetic techniques such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and metre. However, many musical elements occur incidentally in their work, and are essentially the by-product of French linguistic constraints. These include the positioning of stress, the number of syllables in words and phrases, and the ordering of words. In brief, the musicality of all three works was both a conscious writing decision and an unconscious occurrence of language.

In my thesis, my goal was to capture the three poets' distinct perceptions of northern Quebec – in other words, their imagined Norths – by prioritizing their different auditory landscapes. As I translated each poem, I focused on interpreting and re-creating their musicality, paying specific attention to the interplay between sound and silence. Furthermore, I strove to minimize the disruption of meaning and did my utmost to remain faithful to the authors' original ideas, themes, and intentions. To guide my translations, I drew from research in translation studies, focusing primarily on authors who explore poetics, sound, and rhythm.

1.3 The Auditory Landscape of the North

The acoustic features of speech and the mental concepts they represent have long been discussed in the fields of linguistics and translation studies. One of the most fundamental and influential works in recent history has been Henri Meschonnic's propositions for a poetics in translation, an essay published in 1973 that explored pre-existing notions of language and challenged Ferdinand de Saussure's science of signs, otherwise known as his theory of semiology/semiotics. Saussure was interested in how meaning is constructed; he perceived language as a signifying system that creates, rather than expresses, meaning. In semiotics, the smallest unit of language is the sign. "According to Saussure, the sign is formed from the union of the signifier (the sound-image) and the signified (the concept it represents)".[1] Simply put, the word and its signified concept form the basic unit of language.

In his essay on the poetics of translation, Meschonnic opposes Saussure's binary

[1] Brown University course outline. "Ferdinand de Saussure: *On Signifying*". http://cdli.ucla.edu/staff/englund/m20/saussure2.pdf

view of the signifier and signified, arguing that "basing the conception of language on the sign represents an obstacle to the awareness of certain elements of human life, especially to a full understanding of what language or art do" (Pajevic 2011, 304). According to Meschonnic, only semantics considers the text in its continuum; the perspective of semiotics is discontinuous and fails to see the entire work. Instead, he proposes a theory of poetics, a new way of thinking about and translating language. "The reply of poetics is that the unit of language is not the word, and can thus not be word meaning. […] The unit is discourse. The system of discourse" (Pym 2003, 2). In this alternative perspective, language is not considered a collection of single words strung together; rather, it is "something continuous – rhythm, prosody" (Pym 2003, 2). It is important to note that, in Meschonnic's terminology, rhythm does not refer to regularity or measure, but to the flow of language in movement. "Meschonnic defines rhythm as the moment of discourse. Each enunciation is unique; the repetition of an enunciation is another enunciation. Rhythm is consequently what reigns over speech" (Pajevic 2011, 310). Meschonnic's concepts of rhythm and continuum are fundamental to his theory of poetics; they allow us to consider language in its entirety, as discourse, as opposed to its individual parts.

> The semantic meaning is not the result of a combination of semiotic signs; on the contrary, it is considered globally, even though its meaning may be divided into particular 'signs' and their combination (Pajevic 2011, 306-307).

Interestingly, in practice, Meschonnic advocated for literal, word-for-word translation, often using "extreme literalism to create foreignness" (Lederer 2003, 9). He was highly critical of annexation, which he defined as "the illusion of what is natural […] excluding differences of culture, of period, of linguistic structure" (Lederer 2003, 9). In my translations, however, my goal was in fact annexation. I wanted to recreate the

meaning and musicality of the source text to create poems that sounded and felt natural in English. While my translation objective conflicted with Meshonnic's literalism, his poetics of translation – specifically his ideas about rhythm, discourse, and the global meaning of the text – were instrumental in guiding my perspective of language.

As I translated the selected poems by Jean Morisset, Maude Smith Gagnon, and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine, I tried to approach each poem as a complete and continuous work rather than a collection of separate words and phrases. By focusing on understanding and conveying the poem's semantics – the meaning of the whole – I was able to better convey the poets' general ideas and intentions without getting bogged down by their specific words and phrases. Furthermore, I considered the musicality of each poem as complete and continuous. Thus, instead of translating a series of discontinuous auditory features, I translated the general sense of sound and music captured in the ST. Given that my principal goal during translation was to communicate the poets' auditory landscapes and their distinct perception of the North, Meschonnic's poetics of translation was fundamental in shaping my translation approach.

Another researcher whose work has explored the poetics of translation is Barbara Folkart. In her book, *Second Finding: A Poetics of Translation*, she criticizes foreignization, a translation approach that maintains the surface of the ST and its semiotic underpinnings. "True admiration for the source text, true openness to otherness, involves recognizing the full of the text" (Folkart 2007, 7). Although Folkart's criticism of foreignization clearly challenges Meschonnic's extreme literalism, their views on language occasionally overlap. Much like Meschonnic, Folkart believes that the entire message of the ST should be considered during translation, not simply the individual

segments. In her words, “what counts is the signal, not the carrier wave” (Folkart 2007, 7). Ultimately, she is interested in “the full of the text, the proactive pulsions and forces that drive it into being” (Folkart 2007, 13). She proposes an active, writerly approach to translation, one that allows the translator to assume the role of a writer and poet, instead of a mere transmitter of the ST. According to Folkart, the ideal translator will re-enact rather than replicate the source language. Her principal goal in translation is to create – “to *write* a target-language poem, as opposed to *repeating* the source-language poem” (Folkart 2007, 17).

In my thesis, I drew heavily from Folkart’s poetics of translation, both to guide my overall approach and to justify specific linguistic decisions. In particular, I adopted a writerly approach to translation as defined by Folkart. I focused on understanding the ST in its entirety and took creative liberties with its individual segments to effectively convey its essential sense and sound. Drawing from my own literary and poetic sensibilities, I did my best to write poems that were not mere replications of the ST, but successful rewritings of the poets’ original work. In this way, I was able to capture the poets’ musicality and also minimize the distortion of meaning during translation.

While Meschonnic and Folkart’s theories of poetics were instrumental in guiding my perspective of language and translation, I also found it necessary to consider practical and applied sources to better understand the complex acoustic features of human speech. In particular, I drew from Ryan Michael Fraser’s 2007 doctoral thesis, “Sound Translation: Poetic and Cinematic Practice”, in which he argues for the importance of considering vocal sound patterns during translation. Inspired by Alain Corbin’s notion of auditory landscapes, Fraser considers how translators deal with the sonic dimensions of

the ST and explores the different techniques translators use to create sound vocal affinities between texts. He states that, among translators, the general practice is to prioritize meaning, and that vocal sound patterns are virtually always considered unessential. “They are deemed expendable, and are summarily transformed for the purpose of constructing semantic affinities between source and target texts” (Fraser 2007, iv). Instead, Fraser aims to develop a theoretical framework of sound translation. He explores the complex and multilayered features of vocal sounds, and discusses the marginal translation practices that do attempt to recreate the sound patterns of the ST.

Fraser’s work was crucial in broadening my understanding of speech sounds and the subtle effects they have on the reader. As a native speaker of both English and French, I am often unconscious of the acoustic features that characterize and differentiate both languages. Following Fraser’s in-depth analysis of vocal sounds, I developed a new awareness of each language’s sonic structure, and gained a fuller understanding of how they contribute to the creation of prosody and rhythm. Furthermore, I was able to apply this knowledge during translation, where Fraser’s notions of pulse, phrase, and melody were essential in the understanding and translation of all three poets.

In brief, my translation of Jean Morisset, Maude Smith Gagnon, and Natasha Kanapé Fontaine was guided and shaped by this collection of researchers and their fundamental works in translation studies. Drawing from their different theories and perspectives, I approached each poem as discourse, and consequently considered the sound and sense of the ST as complete and continuous. Furthermore, following Folkart’s arguments, I attempted to translate as a writer and take creative liberties to best communicate the ST. Finally, drawing from Fraser’s dissertation on sound translation, I

broadened my knowledge of vocal sound patterns and their underlying structure. This information not only guided my decisions during translation, but also allowed me to gain new awareness of the acoustic features of the French and English languages.

Jean Morisset and his work

Jean Morisset is a distinguished geographer, essayist, and poet, as well as a professor of geography at the Université du Québec à Montréal. He has published more than a dozen non-fiction texts, travel narratives, and poetry collections since 1977, many of which explore the landscape and communities of Northern Canada. He is well known for his work with indigenous populations and has spent the last 30 years exploring the idea of identity and culture in North and South America. His interest in colonialism, cultural memory, and the indigenous experience are central themes in his work and are particularly significant in his poetry collection *Chants Polaires*.

Morisset's understanding of the North is at once foreign and familiar. He was born in Saint-Michel-de-Bellechasse, Quebec, where his father worked as a seaman and navigator on the Saint-Lawrence River. Morisset first experienced the Arctic in the 1960s, when he worked for the Canadian Coast Guard. Initially a seaman on the icebreakers of Nord-du-Québec, he then traveled across the Northwest Territories as part of the Area Economic Surveys, a large-scale research project and data collection expedition. During this time, Morisset saw nearly the entirety of Northern Canada, from Nunavut to the Mackenzie River, from Quebec to Newfoundland. Traveling by boat, by plane, and sometimes on foot, Morisset developed a comfortable familiarity with the northern region and its communities. He worked with several indigenous associations in the Yukon, Newfoundland, and Quebec, and actively participated in environmental impact studies on hydroelectric power projects in the North. These experiences inspired much of his early work, including his lengthy essay on Canadian history, *L'identité ursupée*. Morisset spent the next decade in South America, but later returned to the North

in the late 1990s, spending time in Greenland and Nunavut. He collaborated with documentary filmmakers, artists, and writers on several projects exploring the North, Canadian history, and the re-appropriation of indigenous memory and oral history.[2]

In 2002, Morisset published *Chants Polaires,* a large-format collection of photography and poetry based on his travels in Northern Canada. Many of his poems focus on the landscape itself, describing glaciers and icebergs and drifting ice floes, while others portray the indigenous people he encountered and their way of life. Literary scholars have since examined Morisset's work in detail, focusing on his depiction of the landscape, his interpretation of the region and its people, and his interesting use of language.

Like many other Western male travelers before him, Morisset describes the North as a fascinating unknown territory, one that recedes ever further the closer he comes to it. His poems convey a landscape that is spiritual, mythical, and otherworldly. Duvicq has described the poetry in *Chants Polaires* as "sacré païen", a term she defines as a combination of two feelings or intellectual attitudes: "l'amour et la crainte, et comme une expérience du surhumain ou du surréel" (Duvicq 2012, 41). As previously stated, the Nordic desert can be perceived as a sacred landscape, a liminal space where the mythical and the ordinary meet and overlap. In *Chants Polaires*, Morisset perceives the North as both primordial and eternal, and each poem reflects his quest for divine understanding, "une recherche de l'absolu" (Duvicq 2012, 45). However, the absolute can never be reached or experienced, and Morisset's feelings of wonder, joy, and awe are inevitably tinged with sadness. "Le Nord se transforme en un espace mélancolique de l'origine

2 Serveur d'informations de l'institut international de géopoétique. "Jean Morisset". http://www.geopoetique.net/archipel_fr/heron/publications/media/Morisset-bio-biblio-2006.pdf

perdue" (Duvicq 2012, 42).

Morisset conveys his perception of the North through his use of language, sound, and poetic form. Firstly, his vocabulary is extremely elevated and creates a feeling of lofty transcendence. He often personifies elements of the North, such as icebergs and glaciers, and uses adjectives that evoke the religious or the divine. Furthermore, his use of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition create musical patterns akin to hymns or ancestral incantations (Duvicq 2012, 56). While the collection's musicality evokes celebration, dance, and song, the repetition of certain sounds and phrases also creates the illusion of an echo, thus highlighting the landscape's wide-open space, vast emptiness, and paradoxically, the absence of sound. According to scholar Julie Gagné, "la vastitude transparaît dans l'infinitude de l'écho" (Gagné 2013, 40).

Silence is a recurring theme in Morisset's poetry, and an inherent characteristic of the sacred. At times the silence of Morisset's North is profound, peaceful, and absolute, one Chartier has described as "une quiétude solennelle" (Chartier 2013, 26) while others depict a silence that is stifling and oppressive (Chartier 2013, 31). In such poems, silence is associated with violence, while sound conveys peace and tranquility. According to Chartier, this is a common characteristic of the North in Quebec literature: "Dans la neige hivernale, dans la forêt enneigée, dans le froid, le silence paraît prescrit à l'homme au moyen de ce qu'on peut appeler une éthique du silence, qui peut toutefois devenir une imposition qui le violente parfois" (Chartier 2013, 31).

In all four poems selected for translation, silence is undeniably the overarching theme. The word "silence" is used explicitly throughout each work, and impressions of stillness, meditation, and transcendence are often the main focus. To evoke silence in his

poetry, Morisset chooses to emphasize the sounds of the landscape to highlight and contrast the absence of sound. These include the crack of breaking icebergs, the howling wind, and the distant song of a bird, among others. His use of lengthy sentences, verbose language, rhyme, and repetition ultimately result in poems that feel brash and cacophonic – and yet each one centres on the idea of silence. "Le silence […] ne se révèle que lorsqu'il est brisé par un bruit, un cri, une voix, une musique" (Chartier 2013, 26). In Morisset's *Chants Polaires*, sound and silence work together to transform the North into a sacred, elevated, and mythical landscape.

