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A few Notes on the Translator's Convention

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A few notes on the Translators' Convention

Anne D'HALEWYN

The First General Convention of Translators was held in Montreal on November 5, 1955. Some 300 people, amongst whom were delegates from all parts of the Country, gathered in an all-day session to hear prominent and very highly qualified speakers who discussed the different aspects of translating.

The theme of the Convention was: "The role of the translator" or rather "The task and responsibilities of the translator."

If we were not fully aware of the essential part played in the World by translation, we certainly were convinced of it at the end of the Convention. In fact, translation is most important everywhere, but maybe more so in a province like Quebec where there are two official languages.

Unfortunately, many still think that because they are bilingual, they can translate. As Prof. John Hughes said: "The mere fact of being bilingual does not automatically qualify a person as a translator." To be a good translator, one must not only understand a language, but also understand the people who use that language, so as to be able to interpret adequately the words by which they express their thoughts and feelings.

In a most interesting lecture, Robert LeBidois, from the Department of Language at the United Nations, told us how translators and interpreters are constant liaison agents between races,

nationalities and creeds. They promote understanding, they facilitate and improve relationship. Without them, research and solving of international problems would be hindered and sometimes impossible. Their work is not only useful, it is essential to society.

However, to achieve what is expected of them, translators and interpreters must acquire a vast general culture and a thorough knowledge of at least two languages.

Was this convention the beginning of a movement towards better translating and better co-operation between translators? Let us hope it was, as our joint efforts will accomplish more than the scattered works of a few. A great deal has been done, but let us say with Pierre Daviault, Chief Translator for the Government of Canada: "We should work and work constantly, as there is still much to be done."

There are many excellent translators in our midst, but there are also poor ones. Does the public know the difference? Much to our dismay, in many instances the answer is negative. How can we educate the public? That remains to be seen...

"Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well," said the Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773). To what does this apply better than to the art of translating? At a reception and dinner where about 265 translators and people interested in translation were the guests of the City of Montreal,

Léon Lortie, who was representing the Mayor of Montreal, ended his speech with these words : "We should all aim to translate the best English possible into the best French possible and the best French possible into the best English possible." Thank you, Mr. Lor-

tie, for describing so well the goal that each one of us should have.

Thank you also, Rev. Brother Stanislas-Joseph and your committee, for having organized so efficiently this constructive and inspiring Convention.

* * *

1er CONCOURS de TRADUCTION

Texte anglais:

Le talent littéraire.

L'imagination et l'esprit ne sont point, comme on le suppose, les bases du véritable talent littéraire : c'est le bon sens avec l'expression heureuse. Tout ouvrage, même un ouvrage d'imagination, ne peut vivre, si les idées y manquent d'une certaine logique qui les enchaîne, qui donne au lecteur le plaisir de la raison, même au milieu de la folie.

Voyez les chefs-d'œuvre de notre littérature : après un mûr examen vous découvrirez que leur supériorité tient à un bon sens caché, à une raison admirable, qui est comme la charpente de l'édifice. Ce qui est faux finit par déplaire : l'homme a en lui-même un principe de droiture qu'on ne choque pas impunément. De là vient que les ouvrages des sophistes n'obtiennent qu'un succès passager; ils brillent un instant d'un faux éclat et tombent dans l'oubli.

(Chateaubriand)

Traduction anglaise:

*Literary Talent.*¹

Imagination² and wit³ are not, as is⁴ supposed, the foundations⁵ of true literary talent : it is common⁶ sense with felicity in the expression.⁷ Any⁸ work, even a work of fiction, cannot live,⁹ if the ideas are devoid of¹⁰ a certain logic which connects them and gives the reader the pleasure of reason, even through the flights of the imagination.¹¹

Look at the masterpieces of our literature; upon¹² a serious examination, you will find out¹³ that their superiority is due to¹⁴ a hidden common sense, an admirable reasoning which is like the framework of the edifice.¹⁵ What is false displeases in the end;¹⁶ man¹⁷ has in himself a principle of rectitude¹⁸ which cannot be⁴ offended with impunity.¹⁹ Thence²⁰ it follows that the works of sophists obtain but²¹ a transitory²² success; they throw a false glare²³ for a while and then fall into oblivion.

Commentaires

1. Ne pas oublier de traduire le titre. — 2. On omet l'article parce que le sens est indéfini. — 3. *Esprit* dans le sens de *finesse, sagacité*, se traduit par *wit*. On emploie *spirit* pour signifier *substance immatérielle* et *mind* pour exprimer l'âme comme centre des pensées et des sentiments. — 4. Le verbe qui a pour sujet le pronom *on* se traduit souvent par la forme passive. On peut cependant conserver la forme active en prenant pour sujet *people, one, they*, etc., quand le sens le permet. N'employer *we* que si la personne qui parle prend part à l'action exprimée par le verbe. — 5. *Ou bases* (pluriel de *basis*), *fundamentals*. — 6. *Ou good sense*. — 7. *Ou with an appropriate style, with clever, happy expression*. — 8. *Tout*, dans le sens de *quiconque, quelconque*, etc., se traduit par *any*. Toutefois, la négation peut s'adjoindre au sujet plutôt qu'au verbe, en commençant ainsi: *No work . . . can . . .* — 9. *Ou endure*. — 10. *Ou wanting in, lack* (non pas *lack of*). — 11. C'est-à-dire *à travers les écarts de l'imagination*. On peut traduire *in the midst of folly*. — 12. *Ou after*. — 13. *Ou discover*. — 14. *Ou is owing to, comes from, depends upon, springs from*. — 15. *Ou structure, fabric*. — 16. *Finir* par suivi d'un verbe se traduit par cet autre verbe modifié par *at last, at length, in the end, in the long run*. — 17. Sens général: l'espèce humaine, sans article. — 18. *Uprightness* exprime la droiture du cœur; *rectitude* celle du jugement. — 19. *Impunately* n'existe pas, l'expression consacrée est *with impunity*. — 20. *Ou from there*.