Translations and comments

Four poems from Morisset's *Chants Polaires* were translated into English. The translation of each poem is followed by a commentary in two parts. Firstly, I summarize the subject of the poem and analyse the primary themes and ideas. Secondly, I present the main difficulties encountered during my translation and justify my decisions.

1. violence of howling silence

1.1 Translation

violence
of howling silence on your heels
as you throw your anguish to the northern sky
and implore the distant fleet of geese
to take you to the farthest reach
and drop you before all migration

violence
of absolute silence of the primordial sweetness
a haunting crystalline caress
distress from excess jubilance
a yield from fields of ripened mist
on the hips of dawn's arrogance

violence
of reassuring silence of assimilation
when you interrupt all resistance
and offer the gods your complete abdication
wrapped in a ribbon of acquiescence
showing nothing except your reluctance

silence
absolute violence of the primordial word
seeking a path that recuses itself
from all the languages that refuse it
beneath the reverberation of bursting words
in a qamutiik sliding to madness

and the painless passage
of your subconscious on the ice
in an incessant suspended moment
of utter dazzlement
at the beauty of a frazil wreath
landing on the melting floe
as it continues its slow blind way
beneath the avid gaze of *mille*-icicle confessions
carried by the cold's abrasive expectations
to the ultimate paradise of the hunt overtaken

to a place where silence has dissolved all violence
in the gondola of the last iceberg

1.2 Comments

1.2.1 Analysis

In this poem, silence is the central idea around which the divine qualities of the northern landscape are organized. Morisset explores how the monotonic silence of the North can feel brutal and aggressive, repressing any utterance, sound, or song. Furthermore, Morisset's poem portrays silence as something sacred and primordial, evidence of a time before human language or thought. The lack of sound is depicted as a spiritual experience and we are left with a feeling of transcendence and awakening. Finally, the poem turns in the final verse, where silence is said to dissolve all violence. The previous feeling of repression is diffused and peace returns to the landscape.

1.2.2 Translation difficulties

Given that my primary goal in translation was to preserve Morisset's auditory landscape, the main difficulty encountered was mirroring the poem's various sonic qualities while minimizing the disruption of meaning. Firstly, the poem is cyclical and contains many repetitions at the syllabic, word, and phrasal levels. These repetitions are essential elements of the poem's overall sound. Most importantly, *violence du silence* occurs at the beginning of every stanza, acting as a refrain and anchor point. Due to linguistic constraints, I realized I could not preserve the phrase as a unit without producing a French-like syntax, thereby foreignizing the poem. According to translation scholar Lawrence Venuti, "foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language" (Venuti 1995, 20). While foreignization can be effective in certain contexts, it ultimately involves

"deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience" (Venuti 1995, 20). Since my aim was to preserve Morisset's musicality, the poem needed to flow naturally in English. I therefore opted to create a new refrain by placing every adjective – *howling*, *absolute*, etc. – before the subject, *silence*. I was thus able to mimic the original echo without disrupting the English syntax.

Secondly, the poem is interspersed with rhymes and sound repetitions. Following Folkart's approach to translation and her notion of "the poem as unit of invention" (Folkart 2007, 123), I envisioned my translation as "invention, rather than replication" (Folkart 2007, 122). In order to recreate Morisset's musicality, I attempted to recreate his sonic patterns wherever possible, which sometimes involved a disruption of meaning. For example, in the second stanza, *en jactance* became *arrogance*, although a closer translation of the French would have been "in vainglory."[3] Similar shifts in meaning occurred throughout the translation. When I could not replicate the exact position of the source text's rhymes, I produced new ones to replace those lost in translation. In the first stanza, in order to capture the ship imagery in *voilier d'outardes*, I translated *voilier* as *fleet*, forming an imperfect rhyme with *geese* and *reach*. According to Folkart, liberties taken at the semantic level "become problematic only if they weaken the aesthetic integrity of the English texts" (Folkart 2007, 124). While the precise meaning of certain words and phrases was somewhat altered during translation, these changes contributed to the poem's flow and feeling, and allowed me to mimic the source text's auditory landscape.

3 *Dictionnaire bilingue français-anglais Larousse en ligne*, s.v. "jactance," accessed January 27, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/jactance/.

The fifth stanza was particularly difficult to translate due to its complex web of imagery and sound. Namely, I struggled to maintain the effortless flow of the first four lines, where voiceless fricatives cluster and blend together. I translated *éblouissement absolu* as *utter dazzlement*, creating a new English word to capture the imagery of the French. Musically, the trochaic metre has a strong beat, and the sounds echo nicely with *frazil wreath*. French neologisms are scattered throughout *Chants Polaires*, in the form of portmanteaus, gallicized English words, and hyphenated compounds such as *mille-glaçons*. Consequently, the insertion of *dazzlement* seemed altogether suitable and fitting with Morisset's voice and style. In Folkart's words, "what matters is that the end product of the translation process be a poem whose formal features are utterly appropriate to its imagery and feeling" (Folkart 2007, 124).

In the fifth stanza, I stumbled on Morisset's deceptively simple compound, *mille-glaçons*. In order to preserve the striking imagery and echo the line's syllable count, I chose *mille-icicles*, with *mille* in italics to highlight the shift in language. By creating a bilingual compound instead of translating the French directly as *thousand-icicles*, I was able to recreate the smooth pacing and phonetic repetition. English readers will have no trouble interpreting the line, as it calls to mind the borrowed French word *mille-feuille*. Moreover, I felt compelled to preserve an element of the French in my translation, given Morisset's use of gallicized English words throughout *Chants Polaires*.

2. they were wet words

2.1 Translation

they were wet words
that he was able to preserve
on the weathered hide of a caribou
lying in the mud-bog bottom of an igloo
beneath the smell of decomposted earth

they were damp words
that he refused to let dry
fearing they would evanesce
beneath the chuckling fat
that had sprouted them all

ah ha ah ya ya – ya ya ha ah ha

they were snow-bud words
half-poppies half-palms half-pelisses
that were not yet named
and that wandered mutely
in the minds of angagoks

they were nymphal words
that abruptly walked off
to play with pup-wolves
on the tundra of polished rock
in the cove of chuckling glaciers

ya ya ha ah ha – ah ha ah ya ya

they were free words without
translation
that escaped the black ravennes
and dictionary birds of prey

one day perhaps some hunter-poet
with pointed ivory
will try to harpoon this frosted perfume
or this reflected elegance
and blend them with the flavour of silence

I hope that he will follow the long road
of scarlet seasons
beneath the descent of Antarctic-terns

there are words that cannot survive
unless they refuse to be spoken

I leave you with one or two to remember
aya aya aya ada ada nada
catch them if you can…

2.2 Comments

2.2.1 Analysis

In the present poem, Morisset focuses on the North as primordial, eternal, and silent. In Duvicq's words, "le Nord le renvoie à cette *nostalgie des origines*" (Duvicq 2012, 57). At the core of his work is the idea of a lost, possibly indigenous oral language. This sacred and ethereal language is portrayed as a paradox; it cannot be written, spoken aloud, defined, or translated, and is rooted in Morisset's vivid descriptions of the ever-silent North. The poem ends with a hope for silence, for the words to not be captured or spoken. The poem is interspersed with Inuit chants, and these call to mind the many endangered or extinct indigenous oral languages of northern Quebec. Finally, the interplay between French, English, and Inuit sounds add a layer of musicality to the piece.

2.2.2 Translation difficulties

Much like Morisset's *violence of howling silence*, this piece is structured around sonic cycles and rhythmic patterns. Many words, sounds, and phrases are recurring and their repetition necessarily creates music and rhythm. During translation, I strove to recreate or emulate these sonic patterns whenever possible. For example, in the first two stanzas the second and fifth lines rhyme, creating a predictable structure. I took liberties with the literal meaning of certain words and translated *rescaper* as *preserve*, creating a true

rhyme with *words* and a slant rhyme with *earth*. Similarly, in the fourth stanza, Morisset rhymes the second and fourth lines. To mimic his structure, I translated *déguerpi* as *walked off*, modifying the source text's meaning but keeping close with the line's imagery.

Secondly, two gallicized English words appear in Morisset's work and were particularly difficult to translate: *ravennes* [ravens] and *bouldeurs* [boulders]. The phenomenon of gallicized foreign words has been observed in the works of other Quebec authors such as Jacques Ferron, and has been described by Richard Patry as "l'occurrence de formes lexicales principalement de langue anglaise dont la graphie a été francisée par l'auteur" (Patry 2001, 450). Patry explains that, while gallicized English words are brought closer to the French language through their spelling, their Englishness is paradoxically emphasized because of it. "L'appropriation ne francise pas le terme et, d'une certaine façon, le maquillage de surface que constitue cette manipulation de la graphie signale encore plus l'étrangeté du mot aux yeux du lecteur que le terme anglais lui-même" (Patry 2001, 452).

Focusing on Ferron's poetry, Patry discusses the resistance these words raise in terms of translatability and explores the principal strategies used to integrate them into the English language. By far the most popular approach has been to replace a gallicized word like *ravennes* with its English counterpart, *ravens*. While the meaning is preserved, the bilingual intricacy of the source text is lost. Furthermore, the French sounds cannot be replicated. Given that my priority was to recreate Morisset's musicality, I could not justify complete integration into English. Instead, I opted to keep the gallicized words intact, as several other translators did when translating Ferron (Patry 2001, 458). Patry

points out several consequences to this strategy, namely, that a monolingual English reader might be confused or thrown off by the French spelling. However, in this case, *ravennes* and *bouldeurs* are close relatives of their English equivalents and should be easily understood by English readers. What's more, the juxtaposition of different language sounds – English, French, and Inuit – is a central part of Morisset's collection.

Morisset introduces two other neologisms in his poem: *décomposté* and *puppé.* The first is a straightforward compound of *composter* and *décomposer*, one that was easily translated as *decomposted*. The second, however, was more problematic. I interpreted *puppé* as an adjective derived from *pupe*. Although *larval* would have captured the meaning of the source text, it clashed with the imagery in *abruptly walked off*. In poetry, "musicality and imagery interact to construct and convey the poem's vision" (Folkart 2007, 62). Both were intertwined and integral to the stanza. I eventually chose *nymphal* because it evokes the immature form of a pupa, and because the imagery of a nymph works better with the verb *walk.* The sound of *nymphal* was also infinitely more pleasing than *larval*, and better conveyed the lightness of *puppé*.

3. glacier-wild bouldeur-clawing

3.1 Translation

glacier-wild bouldeur-clawing
rockface-bristling iceberg-bucking

they move towards each other
threatening, jugular protruding
    neck in rictus
    cheekbone arched
    backbone bucking
    nostrils foaming
    panache pluming

but then suddenly
    light-caresses
    breeze-murmurs
    snow-lulls
    sun-friezes
    silence-smiles
step out in cadence

they calm their fractal
without forethought
they offer their paws
without foresight

peace is restored
among the musky bulls
and the large oumigmaks
that escaped the seracs

there will be no
battle this morning

3.2 Comments

3.2.1 Analysis

In this poem, Morisset paints a vibrant picture of a glacier slowly gliding towards a boulder, weaving an elaborate extended metaphor of animals preparing for battle. Once again, noise is used to highlight the lack of sound and convey a silent, violent landscape.

The glacier is described as aggressive and hostile, and the image calls to mind sharp noises and vicious battle sounds. Consequently, the natural cracks and groans of the glacier as it moves through the water are elevated and heightened, and the silence of the landscape is emphasized. As the poem ends, the moment passes, and the glacier does not collide with the boulder. There is sunlight, gentle wind, silence, and peace.

3.2.2 Difficulties

According to Folkart, "form, in any poem worthy of the name, is not only a part of the meaning, but itself inevitably engenders meaning" (Folkart 2007, 124). In this poem, form is particularly significant, working in tandem with imagery and sound to create a vivid auditory landscape that is at once silent and cacophonic. The short lines, brief syllables, blank spaces, and stacked compounds all convey rhythm and dance-like movement, while rhymes and repeated sounds convey hostile clamour followed by gentle silence. I struggled to preserve the auditory features of the poem while staying as close as possible to the source text imagery and structure.

Firstly, Morisset's right-justified lines are fundamental to the poem and were especially important to recreate, both in terms of form and imagery. For example, in the second stanza, the listed descriptions are sharp and aggressive, a quick staccato of stop consonants and brief syllables. I therefore opted for words that evoked the same strength, such as *neck* for *nuque, backbone* for *occiput*, and *cheekbone* for *pommette*. While there was inarguably a shift in meaning, the core image of wild animals preparing for battle was recreated successfully. In other words, "what matters is that the end product of the translation process be a poem whose formal features are utterly appropriate to its imagery

and feeling" (Folkart 2007, 124). The second stanza shifts considerably in tone, and Morisset's sound and structure convey this change as well. Compounds create a gentle rolling cadence, while the words themselves are filled with soft fricatives and nasal consonants. During translation I tried to mimic this shift in sound. Luckily most words had English translations that were phonetically similar, such as *brise* and *breeze*. Others were less obvious, and I did my best to recreate their meaning and musicality. Thus, *accalmie* became *lull* and *cajole* became *caresses*. Despite the subtle difference in meaning, the auditory features and imagery of the source text were adequately conveyed.

In the fourth stanza, Morisset creates a parallel structure, where the last two lines mirror the first two. The lines are once again short and concise, and a sound repetition is created with *prévu* and *prédit*. Consequently, the passage contributes to the musicality of the poem. After much thought, I was able to mimic the parallel structure and sound repetition with the words *forethought* and *foresight.* The English terms capture the sounds, imagery, and feeling of the source text with minimal disruption in meaning.

Finally, following my decision in *they were wet words*, I chose to keep the gallicized English word *bouldeur* intact during translation. However, this second occurrence of gallicized English words brought up an interesting dilemma. In the present poem, *bouldeur* is the only gallicized word; it is a single anomaly and not a trend. I wondered if the preservation of *bouldeur* during translation might be distracting in this case, and leave the English reader confused or in Patry's words, "tout simplement dérouté" (Patry 2001, 458). However, following Folkart's theory of poetics of translation, I chose to approach Morisset's *Chants Polaires* as "the unit to be mapped over from source- to target-system" (Folkart 2007, 119). Thus, in my translation, I was of the

opinion that “the translator must deal with an organic whole, substructures and all” (Folkart 2007, 119). If I approach the poetry collection as my unit of translation, each poem is a thread in a much larger pattern. Similarly, *bouldeur* is no longer a distracting anomaly within a single poem; it is one of several occurrences of gallicized words in *Chants Polaires*. As Folkart states, the translator must treat every element of the unit “as strands texted into a weave” (Folkart 2007, 119).

4. and sometimes we vaguely remember

4.1 Translation

and sometimes
we vaguely remember
when winter engulfs the summer months
and the autumn primrose shouts its woes
on the sea-pole of shocks and tremors

and sometimes
we vaguely remember
through the seasons' deceptions
the vehement illuminations
or the wet-snow whitecaps
on the dream-mirage accordion
of the High-Arctic in germination

and sometimes
we vaguely remember
a long walk without intention
on the stern as it glides through the highest
tide of the universe
amidst moraines, bouldeurs, jostling ice
and other coprophagia of the glacier's intestines
the evapo-salting of frozen kelp
the calls of the head-cocking seagulls
and the cracked-bell croaks
of grave ravennes cloaked in misfortune
resting a moment their crests on
the breast of the shore
and questioning the being's palm
while facing the spotted seal's weathervane
sometimes we vaguely remember
that every country learns on their paws

and when the heart lets flow
some intermingled impulse
when any whiff of darkness subsides
in the distant country of alley-way night

while a human form
extracts itself from the Pre-Dorset
and from the petrified mirage of millenniums
to gently rest on the sharpened point
of the broken harpoon of a thousand derivations

without any explanation save the
shivering silence
beneath the white-mute sky
of the midnight galaxies'
too vast desires

4.2 Comments

4.2.1 Analysis

Here, much like in *they were wet words*, Morisset portrays the northern landscape as primordial, sacred, and infinitely silent. Descriptions of the frozen landscape and eternal winter communicate feelings of transcendence and melancholy, and evoke a long-lost history encased in ice. Morisset references Pre-Dorset culture, "the first occupation of arctic North American by Palaeoeskimos".[4] The Pre-Dorset people lived in the arctic from 2000-500 BCE and are believed to be related, culturally and biologically, to the Inuit. Morisset explores this part of our history and questions the memory of our origins. Through his vivid interplay of sound and imagery, he communicates a deep nostalgia for this mute and dream-like primordial world. Throughout the poem, the landscape is depicted as monochromatic, mystical, and fixed in time.

4.2.2 Difficulties

This fourth and final poem from Morisset's *Chants Polaires* was in some ways the most difficult to translate in terms of language, sound, and imagery. Firstly, Morisset's descriptions of the northern landscape are vivid and evocative, but they are also more abstract than in previous poems. Furthermore, several distinct images often appear together in dense clusters, especially in the crowded third stanza spanning seventeen

4 *The Canadian Encyclopaedia Online*, "Pre-Dorset culture", accessed January 27, 2017, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/pre-dorset-culture/.

lines. Consequently, Morisset's core ideas or intended emotions were not always clear to me. For example, juxtaposed imagery like *le moutonnement d'une giboulée / sur le rêve-mirage en accordéon* were almost absurd and filled my mind with pictures that did not necessarily flow together naturally. I therefore had to spend a lot of time examining and dissecting each individual image in order to recreate it effectively.

Once again, my goal was to mirror the poem's various sonic qualities while staying true to its original meaning. The poem has many internal rhymes and sound patterns that contribute to its subtle musicality, and I strove to mimic them as closely as possible. For example, in the first stanza, the rhyme in *s'époumonne la primevère d'automne* was preserved in *the autumn primrose shouts its woes*. Similarly, *entrechocs rutilants* became *shocks and tremors* to rhyme with the line with *remember*. As I translated the poem, I inserted new sound patterns when I could not recreate or mimic the ones in the source text. The third stanza was particularly musical, and I did my best to recreate the interplay of sound and rhythm. One passage in particular, *le croassement cloche-fêlée / d'un troupeau de ravennes en déveine*, needed to be truly reinvented in order to translate sound, imagery, and feeling. I once again left *ravennes* intact and attempted to write a new passage that mirrored Morisset's. The resulting lines, *the cracked-bell croaks / of ravennes cloaked in misfortune,* carry the same semantic weight and feeling of the source text. Furthermore, the repetition of sounds and internal rhymes are present and capture the flowing musicality of Morisset's work. Another difficult line to translate was *parmi moraines, bouldeurs, bouscueils*. There is no English word for *bouscueils*; its meaning can only be paraphrased. I therefore chose *jostling ice* to capture the image and feeling of the ST. Moreover, its auditory features created a subtle sound

repetition with *glacier's intestines*. Straying from the ST and feeling free to create allowed me to stay true to Morisset's work. As Folkart states, "competent translation is always a matter of text-making" (Folkart 2007, 121).

Finally, this poem was interspersed with several invented hyphenated compounds, such as *rêve-mirage* and *cloche-fêlée*. Much like *mille-glaçons* in Morisset's previous poem, these compounds bring together different sounds and images to evoke new and surprising ideas. The creation of compounds in not altogether uncommon in poetry, and was in fact made famous by authors like Lewis Carroll and E.E. Cummings. During translation, my goal was to mimic the sound and feeling of the source text. Consequently, it was necessary in some cases to stray from the original image. For example, *tête-chercheuse* became *head-cocking* to mirror the sounds in the following line. Similarly, *en-allée* was translated as *alley-way* to create a smoother, more intuitive English phrase.

Overall, every translation decision was motivated by my desire to convey Morisset's auditory landscape. "The irreducible truth of a poem is a direct outgrowth of its flesh – its imagery, sound-plays, rhythm" (Folkart 2007, 414). These elements are crucial to understanding Morisset's perception of the North – at once joyful and cacophonic, sacred and silent.

Maude Smith Gagnon and her work

Maude Smith Gagnon is an acclaimed young poet from Basse-Côte-Nord, Quebec. She completed a master's degree in literary studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal, where her final dissertation was awarded the 2005 Prix HMH. *Une tonne d'air* was her first collection of poetry and garnered widespread praise, winning her the Prix Émile Nelligan in 2006. Smith Gagnon has since published her second collection, *Un drap. Une place*, for which she won the Governor General's Award in 2012.[5]

Smith Gagnon's familiarity with the northern landscape is evident in her writing. Born and raised in northern Quebec, Smith Gagnon's relationship to the region is close and intimate. She is neither a traveler nor an adventurer, and as such her perception of the North is acutely different from Morisset's. Instead of an elevated, mythical, and sacred landscape, Smith Gagnon's North is desolate and steeped in nostalgia. Aspects of the spiritual and the divine are absent from her poetry. Instead, she offers us a collection of clear-cut images, a landscape captured in realistic photographs.

In Smith Gagnon's *Une tonne d'air,* the author examines and explores the ghostly remains of a former mining town in Côte-Nord, Quebec. While the place itself is never named, details within the text clearly point to specific town called Gagnon, one with an unfortunate and infamous history. On October 11th, 1984, the Government of Quebec decreed that Gagnon's depleted mine would be shut down and the town demolished. Consequently, every member of Gagnon's small community was uprooted and forced to relocate while their homes, streets, and buildings were systematically taken apart and destroyed.

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5 *Les Éditions Triptyque*, "Maude Smith-Gagnon", http://www.triptyque.qc.ca/auteurs/aut14.html.

Government officials claimed their decision to demolish the town was practical and well-reasoned, but many Quebecers believed that the complete and utter devastation of Gagnon was cruel and unnecessary. “Obliger à une population à se déraciner de son milieu […] cela équivaut à la mépriser,” wrote local journalist Bernard Gauthier. “Pis encore, démolir ce qu’il reste de Gagnon, c’est renier un patrimoine, une population qui a connu un vécu formidable de sa naissance à sa mort” (Vallières 2015, 113). Many felt that the destruction of Gagnon’s physical space extended to the metaphysical, effectively eradicating the inhabitants’ shared histories, memories, and heritage. Moreover, the destruction of Gagnon did not stop with its infrastructures. Less than a year after the town’s demolition, Gagnon no longer appeared on regional maps; instead, there was only an empty stretch of land. Former Gagnon inhabitants gradually witnessed the disappearance of the town from their birth certificates and identity documents, its name replaced with blank spaces and ambiguous dotted lines. Records of the town dwindled and faded. For all intents and purposes, Gagnon had never existed.

Literary scholar Stéphanie Vallières has written extensively about Gagnon and the effacement of its physical and immaterial space: “Au-delà de l’anéantissement des bâtiments de Gagnon, il s’agit de la mémoire du lieu qu’on ampute à travers ces pratiques,” she states. “En effaçant les traces de cette population déracinée et de son patrimoine renié, la destruction de la ville de Gagnon fait ainsi place au vide physique et symbolique” (Vallières 2015, 114). Today, Gagnon is a ghost town, a place abandoned and erased from collective memory. The land is overgrown with vegetation and the boreal forest has grown tall and wild. An innocent passerby would never know that a mining town had once stood there. “L’enfouissement a favorisé une amnésie collective:

seuls ceux qui se souviennent de Gagnon […] peuvent encore voir et ressentir ce vide" (Vallières 2015, 114).

In *Une tonne d'air,* Smith Gagnon explores the empty spaces Gagnon left behind. Much like Morisset, her perception of the northern landscape is coloured by her own personal experiences and cultural biases. She is a northern Quebecer herself, and while she never lived in the former mining town, she did grow up in a region populated by small towns much like Gagnon. She therefore shares many of the same cultural and social references as the town's former inhabitants, and has an innate understanding of their language, history, and heritage. Smith Gagnon's feelings of empathy and solidarity are clearly conveyed in *Une tonne d'air*, and consequently, her vision of the North is bleak and deeply melancholic.

The collection is a linear narrative consisting of a series of poems, each one like a thread leading the reader along a deserted path. Smith Gagnon avoids typical poetic tools such as metaphor, simile, and rhyme, and instead offers us clear, uncluttered descriptions. A nameless narrator wanders through the abandoned town, describing the region with microscopic precision, all the while conveying a sense of absence and loss. A parallel is drawn between the narrator and the town itself, mirroring Gagnon's forsaken terrain with the narrator's own sense of loneliness and isolation. Vallières has argued that Smith Gagnon's work can be read as an attempt to save the forgotten town from collective oblivion: "L'enfouissement des restes de Gagnon se traduit, en littérature, par la construction d'une mémoire collective palliative de la ville" (Vallières 2015, 113). Each poem digs through the debris and brings Gagnon's history to the surface. Nordic vegetation has spread and covered most of the town's remains: taiga, lichen, snow, and

spruce make up Smith-Gagnon's landscape, one that is neither sacred nor mythical, but beautiful all the same.

Much like in Morisset's collection, silence is a central and overarching theme. Whereas Morisset uses noise and dense language to contrast and highlight the silence of the North, Smith-Gagnon opts for subtlety, brevity, and restraint. The town of Gagnon is never named, and none of the poems are titled – intentional omissions that clearly convey the effacement of Gagnon's name and history. Furthermore, the various sounds described in *Une tonne d'air* are small and delicate, and serve to create an impression of silence, melancholy, and loneliness. While the language does not follow traditional poetic forms or structures, certain sounds are often repeated, and the flow of words has an understated musicality. Furthermore, each poem has a very low syllable and word count, communicating absence and silence in its most basic sonic elements. The form also contributes to the atmosphere of quiet, with poems that are confined to the upper half of the page and often interspersed with gaps and spaces. In *Une tonne d'air*, the silence of the North not only reflects the town's physical absence, but also its symbolic absence from our collective consciousness.

Translations and comments

Given the length of each poem in *Une tonne d'air* and the narrative, linear quality of the collection, I chose to translate four pairs of Smith Gagnon's poems. Each pair appears in sequence in the collection and captures a succession of moments. The translation of each poem pair is followed by my commentary, where I present and discuss the main difficulties encountered during my translation, and justify my decisions. Since the poems

are purely descriptive and straightforward, I did not feel that an analysis of each poem was necessary.

1. Pages 10-11

1.1 Translation

> Three hundred kilometres north of this stem, an entire town is buried beneath debris. A broad expanse of taiga covers the coarse soil where there were once houses, municipal buildings, and a small shopping mall.
>
> Twenty years ago, the mineral deposits dried up. Everything was demolished. A few steel structures still stand. A railroad. Nothing else. Nothing but a cloud of black flies.
>
> *
>
> Train tracks loom on the edge of a field of parabolic dunes. Great barrels of dry twigs roll over the earth, drift away. In the distance, some scattered islets of order, broken windows blanching beneath the beating sand. Here and there the wind buries the tracks, thickens the air, compresses itself into the narrow spaces between the trees circling the breadth of land. The origin of those whistling sounds.

1.2 Comments

1.2.1 Translation difficulties

Like all of Smith Gagnon's poems in *Une tonne d'air*, this pair is short and descriptive. Contrasting starkly with Morisset's *Chants polaires*, this collection contains few sonic patterns or repeated rhythmic sets. Smith Gagnon uses fewer words and shorter phrases; her language is straightforward and unconstrained. The text's brevity was a primary challenge in my translation. When only a few lines are used to convey an idea, every word gains significance; each letter and syllable is important and contributes to the whole. In order to preserve Smith Gagnon's musicality, I needed to be as painstakingly meticulous and thorough in my translation. Furthermore, Smith Gagnon avoids obvious rhyme patterns and traditional forms, opting instead for free verse. Despite this, sound is still at play, like an electrical current humming and resonating just below the surface. In all of Smith Gagnon's poetry, auditory features and internal proportions interact and

communicate basic sonic information: the poem's phrase, pulse, and melody. "The pulse is typically measured by its syllable count and by the position of the stress within this count" (Fraser 2007, 66). Similarly, the phrase is measured by its syllable and word count, as well as the position of phrasal stress. The occurrence and measurement of stress is particularly significant in translation given that English is a stress-timed language, and French is syllable-timed.

> Both kinds of "linguistic rhythm" [syllable-timed and stress-timed] are characterised by the recurrence of a given element at regular intervals. However, in certain languages the element is a stressed vowel (accentuated feet of greater or lesser duration) whereas in other languages, the element is the limit of the syllable (syllables of greater or lesser duration). Both categories are regarded as being mutually exclusive (Bertràn 1999, 103).

In French, word-level stress predictably falls on the final syllable, but is unpredictable and varied in English. Consequently, the auditory features inherent to the French language give Smith Gagnon's work its own weight and sound, and are particularly noticeable due to her sparse language. Finally, the poetry in *Une tonne d'air* also has its own distinct melody, a term defined by Fraser as "the text's phonemic contour" or "phonemic chain" (Fraser 2007, 74). He states that the melody is a qualitative sense rather than quantitative, and "seems rather to be something between an assessment and an impression" of the text's overall pattern of sounds (Fraser 2007, 74). Given that my primary goal during translation was to convey Smith Gagnon's auditory landscape, capturing these subtle sound features was key. "If you go for straight denotation when you translate poetry, you savage not only sound play, music and prosody, but also the ambiguities built into the ST, its complex web of resonance and indeterminacy" (Folkart 2007, 121).

To begin, I attempted to mimic the few instances of sound repetition present on pages 10 and 11. While I could not recreate the exact patterns of the ST, I did introduce new auditory strings that conveyed a similar musicality. In the first paragraph, *recouvre dans toute son étendue*, the vowel –ou is repeated and echoed across a sentence. In translation, I introduced the alliteration *covers the coarse soil.* Similarly, *une ville entière est ensevelie* is clustered with the same vowels and consonants, –en and –i and –v appearing in different arrangements. My translation, *an entire town is buried beneath debris*, created a repetition of the hard consonants –t and –b and reinvented the ST's musical thread. In the third paragraph, I struggled to recreate the cyclical sounds in *pâlissent sous les pulsations du sable.* After some reflection, I chose to veer away from the exact meaning of the words to better mirror the ST. The resulting line, *blanching beneath the beating sand*, conveys the same idea as the ST and recreates Smith Gagnon's rhythm and melody. These small, seemingly inconsequential decisions were crucial in communicating the sonic nuances present in her work.

Secondly, Smith Gagnon's word choices were often problematic. Many did not have English equivalents and needed to be paraphrased for the meaning to be accurately translated. In these situations, I chose to take certain semantic liberties in order to stay true to Smith Gagnon's sparse writing style. For example, in the third paragraph, I struggled to translate *s'éloignent*, a vague French verb that can be applied to almost any subject that is "moving away". In English, however, a more precise verb was necessary to communicate the same idea. For example, were the dry twigs rolling away, blowing away, or perhaps wandering away? After some thought, I settled on the verb *drift*, both for its meaning and phonetic qualities.

The compound *petits-bois* was also quite challenging. The word refers to a specific part of a window frame, sometimes referred to as "glazing" or "window bar"[6] in English. Neither of these terms are used colloquially in the English language, and given Smith Gagnon's straightforward and conversational voice, I chose to avoid using terminology that required specific professional knowledge. I chose to translate the term as *broken windows*, a simple phrase that recreated the core imagery and sound of the ST. Furthermore, the addition of *broken* worked well with Smith Gagnon's overarching theme of fragments and debris.

Finally, the line *persistent encore* was surprisingly difficult to translate. While a few English words came to mind – *remain* being the easy choice – none captured the same lonely desperation of the ST. Finally, I translated the line as *still stand*. The phrase conveyed the feeling of the ST and also created a nice alliteration with the fricative *–s.*

Overall, these decisions allowed me to effectively re-enact the poem's musicality, while staying true to the author's original imagery, meaning, and feeling: "sound play, textures, rhythms, and images all contribute to making sense and generating insight" (Folkart 2007, 59).

6 *Dictionnaire bilingue anglais-français Larousse en ligne*, s.v. "petits-bois", accessed January 27, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/petit%2Dbois/.

2. Pages 30-31

2.1 Translation

> A foundation, a red toque, a shard of glass. These shapes share the same space. Tangled in stems and the slanted shadows slowly raised by the light of day. A reflection.
>
> *
>
> At first glance, stillness is what separates the fauna from the flora. But even without a nervous system, plants move too. Stimulated by light, touch, weight, they bend, curl, extend. Here, flower petals unfurl. The petal's two sides don't grow at the same speed. A rise in temperature accelerates the growth of the inner side, and since the outer side is growing more slowly, the petal's curvature is inversed.

2.2 Comments

2.2.1 Translation difficulties

In the above-mentioned pair of poems, instances of rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration are scarce. Certain lines do have subtle sound repetitions, like *les ombres obliques* and *un même lieu / Emmêlées*, and I worked hard to echo these moments of music. However, once again, much of Smith Gagnon's work is free and unconstrained. At first glance, her auditory landscape is altogether silent, but upon closer inspection, the importance of sound slowly becomes apparent.

According to Fraser, during the translation of a text's auditory features, "the translator goes about counting the internal elements of the phrase and measuring how they cohere together" (Fraser 2007, 67). I therefore focused on these basic phonetic elements – the phrase, pulse, and melody – and struggled not to "get lost in the text beyond the sound" (Fraser 2007, 53).

Firstly, I tried to keep the text's syllable and word count low during translation. On average, French texts tend to be longer than their English translations. Many words in

the English language are Germanic and derived from Old English; these tend to be shorter than borrowed words with Latin roots. Furthermore, French vocabulary is primarily derived from Latin or Greek and has fewer monosyllabic words. However, keeping Smith Gagnon's poems brief and sparse proved to be quite challenging, mainly because several of her vocabulary words and sentences did not have straightforward English translations. To avoid lengthy and unpleasant paraphrases, I distanced myself from the precise meaning of each word and tried to immerse myself in the poem's feeling, sound, and imagery. For example, on page 30, the line *gisent par terre dans un même lieu* was simplified and stripped down to *share the same space* in order to maintain a low syllable and word count and to mimic the positioning of stress. The resulting –s alliteration was incidental but fit nicely with the poem's overall sound. Similarly, on page 31, the line *le monde animal du monde végétal* was translated as *the fauna from the flora*; the line maintained a low word and syllable count, created an –f alliteration, and sounded quite idiomatic in English.

Secondly, I struggled to translate many of the sentences on page 31. Here Smith Gagnon describes the growth and curvature of a flower petal with vivid, evocative language, transforming something scientific and technical into a moment of delicate, quiet beauty. One sentence in particular gave me pause, where the author lists several nouns and verbs in quick succession. Once again I attempted to reinvent the ST, creating something new but equally compelling. Thus, *les contacts* became *touch* – a shorter, more sensorial version of *contact* – and *une fleur ouvre ses pétales* was translated as *flower petals unfurl*. I also prioritized English words with low syllable counts to maintain the internal pulse and phrase of the French text, such as *bend* and *curl*. These decisions

allowed me to maintain the ST's impression of silence, while also conveying Smith Gagnon's ideas and imagery.

Finally, the last two sentences of page 31 were the most technical, and were consequently the most difficult to translate. I struggled with several terms, such as *parois* and *face supérieure/inférieure*, and therefore decided to look into botany and plant terminology. According to my research, the two sides of a flower petal are referred to as the inner and outer sides, and *parois* could alternatively be called sides or surfaces.[7] In my translation, I settled on *sides* for brevity. For the last sentence, I chose to stick very closely to Smith Gagnon's structure and syntax, both for sonic and semantic purposes. Many of the French words had straightforward English equivalents, and the resulting text naturally mirrored the ST's word and syllable count, auditory features, and meaning.

On the whole, my translation decisions were motivated by my desire to preserve the melody, phrase, and pulse of Smith Gagnon's work, fundamental elements that reflect her bleak perception of the silent northern landscape.

7 "Herbarium Glossary". Michigan Flora Online, accessed January 27, 2017, http://michiganflora.net/glossary.aspx.

3. Pages 32-33

3.1 Translation

> The lichen is gray, mint green when wet. It covers both the rocks and the earth they press into, blanketing the minute details of the terrain.
>
> Few plants adapt to the rocky soil. And yet lichen always finds what it needs to grow a meagre centimetre per year. The curious blending of mushroom spores and free algae, gently eroding under passing feet.
>
> *
>
> Layers of lichen cover the rock. Shadows grow long. Nothing else moves.
>
> Suddenly, a bird leaps from the shadows, alights on the rock. Peaks fragment and fly away.
>
> Erratic, the bird turns its head right, looks towards the sky. Tufts of feathers flutter on its chest exposed to the wind.

3.2 Comments

3.2.1 Translation difficulties

Much like the poems on pages 30 and 31, this pair does not contain obvious instances of music or sound repetition. Instead, the poetic pulse, phrase, and melody are the work's fundamental auditory features. Using only a handful of sentences and simple language, Smith Gagnon describes a piece of land in microscopic detail, focusing on the growth of lichen and the sudden movements of a bird on a rock. The words she chooses are clear and precise, and even the most technical passages paint a vivid picture of quiet, hidden life in the North.

Once again, I strove to recreate the text's phrase and pulse, thereby maintaining "symmetry of phrasal proportions between source and target texts" (Fraser 2007, 67). Many of Smith Gagnon's words and ideas did not have straightforward translations in

English, and I struggled to recreate her principal imagery and ideas while still maintaining her understated musicality. For example, I spent a long time considering the second sentence on page 32. Words and expressions like *à la fois*, *ramenant*, and *sur un même plan* were simple and melodious in French, but lead to awkward and cluttered sentences in English. I therefore chose to move away from the ST meaning and instead reimagine the author's original imagery as best I could. Thus, *ramenant tout les details du relief sur un même plan* became *blanketing the minute details of the terrain*. The translation preserves the ST imagery and also creates similar phrase and word-level stress. Furthermore, the addition of *minute* allowed me to lengthen the English sentence and closely mirror the ST word and syllable counts. Similarly, when translating the second paragraph of page 32, I prioritized simple phrasing and direct language, and attempted to mimic the ST pulse and phrase rhythm.

Page 33 introduced several other difficulties during translation. In particular, I found the terms used to describe lichen, such as *écailles* (scales)[8] and *crêtes* (crests)[9] awkward and jarring in English. When translating the first sentence, I opted for the more idiomatic phrase *layers of lichen*, both for its similar meaning and musical alliteration. In the second line of the second paragraph, I also took certain liberties with the ST meaning to better mimic the original poem's melody and feeling. The resulting phrase, *peaks fragment*, is much shorter than the French, but conveys the imagery in a musical and compelling way. Moreover, the shortened word and syllable counts only contribute to Smith Gagnon's sparse writing style.

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8 *Dictionnaire bilingue anglais-français Larousse en ligne*, s.v. "écaille", accessed January 27, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/écaille/.

9 *Dictionnaire bilingue anglais-français Larousse en ligne*, s.v. "crête", accessed January 27, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/crête/.

In the second and third paragraphs of page 33, Smith Gagnon introduces several ideas separated by commas, creating a series of sentences with particular phrasal stress and rhythm. In order to mimic these auditory features in translation, I chose to stay very close to the ST syntax and comma placement. Moreover, I restructured certain phrases to make them as idiomatic and fluid as possible. For example, *Soudain un oiseau, caché dans l'ombre, bondit sur la roche* was translated as *Suddenly, a bird leaps from the shadows, alights on the rock*. While the use of different verbs did affect the meaning of the text, the poem's core imagery, feeling, and tone were recreated. Furthermore, I was able to maintain a low syllable and word count.

Despite the minute variations in meaning during translation, these decisions allowed me to communicate Smith Gagnon's pulse, phrase, and melody, sonic elements fundamental to her work that should not be underestimated. "This sort of phrasal proportionality is what theory cites to draw a distinguishing line between translation and other practices of re-writing" (Fraser 2007, 69).

4. Pages 42-43

4.1 Translation

> Black spruce needles, those narrow leaves that fail to fall in winter, have a thin waterproof coating. It limits the loss of liquid during the coldest months, when water no longer circulates in the soil.
>
> The spruce's trunk is thin, its branches short. A form that does little to protect it from the brutal wind. The wood is soft, allowing the tree to buckle instead of break beneath the weight of snow.
>
> The boreal forest has few species. That spruce over there is nearly twelve feet tall. It is over one hundred years old.
>
> *
>
> Snowflakes fall slowly.
>
> The hexagonal structure of their crystals makes them light and easily discernible in the sky, unlike raindrops, and allows us to watch them travel the final distance of their long descent.
>
> These snowflakes fall for over a day before landing and melting in the palm of a warm hand.
>
> In the distance, slowly but surely, some of them stray from the collective. They rise here and there, buffeted by currents of air.

4.2 Comments

4.2.1 Translation difficulties

In this final pair of poems, Smith Gagnon explores and illustrates two elements of the northern landscape: black spruce and falling snow. Much like the poems already discussed, both pages focus on the secret lives of the North: the microcosms and hidden inner workings of the fauna and the flora. Once again the author uses simple, colloquial language to depict scientific processes, avoiding jargon and terminology to paint an evocative portrait of the silent landscape. Of all Smith Gagnon's poetry, this pair was the most descriptive and technical, which made it the most difficult to translate. My main

challenge was recreating the author's clear, methodical descriptions while still preserving the tone of quiet melancholy conveyed through her melody, pulse, and phrase. Throughout my translation, I struggled to strike a balance between description and music, science and poetry.

Firstly, on page 42, Smith Gagnon introduces a handful of understated instances of sound repetition and alliteration. For example, the high vowel –i is repeated throughout the first paragraph (*hiver*, *munies*, *celle-ci,* etc.) and the fricative –s creates subtle alliteration in the second paragraph (*ses*, *cette charpente*, *cinglant*, etc.). Similarly, on page 43, the vowel –é is echoed throughout the poem (*hexagonale*, *légèreté*, *repérer*, *observer*, etc.) and several similar vowels appear in quick succession in the final paragraph (*uns, eux, peu à peu*). These moments occur below the poem's surface but contribute to its tone and melody, and consequently have an effect on the reader. While I could not perfectly recreate these auditory features in translation, I chose to create instances of discreet sound repetition whenever possible. On page 42, I introduced several alliterations, such as *fail to fall*, *limit the loss of liquid*, and *buckle instead of break beneath*. Similar sound patterns did not occur as naturally on page 43, but I was able to slip in a few alliterations (*discernible*, *distance*, *descent*) and quiet assonances (*here and there*, *currents of air*). Overall, these auditory features were necessary to mimic the delicate beauty and melody of the ST.

As with my previous translations, I attempted to preserve the poem's low syllable and word count, and therefore mimic Smith Gagnon's sparseness. Once again, many of the French sentences were naturally shorter and simplified when translated into English. Furthermore, the ST rhythm and phrasal stress were closely mimicked during translation.

However, certain French words were problematic. On both pages, the author uses metres to describe both the height of the spruce and the distance traveled by falling snow. In French-speaking Quebec, the metric system is well implemented and used commonly in daily life, whereas English Canada still uses the imperial system in many sectors. In particular, imperial units are often used to measure height and weight. The use of metres felt jarring and awkward in English, so I chose to convert the height of the spruce into feet to create a more idiomatic sentence. The second mention of metres on page 43, *les derniers mètres*, was even more perplexing. Given that the exact distance travelled is not specified, I chose to lose the metrical reference altogether and instead settle for *the final distance*. The resulting sentence was clear, melodious, and captured the imagery of the ST.

Finally, the final paragraph on page 43 was very challenging. The line *s'isolent peu à peu de l'ensemble* conveys a specific image that does not have an easy English translation. Furthermore, *remontent ici et là* and *sous l'action de* were simple and idiomatic phrases in French, but could not be easily transferred. To communicate Smith Gagnon's melody effectively without straying from her original image, I moved away from the ST meaning and recreated the passage. The first line became *slowly but surely, some of them stray from the collective*, where the inherent meaning of *s'isolent* is captured within the word *stray*. The second line was translated as *They rise here and there, buffeted by currents of air*. While the verb *rise* does not express the same up-down action of *remontent*, the use of *buffeted* does evoke the wild and unpredictable movements of the snowflakes, an image that closely mirrors that of the ST.

In brief, during the translation of Smith Gagnon's work, my decisions were motivated by my desire to re-enact her auditory landscape. Her depiction of the North as a silent, desolate, and forgotten region is rooted in her cultural and linguistic ties to northern Quebec. Furthermore, her feelings of empathy for the inhabitants of Gagnon resonate within the text, and effectively mirror Gagnon's effacement from the physical and immaterial world. Through sound, I attempted to convey the same understated musicality and melody inherent to her work.

Natasha Kanapé Fontaine and her work

Natasha Kanapé Fontaine is a 26-year-old Innu writer, slam poet, visual artist, and actress from Pessamit, a First Nations reserve in Baie-Comeau, Quebec. She is also a political and environmental activist, and fights for indigenous rights as the current spokesperson for the Quebec branch of the indigenous national movement Idle No More. She is the author of three highly acclaimed collections of poetry, all of which explore themes of indigenous culture and identity. In 2013, her debut collection *N'entre pas dans mon âme avec tes souliers* was awarded the Prix d'excellence de la Société des Écrivains francophones d'Amérique. Less than two years later, *Manifeste Assi* was a finalist for the 2015 Prix Émile-Nelligan. In May 2016, Fontaine launched her most recent collection of poetry, *Bleuets et abricots*.[10]

As an Innu woman from northern Quebec, Fontaine's relationship with the North is distinct from Morisset's and Smith Gagnon's. Her perception of the territory is rooted in her indigenous culture, language, and history, and therefore opposes the mythical, Western-centric notion of the North. In her eyes, the territory is neither an exotic landscape to be explored nor a desolate wasteland to be studied, and interestingly, any mention of silence is conspicuously absent from her work. Instead, sound and music are used to evoke a strong, narrative voice, one that communicates Fontaine's ideas, emotions, and political beliefs. Through her poetry, she conveys an imagined North that is fundamental to her sense of self. The land is depicted as an extension of her female body and Innu identity, but also a reflection of the collective experiences of all indigenous people fighting against oppression.

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10 Natasha Kanapé Fontaine's personal website, accessed January 27, 2017, https://natashakanapefontaine.com/biographie/.

In *Bleuets et abricots*, Fontaine retraces her history, focusing on the experiences of indigenous women in Quebec and around the world. In an interview with *La Presse* conducted in March 2016, she described her collection as "le discours d'une femme autochtone qui est revenue à la vie." With each poem, Fontaine builds a dialogue between her own northern Innu culture and the indigenous cultures in Haiti. She draws parallels by comparing and contrasting the Quebec and Haitian landscapes, juxtaposing sand and snow, oceans and ice flows. Sometimes the territories blend together and become indistinguishable, merging to form one single place. Elements of the North such as snow, ice, and lichen are used to convey aspects of the indigenous identity and culture, such as beauty, strength, pride, and dignity. "Avec le bleuet, fruit indigène du territoire nordique, et les gros abricots-pays d'Haïti, elle [Fontaine] invite au dialogue, à la réconciliation et aux liens qui enrichissent."[11]

Through this dialogue, Fontaine creates a collection that is at once intensely personal and undeniably political. Many of her poems feel very intimate, but ultimately reflect a much larger picture. "Dans *Bleuets et abricots* […] j'ai voulu fournir un discours puissant et entier à toutes les femmes autochtones d'abord, mais aussi à toutes les femmes," Fontaine stated during her interview with *La Presse*. "J'ai écrit au 'je', mais je dis 'je' pour dire 'les autres', afin que nous soyons, que nous devenions, nous les autochtones, une collectivité plus forte."

In Fontaine's writing, sound and music play integral roles. While she stated in a 2014 interview with Artichaut magazine that her slam performances and written poetry have completely different energies, the influence of slam is undeniable throughout

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11 "Bleuets et abricots, le sucre poétique du territoire," ICI Radio-Canada Premiere, accessed December 29, 2016, http://ici.radio-canada.ca/premiere/emissions/plus-on-est-de-fous-plus-on-lit/saison-2015-2016/segments/chronique/5580/natasha-kanape-fontaine-bleuets-abrcots-poesie-memoire-dencrier

Bleuets et abricots. The aesthetics of slam are distinct from other forms of literature and have their own auditory features tied to performance and political expression. Since its emergence in New York City in 1975, slam poetry has become a veritable movement, giving a voice to many marginalized groups and allowing them to denounce social inequalities and oppression (Paré 2015, 89). “Le slam continue d’être fortement lié à la défense des identités culturelles, génériques et linguistiques, notamment chez les peuples autochtones et dans les communautés minoritaires ou diasporiques.” (Paré 2015, 92)

Slam is rooted in militant activism, and consequently, its auditory features are often violent and aggressive. Aspects such as stress, alliteration, and repetition are particularly important and appear frequently in slam poetry (Paré 2015, 101). Furthermore, many slammers prefer to use short phrases and single words for emphasis and urgency, discarding syntax and structure in favour of freely flowing words. “Déstructurée et marquée par l’urgence d’accumuler les mots, la langue du poème n’offre aucune prise sur la continuité” (Paré 2015, 101). These auditory features are all present in Fontaine’s *Bleuets et abricots*, and consequently, her poetry tends to evoke a steady, percussive beat, not unlike a drum.

Throughout *Bleuets et abricots*, drums are a recurring theme, often referencing traditional indigenous practices. “Drumming has been an integral part of Aboriginal cultures since time immemorial, as the drumbeat represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth” (Goudreau 2008, 73). While there is very little literature about the history of indigenous drumming traditions, existing literature suggests that certain musical ceremonies, such as powwow drumming, was historically the role of men (Goudreau 2008, 73). However, in Fontaine’s poetry, drumming is explored from a female

perspective, and is used to convey the voice and strength of indigenous women. Furthermore, the drum contributes to Fontaine's theme of collective indigenous experiences, and she herself has stated that drumming traditions can be found in indigenous communities around the world.

> La musique traditionnelle haïtienne a un fondement rythmique autochtone, que je reconnais, que mon corps reconnaît, quand je danse et quand je chante. Et chez les Mapuches, il y a un tambour semblable à celui des Innus. C'est quand même étrange qu'à trois endroits différents dans les Amériques il y ait un son qui revienne: le son du battement de la terre.[12]

As previously mentioned, the theme of silence is virtually unexplored in Fontaine's poetry. References to emptiness, immensity, and isolation are noticeably absent, and her language does not convey a quiet, monochromatic territory. Unlike Morisset and Smith Gagnon, Fontaine depicts a northern landscape that is alive and vibrant, one where indigenous women are able to speak up and be heard. Consequently, silence has no place in Fontaine's imagined North – quite the opposite. Only sound can effectively communicate her perception of the territory. Overall, her writing is strong, unconstrained, and imbued with a natural rhythm, reflecting many of the same elements common to slam poetry. In brief, Fontaine's *Bleuets et abricots* depicts an imagined North that is awake, alive, and filled with music.

Translations and comments

Fontaine's *Bleuets et abricots* is a collection in two movements. Each movement is composed of three long-form poems, each one spanning several pages. I therefore chose to translate four excerpts taken from three of Fontaine's poems: *La Marche*, *La Chasse*,

12 "Du poème à l'activisme. Entrevue avec Natasha Kanapé Fontaine," Artichaut magazine 2014.

and *La Cueillette*. For the purpose of my thesis, I chose excerpts that focus on the northern Quebec (as opposed to Haitian or Caribbean) landscape. My English translations are followed by a commentary in two parts. Firstly, I summarize the subject of the poem and analyse the primary themes and ideas, focusing on the excerpt I translated. Secondly, I present the main difficulties encountered during translation and justify my decisions.

1. The Walk

1.1 Translation

Oh my country
I will name you by your name
in the enclosures of Anticosti
enclosures of Eeyou Istchee
open the door for refugees

We will unearth
the invisible wealth
mislaid between cities
chain the monsters of history
and endless stories of civilization
in our subarctic woods

Oh my country
I will be beautiful
for my grandmother's poem

If I named for you my body
If I named for you my face
the name of my mountains my streams
Utshuat Upessamiu Shipu
the name of my river my sand my lichen
Uinipeku Nutshimit

I will make my hair
like the arctic reindeer
resinous moss of the pines
spirits of the harvest
I remember
the peat damp hands
surrendered to despair
and desire

Oh my country
here is your name
coiled between my entrails
sand and surf
moon and stones

Chief of wandering
trembling clearings
tempestuous taiga

tumultuous tundra

You call yourself savage
you creep under my skin
inside

1.2 Comments

1.2.1 Analysis

In *La Marche*, Fontaine's voice directly addresses her land and territory, speaking for herself, but also for the many indigenous communities in northern Quebec and around the world. Her voice is a rallying cry, a call to all indigenous women to reclaim the land, culture, and traditions that have been lost to Western civilization. In this excerpt, strong parallels are drawn between the female body and the territory, blending hands and hair with mountains and rivers, conveying a deep symbiosis with the northern landscape and the Earth. At times Fontaine's depictions become visceral, sexual, and aggressive. These passages reinforce the depth of her relationship with the territory, while also conveying a general sense of anger, urgency, desperation, and violence.

1.2.2 Translation difficulties

The sonic features of Fontaine's poetry echo many of those present in Morisset's and Smith Gagnon's work, and yet her auditory landscape is entirely different and distinct. While she does adopt sound repetition, alliteration, and rhyme – techniques characteristic of slam poetry – the ebb and flow of her work is rooted in more subtle musical elements, such as syntax, pulse, and phrase. During my translation of the excerpt of *La Marche*, I tried to recreate these complex layers of musicality and convey Fontaine's strong, passionate voice.

Firstly, there are several instances of repetition in Fontaine's poem, both at the word and phrasal levels. Unlike Morisset's work, these repetitions do not convey silence or vast, empty space; rather, they serve to emphasize the poem's passion and urgency. Considered together, they form a chant that slowly builds and escalates as the poem progresses. The repeated syntactic structures, words, and phrases are therefore essential to Fontaine's musicality, and I did my best to recreate them. In addition, I strove to maintain their pulse and phrase (i.e., their syllable count and the position of stress within individual words and phrases).

The line *Pays mien ô* is one of the most important repetitions of the poem, as it occurs at the beginning of several paragraphs, serving as a refrain and anchor point. Here, each word has only one or two syllables, and consequently, three of the four syllables carry stress. Similarly, *Si je te nommais* occurs twice and contains very short, staccato-like words and four stressed syllables. In order to recreate the strength of the original lines, I chose to prioritize a similar pulse and phrase. The resulting lines, *Oh my country* and *If I named for you*, had identical syllables counts – four and five, respectively – and also mimicked the occurrences of stress.

Secondly, certain sounds repeat throughout Fontaine's poem, contributing to the poem's strong rhythm and sense of urgency. These sound cycles are subtle, but nonetheless present. For example, in the second paragraph, the words *invisibles*, *villes*, and *civilization* create a musical thread by repeating –i, –v, –s, and –l. During translation, I attempted to recreate this thread with a different set of sounds, namely –th in *unearth* and *wealth* and –m in *mislaid* and *monsters*. Furthermore, I repeated the fricative –s throughout the paragraph, and particularly in the final two lines, *endless stories of*

civilization in our subarctic woods. Likewise, in the seventh paragraph, Fontaine introduces slant rhymes (such as *errances* and *vibrantes*), sound repetitions (such as *houleuses* and *toundras*) and alliterations (such as *taïgas*, *toundras*, and *tumultes*). I attempted to reinvent these auditory features by creating similar musical threads. The final –ing syllable in *wandering*, *trembling* and *clearing* created a new sonic pattern. Furthermore, I chose to prioritize words beginning with –t to mirror the ST alliteration. In the end, I was able to recreate the repetitions present in Fontaine's work without adversely affecting the original meaning.

Finally, several words in the ST proved to be extremely challenging to translate and required flexibility and creativity. In the fourth paragraph, *rivière* and *fleuve* occur in quick succession separated by a single line in the Innu language. In English, there is no distinction between these two bodies of water, and both are translated as "river". While repetition is an integral part of Fontaine's poetry, it did not seem justified in this context. In the present paragraph, the author is listing elements of the northern territory, and the distinction between *fleuve* and *rivière* is clearly intentional. According to their French definitions, a *fleuve* flows into the ocean and is often formed by the joining of several rivers.[13] I therefore chose to translate the former as *stream* and the latter as *river*, to mirror this distinction.

In the fifth paragraph, I struggled to interpret the first three lines. Firstly, in French, *coiffer* encompasses many different meanings, and the verb can therefore be applied in a variety of contexts. Possible English translations include "to comb", "to

13 *Dictionnaire de français Larousse*, s.v. "fleuve", accessed January 29, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/fleuve/34135?q=fleuve#34069.

brush", or "to do one's hair".[14] In the ST, the precise meaning of *coifferai* is ambiguous and left up to interpretation. Furthermore, *je me coifferai / pareille au renne arctique* is a confusing image. Was Fontaine referring to the reindeer's antlers, or perhaps its fur? After much research, I eventually discovered that reindeer lichen, otherwise known as reindeer moss, is a type of vegetation that grows in Canadian boreal pine forests and resembles densely tangled hair.[15] The third line, *à la mousse résineuse des épinettes*, suddenly made perfect sense and clarified the poem's imagery. My translation, *I will make my hair / like the arctic reindeer / resinous moss of the pines* accurately conveyed the ST meaning, created sound patterns with the repetition of –r and –s, and maintained the ambiguous imagery.

Finally, I stumbled on the word *eau-de-vie*, a deceptively simple noun with hidden layers. In French, *eau-de-vie* is a generic term that encompasses all types of alcohol produced through fermentation and distillation, such as whisky or rum.[16] However, in the context of Fontaine's poetry and indigenous experiences, *eau-de-vie* (literally "water of life"[17]) takes on new meaning. Addictive behaviours such as alcohol and substance abuse are prevalent in indigenous communities, and are rooted in our country's history of colonization.

> The origins of alcohol abuse can be found in early Canadian history with the introduction of liquor by European fur traders in the early seventeenth century. Prior to this, drunkenness and violence were virtually unknown to the Aboriginal

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14 *Dictionnaire bilingue français-anglais Larousse*, s.v. "coiffer", accessed January 29, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/coiffer/.

15 *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. "reindeer moss", accessed February 15, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/reindeer_moss

16 *Dictionnaire de français Larousse*, s.v. "eau-de-vie", accessed January 29, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/eau-de-vie/27211?q=eau+de+vie#27067

17 *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. "eau de vie", accessed January 29, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/eau_de_vie.

> people who had “a very low incidence of violence” in their own communities. (Chansonneuve 2007, 7)

When talking about the indigenous experience, alcohol is associated with oppression, violence, and death, and as such, Fontaine’s use of *eau-de-vie* can be read as satirical and tongue-in-cheek. In English, this implication is difficult to capture. While “eau de vie” does exist in the English language, its meaning has strayed from the original French and now specifically refers to Brandy. Furthermore, in the context of Fontaine’s poem, a monolingual English reader would fail to grasp its satirical, literal meaning. After much thought, I finally chose to translate the word as *spirits*. While the word fails to convey the same irony, it does capture the general ST meaning and reiterates the fricative –s present in *pine’s resinous moss* and *harvest*.

2. The Hunt

2.1 Translation

Here we are
walking towards the void
the threshold of the North
a sculpted man
compelling
destiny

Diverting the river
from its path
music from the falls
water promises minerals memory
equilibrium elevation

She changes beds with her rapids
and the whales' laments
the trucks march on
big bears of misery
from the woods where machinery has been sown
for centuries and centuries
the orgies of kings
leaving nothing behind but
broken land
broken bones
my broken caribou hooves

Diverting the river from its path
the cliffs country mine
and greed will succeed
in splitting the tides
prophetic stories from the Exodus

I lean towards the South
and pain becomes a bite
my sick left side
will no longer wait for those wolf teeth

I no longer have a mirror
to recognize my face
the thirst in my throat
in my convictions
in my cries

2.2 Comments

2.2.1 Analysis

In *La Chasse*, Fontaine once again adopts a voice that speaks for all indigenous women, exploring how historical injustices have impacted their languages, traditions, and collective health. Throughout the poem, she references the residential schools program, which was a "deliberate attempt by the Government of Canada to wipe out all traces of Aboriginal cultures" (Chansonneuve 2007, 7). These historical references add weight and power to her work as a whole. Overall, *La Chasse* feels like a mournful cry for everything that has been taken from indigenous communities. In this excerpt, the central theme is the environment, as Fontaine condemns the damage and destruction of the northern territory by Western industry. Throughout the text, she continues to draw parallels between the land and her body, and returns to the line *pays mien*, thereby reinforcing her deep relationship to the land.

2.2.2 Translation difficulties

In the present poem, repetition, alliteration, and rhyme continue to be integral to Fontaine's auditory landscape, and I tried to recreate these effectively in my translation. Furthermore, in this excerpt, Fontaine frequently dismisses syntactic structure, preferring to write lines comprised of disconnected words, and I had difficulty translating several of these passages. Finally, throughout *La Chasse*, Fontaine relies heavily on syllable count and stress to create a steady, cyclical rhythm. As French stress is always word-final, low word and syllable counts allow Fontaine to multiply the number of stress-heavy syllables. Many of the poem's final syllables also rhyme, adding a layer of musicality and

contributing to the impression of a chant or refrain. As I translated the poem, I strove to capture its pulse and phrase while also conveying its inherent meaning and tone.

In the very first paragraph, Fontaine creates a musical thread by repeating the voiced fricative –v (*voici que l'on avance / droit vers le vide*) and the nasal vowel –ain (*contraindre / destin*). While I could not replicate these elements without seriously disrupting the ST meaning, I attempted to recreate them in innovative ways. I chose words with similar vowel and consonant patterns, and focused on repeating instances of –o (*towards*, *void*, *threshold*) and –w (*we*, *walking*, *towards*). Furthermore, my repetition of –e in *compelling* and *destiny* mimicked the ST closely. While the resulting lines did not perfectly reproduce Fontaine's use of sound, they did communicate her distinct musicality.

In the third and fourth paragraphs of *La Chasse*, sound repetition and rhyme are particularly present, working together to create a strong sense of rhythm and music. Firstly, the vowel –é recurs throughout this section, echoing nearly a dozen times between the words *brisé* and *récits*. While I was unable to mimic this lengthy pattern during translation, I did introduce new sound cycles to convey a similar musicality. These included the repeated –k in *cliffs* and *country*, the rhyme in *greed* and *succeed*, and the reoccurrence of –s in *succeed*, *splitting*, and *stories*. Secondly, the fourth paragraph has a distinct pulse and phrase: the first and last lines span eleven syllables each, while the three enclosed lines are quite short. While I could not duplicate the ST pulse and phrase, I did successfully recreate the paragraph structure (i.e., three short lines enclosed by three longer ones).

Fontaine uses alliteration throughout *La Chasse*, and these reinforce the strength of her voice and message. In the second paragraph, her French word choices had English cognates, and I was therefore able to closely follow her instances of alliteration and overall sound patterns. However, in the third paragraph, I had to stray from the ST meaning in order to recreate Fontaine's alliteration. After much thought, I translated *marchent* as *march on* and *malheur* as *misery*. These decisions allowed me to maintain the ST alliteration, mirror the original syllable count, and capture the core imagery and meaning.

The influence of slam poetry is unmistakeable in Fontaine's collection, and is most evident in her frequent disregard of syntax in favour of single, unstructured words, such as *l'eau promet minéraux mémoire* / *équilibre élévation*. Overall, this format was easy to re-enact during translation. However, I stumbled on the final line of the third paragraph, *mon trot caribou brisé*. This short phrase is profoundly musical thanks to its complex auditory features, namely, its low syllable count and sound repetition. Of the line's seven syllables, four are stressed and create a heavy, rhythmic beat. What's more, the syllable-final –o in *mon* is echoed in *trot,* and the –b in *caribou* recurs in *brisé*. However, without a clear syntactic structure, the line can be read in many different ways. What does the possessive pronoun *mon* describe? Does the adjective *brisé* modify *trot*, or *caribou*, or both? The words are free-floating, and I therefore felt at liberty to stray from the ST to better convey the poem's musicality. The resulting line, *my broken caribou hooves*, mimics the ST pulse and phrase, and recreates Fontaine's subtle sound repetitions.

Finally, I struggled with the final two lines of the excerpt, *ma côte gauche malade*

/ *ne peut plus attendre les dents du loup*. Here, the –o sound recurs in *côte* and *gauche*, and the nasal vowel –en in *attendre* is repeated in *dents*. Furthermore, several of the words have multiple meanings in French, leaving them open to interpretation. For example, in the context of Fontaine's poem, *côte* could either refer to the narrator's body (side or ribcage) or the land (coast or hill).[18] To further complicate things, the adjective *gauche* could either mean the physical left or the political left.[19] Both seem plausible, given Fontaine's environmental and political activism. Interestingly, Fontaine might have chosen these words intentionally, fully aware of their ambiguity, in order to create a double-entendre: the wolf threatens her body as well as her territory and beliefs. Given that my ultimate goal was to re-enact Fontaine's auditory landscape during translation, my priority was to maintain the ST auditory features. I therefore chose to translate *côte* as *side* in order to create alliteration with *sick*. What's more, the phrase *left side* carries the same ambiguities, and could either be interpreted in the physical or political sense. Finally, I opted for *will no longer* instead of "can no longer" to introduce some alliteration in the concluding line.

18 *Dictionnaire bilingue français-anglais Larousse*, s.v. "côte", accessed January 29, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/côte/.

19 *Dictionnaire bilingue français-anglais Larousse*, s.v. "gauche", http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/gauche/.

3. The Harvest (excerpt #1)

3.1 Translation

Up North the stars run
the aurora borealis holds vigil
give me back the names of those waterways
drained by the dams
so I may drink the water from our mountains
and taste its kiss

We braid our hair again
no one left to scalp us
strip them from us

We braid sweetgrass
strands of our sea
we burn it for the firmament
we listen to the cantilenas
songs of dawn and sea
the seventh generation rises
and counts the stars
in the nebulous darkness
and depths of black holes
knowing the names of galaxies by heart,
of solar systems
people of the stars

My heart skips
I slip rings
on my fingers
I place gold upon my head
tonight I will wear
my clothes made of lichen
I will tie my hair
when the drum-man comes
I will whisper the mysteries
of the meteors
into his ear

3.2 Comments

3.2.1 Analysis

In *La Cueillette*, Fontaine's voice shifts in tone, moving away from anger and indignation to pride and joy. She is celebratory and triumphant, proclaiming the strengths, virtues, and beauty of indigenous women and the North. In this excerpt, much like in Fontaine's previous poems, the territory and the female body are depicted as inseparable and symbiotic. Elements of the landscape such as rivers, mountains, and vegetation cover and clothe the narrator's body, conveying intimacy, sexuality, and love. To further communicate this intrinsic relationship, Fontaine references the Seventh Generation Principle, a philosophy derived from the Constitution of the Iroquois Nation. "This principle states that we [indigenous people] should make decisions about how we live today based on how our decisions will impact the future seven generations."[20] Finally, Fontaine's exploration of the cosmos, stars, and darkness evoke a sense of spirituality, turning the environment into a sacred, liminal space.

3.2.2 Translation difficulties

Like Fontaine's previous poems, *La Cueillette* is imbued with musical elements, and my main difficulty during translation was effectively reinventing them without significantly disrupting the meaning of the ST. While more obvious and recognizable techniques such as repetition, alliteration, and rhyme are less frequent in the present excerpt, pulse and phrase continue to work below the surface. I did my best to reproduce these auditory features whenever possible, either by mimicking the ST or by introducing my own sonic

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[20] "Indigenous Values," *Woodbine Ecology Centre*, accessed January 29, 2017 ,http://www.woodbinecenter.org/indigenous-values.

elements. Furthermore, on several occasions, the French syntactic structure was intrinsically linked to the poem's overall sound, and I struggled to create a similar structure in English. When maintaining the original syntax was impossible, I approached the poem as a writer, taking creative liberties to capture the core sound and sense of the ST.

Firstly, at the onset of the poem, two elements of the northern landscape are personified, and both lines consist of the same pattern of words. Through parallel structure, Fontaine provides emphasis through repetition. I strove to capture the ST meaning while maintaining the parallel. However, the meaning of *veillent* proved to be quite difficult to convey. In French, "veiller" commonly means to look after someone or something, but can also mean to stay awake and stand guard.[21] Given the noun preceding the verb (*aurores boréales*) and the excerpt's overarching theme of space and darkness, I felt it was important to express the idea of night. After some consideration, I chose to translate *veiller* as *hold vigil*. The word *vigil* is defined as "a period of keeping awake during the time usually spent asleep, especially to keep watch or pray."[22] Incidentally, the –o vowel in *aurora borealis* is repeated in *hold,* creating a musical thread that contributes to the pattern of sound.

A second phrase that proved difficult to translate was *au baiser de sa bouche*. While a more word-for-word, literal translation would have resembled "from the kiss of its mouth", I chose to focus on the poem's overall meaning as opposed to the individual words to better express its sense and sound. The resulting phrase, *and taste its kiss*,

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21 *Dictionnaire français Larousse*, s.v. "veiller", accessed January 27, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/veiller/81274?q=veiller#80324

22 *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. "vigil", accessed January 29, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vigil.

captured the essential imagery and feeling of the ST and worked well with the poem as a whole. Furthermore, while I could not replicate the original alliteration, I did introduce a new pattern of sound with the repetition of –s, –t, and –k.

I encountered a similar difficulty in the second paragraph, where the poem's French syntax once again governs the text's musicality. Here, both the first and second lines follow a subject-object-verb structure (S-O-V), meaning that the object comes between the subject and the verb (i.e., *nous les scalper*, *nous les arracher*). Fontaine also introduces parallel structure so that the second line emphasizes and mirrors the first. In English, the structure is S-V-O, with the object falling in final position. In order to recreate Fontaine's sound, I needed to create new auditory features to express the same melody. My translation, *no one left to scalp us / strip them from us*, effectively communicates the meaning of the ST, while also introducing alliteration and maintaining the parallel structure.

In the third paragraph, I stumbled on *au sein des ténèbres / nébuleuses et trous noirs.* Firstly, the line break detaches the adjective from its subject. Interestingly, *au sein des ténèbres* can be interpreted alone, and the line break therefore flows smoothly. In English, however, the adjective comes before the subject, and the situation is reversed: the adjective is left hanging on the edge of the page, while the subject is unmoored and pushed to the next line. Consequently, the line break feels sudden and disruptive to the reader. In an attempt to make the break feel natural in English, I translated the lines as *in the nebulous darkness / and depths of black holes.* While I did stray from the ST meaning, I was able to reproduce Fontaine's fluid, natural language. Furthermore, the French lines are comprised of anapests, and I was able to recreate this metre in

translation. Finally, in the ST, the vowel –é (along with neighbouring vowels like –in and –è) recurs throughout the passage, creating a long sonic pattern. In my translation, a similar pattern occurs with the recurrence of –d and –b.

Finally, in the fourth paragraph, I had trouble translating the concluding lines, *je lui soufflerai à l'oreille / mille secrets / sur les météores*. In this case, the musicality of the ST depends on several layers of repeated sounds, all of which contribute to the whole. These include the repetition of –è (*soufflerai, oreille, secrets, les*) and the –m alliteration (*mille, météores*). Moreover, the second and third lines have very low syllable counts compared to the first, creating a distinct stress pattern and rhythm. In order to capture the sound of the ST, I considered the passage as a whole instead of focusing on the separate words and segments. My translation, *I will whisper the mysteries / of the meteors / into his ear*, did veer away from the original meaning, but successfully conveyed Fontaine's essential ideas and imagery.

4. The Harvest (excerpt #2)

4.1 Translation

I've tracked and caught
blueberries and apricots

Montreal
raise your head
remember your name
Hochelaga

My people are a people of the clouds
but our heads do not rest there
the sleet and snow have raised us rebels
snowshoes on our feet, high cheekbones
honey from the firs on our lips

Guided by the snows
the years of ice our glacial space
we are worthy
we are living

I savour the cumulus
concrete walls and wooden fences
I crane my neck

I sip the cirrus
and others speak
another language
another thought
another life

Here
the horizon has a name
I do not know

Where have all
the wide views gone,
the eyes embedded
in the depths?

4.2 Comments

4.2.1 Analysis

In this excerpt of *La Cueillette*, Fontaine continues to proclaim the strength and beauty of her people, and her voice is celebratory and filled with pride. She also makes specific references to the history of Montreal, and demands that we remember and acknowledge our violent, colonial past. In particular, she mentions Hochelaga, an indigenous village on the Island of Montreal that was visited by Jacques Cartier during his search for a passage to Asia.[23] Throughout this excerpt, the open sky is a recurring theme. The narrator asks that we raise our heads; she mentions clouds, horizons, and *les visions larges*. Near the end of the excerpt, she evokes a feeling of loss and disconnectedness with the earth. The descriptions of buildings and cement structures feel bleak and desolate. Despite Fontaine's powerful and joyful narrative voice, the feeling imbued in this section of *La Cueillette* is also melancholic and tinged with sadness.

4.2.2 Translation difficulties

In certain sections of *Bleuets et abricots*, the core meaning of Fontaine's poetry seemed inextricable from the original French speech sounds. This was often the case in the present excerpt of *La Cueillette*. Specific sound patterns, idioms, and sentence structures seemed impossible to translate without seriously affecting either the meaning or the music of the ST. Faced with this challenge, my compromise solution was often to completely recreate the difficult passage, finding new ways to express the imagery and acoustic features of Fontaine's poem. While these translations were ultimately rewritings

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23 *The Canadian Encyclopedia Online*, s.v. "Hochelaga", last edited March 04, 2015, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/hochelaga/.

of the ST, they were able to effectively convey Fontaine's voice, message, and auditory landscape.

Firstly, I was stumped by the excerpt's initial lines, *Je sais dépister / bleuets et abricots*. Fontaine not only evokes a compelling image, she also creates a subtle sound pattern with the vowel –é, which is repeated four times. In French, *dépister* is generally used when talking about tracking wild animals.[24] I chose to take this image one step further in my translation in order to create my own rhyme with the syllable –ot. The resulting line, *I have tracked and caught* / *blueberries and apricots*, communicates Fontaine's imagery as well as her musical elements.

Secondly, the third paragraph introduces a French Quebec idiom, *pelleteur des nuages*, meaning an idealist or dreamer who does not consider practical limitations.[25] Interestingly, Fontaine plays with this idiom, restructuring the imagery to express a more complex idea: her people have dreams, but they are not dreamers (*mon peuple est un peuple de nuages* / *nous ne les pelletons pas l'hiver*). I felt it was imperative that I convey this subtlety in translation. The cloud imagery is recurring throughout Fontaine's poem, and could not be avoided or changed. I attempted to find a similar, cloud-related idiom in English, and eventually settled on "head in the clouds", meaning a daydreamer who is unaware of their surroundings.[26] I then reworked the idiom to communicate the ST meaning. While the English idiom's definition is not quite identical to the French, the

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24 *Dictionnaire français Larousse*, s.v. "dépister", accessed January 29, 2017, http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/dépister/23788?q=dépister#23664.
25 "Pelleter des nuages", *Traduction du français au français*, http://www.dufrancaisaufrancais.com/pelleter-des-nuages
26 *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. "head in the clouds", accessed January 29, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/with_one's_head_in_the_clouds.

resulting lines (*my people are a people of the clouds* / *but our heads do not rest there*) captured the essential meaning and imagery of the ST.

Thirdly, I struggled with several aspects of the third paragraph during translation. As previously mentioned, Fontaine generally favours single words and brief phrases throughout *Bleuets et abricots*, and the second line (*les ères glaciaires notre espace*) is a perfect example of her telegraphic style. Moreover, the line's musical features were quite difficult to re-enact. Here, Fontaine creates two sound repetitions: the vowel –è is echoed throughout the line, and the syllable –ère recurs in *ères* and *glaciaires*. Furthermore, the metre is loosely iambic, creating a gently rocking rhythm. In my translation, *the years of ice our glacial space*, I was able to express the core meaning of the ST and also convey Fontaine's musicality. Namely, the syllable –ace is repeated in *glacial* and *space*, the –i in *ice* is echoed in *glacial*, and a true iambic metre is introduced.

Fourthly, I had trouble translating the seemingly simple line *je dois étirer le cou.* Read alone, the line could easily be translated as "I need to stretch my neck." However, when the passage is considered in its entirety, the line suddenly evokes an intentional craning of the neck, an attempt to see clouds billowing above stark edifices, and I therefore chose the verb "crane" as opposed to "stretch". I also chose to omit "I need" to better mirror the syntactic structure of neighbouring lines (*I savour the cumulus*, *I sip the cirrus*). This contributed to the overall flow and rhythm of the poem.

In brief, during my translation of these four excerpts of Fontaine's poetry, my ultimate goal was to understand and express her auditory landscape, and consequently, her perception of the North. Unlike Morisset and Smith Gagnon, she portrays a territory that is intimate and familiar. While at times, her depiction of the landscape can be

interpreted as spiritual or sacred, there is no mention of silence in *Bleuets et abricots*. Rather, Fontaine's work is about breaking the silence. Her imagined North resonates with song and music, but above all, with her narrative voice, one that echoes the collective voices of all indigenous women, in Quebec and around the world.

Conclusion

In the present thesis, I took on the difficult challenge of translating poetry, with the specific goal of recreating each poet's perception and depiction of sound and silence in northern Quebec. By attempting to strike a balance between sound and sense, I hoped to capture the auditory landscape of each author, and consequently, their personal experiences of the territory. While all three poets had distinct writing styles and explored different subject matter, both Jean Morisset and Maude Smith Gagnon portrayed a region that was steeped in silence, contributing to our collective Western understanding of the North as a primarily empty, isolated, and silent space. As I analyzed and translated their selected poems, I discovered the various ways in which an impression of silence can be conveyed through words and writing. Some authors use pattern, repetition, open vowels, soft consonants, or noise to contrast and highlight the silence; others rely on line breaks, punctuation, and blank spaces to give way for breath and resonance. In brief, what we understand as "silence" cannot be evoked without sound. Jordie Graham's poem, "Notes on Silence", perfectly captures the symbiotic relationship between the two.

> Silence which is the absence of speech, or the ability to speak, the reason or desire. […] Its emissaries are the white spaces, of course, the full stops. But also, all acts of grammar, which are its inroads. And the way the lines break, or slow. […] And certain kinds of words, too, are messengers of silence. […] And certain sounds that deepen and slow the poem into sounds you can't hear – all the long vowels in the sharp teeth of the consonants. And echoes, and what is said by implication, and default (Graham, 1984).

Both Morisset and Smith Gagnon adopt writing techniques to evoke silence in their poetry, and I did my best to recreate this feeling in my translations. However, Fontaine's work was quite the opposite, and contrasted starkly with the other two poetry collections. As a young Innu woman, Fontaine's view of the North opposes the mythic

and exotic representations found in the majority of current Western literature. Consequently, silence has no place in her collection, whereas voice and musicality are pushed into the foreground. Overall, I found that the poets' use of sound was integral to their perception of the northern landscape, and was the necessary focus of my translation.

The difficulties I encountered in my translations were varied, but all stemmed from the challenge of re-enacting both sound and sense. Drawing from various sources in translation studies, particularly those that explored poetics and musicality, I did my best to accurately communicate the authors' musicality without adversely affecting the ST meaning. Following Meschonnic's notions of rhythm and continuum, I viewed each poetry collection, and each individual poem, in their entirety, and did not focus on individual words or segments. Inspired by Folkart's notion of "writerly" translation, I gave myself the freedom to approach each translation as a writer, and tried to rewrite rather than replicate the ST. Finally, I drew heavily from Fraser's work on sound translation to gain a heightened awareness of speech sounds and better understand the musical underpinnings of language. My resulting translations and analyses demonstrate the significance of sound and silence in these particular poetry collections, and the importance of considering both the intentional and incidental auditory features when translating the ST. Furthermore, my translations may help other translators develop an awareness of the subtle, unconscious musicality of language, and offer helpful translation tools. Overall, my thesis supports Chartier's notion of imagined spaces, and contributes to this interdisciplinary field by suggesting that biases and stereotypes associated with places and spaces exist in poetry as much as in other literary works.

As translators, we are often forced to find compromise solutions. Linguistic rules, such as phonetics, syntax, and prosody, vary from one language to the next, and cannot be easily replicated. The over-emphasis of one aspect of language is often detrimental to another, and many translators struggle to find a balance. The challenges associated with translating poetry, a fundamentally auditory literary form, are particularly daunting, because the meaning of a poem is often intrinsically tied to its sound. The underlying relationship between sound and sense has led many to deem poetry "untranslatable", but this narrow point of view fails to consider the endless possibilities of reinvention. All literary translation is, in fact, a rewriting; no text is perfectly preserved as it moves between languages. Instead of concerning ourselves with what cannot inevitably be preserved or replicated, I propose that we focus on the possibilities of recreation. In this way, translators may find a way to strike the perfect balance between meaning and musicality, and capture the essential core of the poem.

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Appendix 1 – Jean Morisset's original poems

violence
du silence hurlant qui te court après
quand tu lances ton désarroi au ciel du nord
en implorant le grand voilier d'outardes
de t'emporter au plus loin du lointain
pour te projeter en amont de toute migration

violence
du silence absolu de la douceur première
hantise cristalline de la caresse
détresse d'un surplus d'allégresse
émanant d'un champ de brume pulpeuse
sur les reins de l'aurore en jactance

violence
du silence rassurant de l'assimilation
quand tu interromps toute résistance
et remets aux dieux ton abdication suprême
enrobée d'un joli ruban de complaisance
sans autre mention que ta componction

silence
violence absolue de la parole première
tentant de se frayer une voie qui se récuse
à travers tous les langages qui la refusent
sous la réverbération de mots éclatés
glissant en kométique jusqu'à la folie

et le passage sans douleur
de l'inconscience en banquise
moment sans cesse suspendu
de l'éblouissement absolu
quand la beauté d'une gerbe de frasil
se laisse déposer sur la berge fondante
en continuant son cheminement aveugle
sous le regard avide de l'aveu mille-glaçons
et l'exigence acérée du froid qui l'emporte
dans le paradis ultime de la chasse engloutie

là où le silence a dissous toute violence
dans la nacelle du dernier iceberg

c'était des mots mouillés
qu'il avait réussi à rescaper
sur une vieille peau de caribou
gisant au fond d'un igloo tourbeux
sous une odeur vaseuse décompostée

c'était des mots humides
qu'il refusait de faire sécher
de peur qu'ils s'évanessent
sous la graisse ricaneuse
qui les avait fait germer

ah ha ah ya ya – ya ya ha ah ha

c'était des mots neige-bourgeons
mi-pavots mi-palmés mi-pelisses
qu'on n'avait pas encore nommés
et qui trottaient sans le dire
dans la cervelle des angagoks

c'était des mots puppés
qui avaient aussitôt déguerpi
pour aller jouer avec chiots-loups
sur la toundra des rochers polis
à l'anse des glaciers ricaneurs

ya ya ha ah ha – ah ha ah ya ya

c'était des mots libres et sans
traduction
qui avaient échappé aux noirs ravennes
et aux grands rapaces du dictionnaire

un jour peut-être quelque chasseur-poète
à pointe d'ivoire
tentera d'en harponner le parfum givré
ou l'élégance miroitante
pour les mélanger à la saveur du silence

j'espère qu'il suivra alors la grande piste
des saisons écarlates
sous la déclinaison de sterne-antarctique

il est des mots qui ne peuvent vivre
que s'ils refusent de se laisser prononcer

je vous en laisse un ou deux en souvenir
aya aya aya ada ada nada
attrapez les si vous le pouvez…

glacier-fauve bouldeur-griffu
rocher-crispé iceberg-ruade

ils s'avancent l'un vers l'autre
menaçants, jugulaire en saillie
nuque en rictus
pommette arquée
occiput en ruade
naseaux en écume
panache en socle

mais voilà que soudain
lumière-cajole
brise-murmure
neige-accalmie
soleil-frises
silence-sourire
se succèdent en cadence

se calment le fractal
sans l'avoir prédit
se donnent la patte
sans l'avoir prévu

la paix est rétablie
chez les bœufs musqués
et les grands oumigmaks
ayant échappé aux séracs

il n'y aura pas
de combat ce matin

et quelquefois
on se souvient vaguement
lorsque se prolonge l'hiver estival
et que s'époumone la primevère d'automne
sur le pôle-mer aux entrechocs rutilants

et quelquefois
on se souvient vaguement
à travers le mensonge des saisons
la véhémence des illuminations
ou le moutonnement d'une giboulée
sur le rêve-mirage en accordéon
du haut-arctique en germination

et quelquefois
on se souvient vaguement
d'une longue promenade sans intention
sur la poupe dégagée de la plus haute
marée de l'univers
parmi moraines, bouldeurs, bouscueils,
et autres coprophées des intestins glaciaires
évapo-salaison des gelées de varech
appel des mouettes à tête-chercheuse
et le croassement cloche-fêlée
d'un troupeau de ravennes en déveine
posant un moment la tête sur le
ventre de l'estran
et interrogeant la paume de l'être
devant la girouette du phoque moucheté
quelquefois on se souvient vaguement
que tout pays s'apprend par les pattes

et alors que le cœur laisse circuler
quelque pulsion intercalaire
quand s'estompe toute odeur de noirceur
au pays lointain de la nuit en-allée

pendant qu'une forme humaine
s'extirpant du pré-dorset
et du mirage pétrifié des millénaires
pour se poser doucement sur la pointe
du harpon brisé de mille dérives
sans autre commentaire que le
silence frémissant
sous le ciel blanc-muet
du désir trop vaste
des galaxies de minuit

Appendix 2 – Maude Smith Gagnon's original poems

p. 10-11

Trois cents kilomètres au nord de cette tige, une ville entière est ensevelie sous les décombres. La végétation de la taïga recouvre dans toute son étendue le sol granulaire où s'édifiaient autrefois des maisons, quelques bâtiments municipaux et un petit centre d'achats.

Il y a vingt ans, les gisements de la mine se sont épuisés. On a tout démoli. Quelques structures d'acier résistent encore. Un chemin de fer. Rien d'autre. Qu'un nuage de mouches noires.

***

Les rails se profilent à la lisière d'un champ de dunes paraboliques. Les brindilles sèches roulent en tonneaux sur le sol, s'éloignent. Quelques îlots d'ordre éparpillés là-bas, des petits-bois avortés qui pâlissent sous les pulsations du sable. Le vent ensevelit les rails par endroits, épaissit l'air et se comprime dans les couloirs étroits entre les troncs qui cernent l'étendue. C'est de là que proviennent ces sifflements.

p. 30-31

Un solage, une tuque rouge, un morceau de vitre. Ces formes gisent par terre dans un même lieu. Emmêlées dans les tiges et les ombres obliques que la lumière du jour redresse lentement. Un reflet.

***

À première vue, l'immobilité est ce qui différencie le monde animal du monde végétal. Pourtant, bien qu'elles ne possèdent pas de système nerveux, les plants bougent elles aussi. Stimulées par la lumière, les contacts, la pesanteur, elles se courbent, s'enroulent, s'étendent. Ici, une fleur ouvre ses pétales. Les deux parois d'un pétale ne s'allongent pas à la même vitesse. Une élévation de la température accélère la croissance de la face supérieure, et puisque de développement de la face inférieure est plus lent, la courbure du pétale s'inverse.

p. 32-33

Le lichen est gris, vert menthe quand il est détrempé. Il couvre à la fois les roches et la terre sur laquelle elles s'appuient, ramenant tous les détails du relief sur un même plan.

Cette surface rocailleuse, peu de plants s'y acclimatent. Le lichen, quant à lui, trouve toujours ce qu'il faut pour croître d'un maigre centimètre par an, curieuse association de la spore de champignon et de l'algue libre que le piétinement effrite au passage.

***

Des écailles de lichen couvrent la roche. Les ombres s'allongent. Rien d'autre ne bouge.

Soudain un oiseau, caché dans l'ombre, bondit sur la roche. Les crêtes se déchiquettent et s'envolent.

Par à-coups, l'oiseau tourne la tête à droite, regarde vers le ciel. Des touffes de plumes se retroussent sur sa poitrine exposée au vent.

p. 42-43

Les aiguilles de l'épinette noire, ces feuilles très étroites qui ne tombent pas l'hiver, sont munies d'une fine couche imperméable. Celle-ci limite les pertes liquides durant la saison froide, quand l'eau ne circule plus dans le sol.

Le tronc de l'épinette est maigre, ses branches courtes. Cette charpente laisse peu de prise au vent cinglant. Quant à son bois mou, il permet à l'arbre de se tordre sous le poids de la neige au lieu de casser.

La forêt boréale compte peu d'espèces. L'épinette, là, mesure trois mètres vingt. Elle a plus de cent ans.

***

Les flocons tombent avec lenteur.

La structure hexagonale de leurs cristaux les dote d'une légèreté qui permet de les repérer un à un dans le ciel, contrairement aux gouttes de pluie, et d'observer les derniers mètres de leur longue descente.

Ces flocons mettent plus d'une journée avant de se déposer dans la paume d'une main et de fondre à sa chaleur.

Au loin, quelques-uns d'entre eux s'isolent peu à peu de l'ensemble. Ils remontent ici et là, sous l'action des courants d'air.

Appendix 3 – Natasha Kanapé Fontaine's original poems

1. Excerpt of *La Marche*

Pays mien ô
je te nommerai par ton nom
aux enceintes Anticosti aux
enceintes Eeyou Istchee
ouvrir la porte aux réfugiés

On recueillera
la richesse invisible
perdue entre les villes
enchaînera les monstres de l'histoire
les contes éternels de la civilisation
en nos forêts subarctiques

Pays mien ô
je me ferai belle pour le poème
de ma grand-mère

Si je te nommais mon ventre
si je te nommais mon visage
le nom de mes montagnes ma rivière
Utshuat Upessamiu Shipu
le nom de mon fleuve mon sable mon lichen
Uinipeku Nutshimit

Je me coifferai
pareille au renne arctique
à la mousse résineuse des épinettes
eau-de-vie des cueillettes
Je me souviens
la tourbe mains moites
soumises au désespoir
au désir

Pays mien ô
voici ton nom
lové entre mes entrailles
sable et plages
lune et pierres

Chef de l'errance

clairières vibrantes
taïgas houleuses
toundras du tumulte
tu te dis sauvage
tu t’insinues en ma chair
dedans

2. Excerpt of *La Chasse*

Voici que l'on avance
droit vers le vide
la limite du Nord
homme sculpté
contraindre
le destin

Détourner la rivière
de sa trajectoire
musique des chutes
l'eau promet minéraux mémoire
équilibre élévation

Elle change de lit avec ses rapides
et la complainte des baleines
les camions marchent
grands ours de malheur
depuis des bois où l'on plante machineries
depuis des siècles et des siècles
orgies de rois
abandonnant derrière eux
paysage brisé
ossature brisée
mon trot caribou brisé

Détourner la rivière de sa trajectoire
les falaises pays mien
la cupidité aura mené
à séparer les eaux
prophétie en ces vieux récits de l'Exode

Je me penche vers le Sud
La douleur se fait morsure
ma côte gauche malade
ne peut plus attendre les dents du loup

Je n'ai plus de miroir
pour reconnaître mon visage
la soif à ma gorge
à mes convictions
à nos cris

3. Excerpt #1 of *La Cueillette*

Au Nord les étoiles courent
les aurores boréales veillent
redonnez-moi le nom de ces routes d'eau
asséchées par les barrages
que je boive à l'eau de nos montagnes
au baiser de sa bouche

Nous tressons à nouveau nos cheveux
plus personne pour les scalper
nous les arracher

Nous tressons le foin d'odeur
chevelure de notre mer
nous le brûlons pour le firmament
nous écoutons les cantilènes
de l'aube et de la mer
la septième génération se lève
elle compte les astres
au sein des ténèbres
nébuleuses et trous noirs
elle connaît par cœur le nom des galaxies
des systèmes solaires
le peuple des étoiles

Mon cœur palpite
je glisse des bagues
à mes doigts
je pose un bijou d'or sur ma tête
ce soir, je me vêtirai
de mes habits de lichen
j'arrangerai mes cheveux
à la venue de l'homme-tambour
je lui soufflerai à l'oreille
mille secrets
sur les météores

4. Excerpt #2 of *La Cueillette*

Je sais dépister
bleuets et abricots

Montréal
lève la tête
souviens-toi de ton nom
Hochelaga

Mon peuple est un peuple de nuages
nous ne les pelletons pas l'hiver
la neige nous élève en êtres insurgés
raquettes aux pieds, joues saillantes
miel de sapin sur les lèvres

Guidés par les neiges
les ères glaciaires notre espace
nous sommes dignes
nous sommes vivants

Je déguste les cumulus
immeubles de béton clôtures de bois
je dois étirer le cou

Je sirote les cirrus
les autres parlent
une autre langue
une autre pensée
une autre vie

L'horizon a un nom
ici
que je ne connais pas

ou sont passé
les visions larges
les yeux incrustés
dans les profondeurs ?

Appendix 4: Map of northern Quebec