

UNTRANSLATABLE TEXTS AND LITERARY PROBLEMS: A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

Joseph Pivato

Athabasca University

134 Over the past decade, debates about the role of translations in studies focused on Comparative Literature have grown. Questions of self-translation and untranslatable texts have also been added to this discourse. The aim of this article is to bring a Canadian perspective to these discussions by looking at the writing and translation of Nancy Huston in English and French, and those of Italian-Canadian writer Arianna Dagnino in English and Italian. While these two sections revolve around selected Canadian authors switching between European languages, the third section deals, more generally, with the problems of translating Indigenous writing in Canada.

I begin with my early experience with untranslatable texts and the problems that they posed for literary studies dependent upon texts in English translation. As a university student, I was often disturbed by the misuse of the translated novels by Gabrielle Roy in English courses. In the 1970s and 1980s, Gabrielle Roy's novels were included in many Canadian Literature courses as if they were English-language works. Instructors and students often ignored the fact that they were originally written in French, often in a Quebec context, and had been translated into English. In fact, these novels were misrepresented to students by assuming them under the general rubric of Canadian literature, without recognizing that there are two distinct literatures: one in English and one in French. The fact that we have programs, courses, academic studies, and publications in Comparative Canadian Literature is a recognition of the many differences that exist between the two literary traditions, and we must realize that translation can bridge some of those differences, not all. As part of this discussion, I often refer readers to E.D. Blodgett's critical essay, "How Do You Say 'Gabrielle Roy'?"

In his 1923 essay "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin argues that trans-

latability is an essential feature of a work of art, but then he goes on to examine the many different problems of the relationship between the original work and its reproduction in the translation (1-4). Let us look briefly at some of the discussions which have been carried on in recent publications by scholars in translation studies. In 2009, the journal *Translation Studies* devoted an entire issue to the examination of the “translational turn” in the humanities and social sciences. The introduction to this issue was written by the German scholar Doris Bachmann-Medick, who explained in a note that the English translation of her “Introduction: The Translational Turn” uses the German term *Kulturwissenschaften* (cultural sciences) rather than the Anglo-American term *cultural studies* because the German concept “is less focused on popular culture, less clearly political, more historically oriented and more interested in the larger, epistemologically reflexive discussion of ‘culture’ in general” (14). She thus identifies a problem with translation in her own article on translation.

One of the pioneers of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies in the UK is Susan Bassnett, who wrote about the translation turn in Cultural Studies back in 1998 (123-40), and in 2018 edited *Translation and World Literature*, in which she explores “the rocky relationship between translation studies and world literature” (4), and we could add Comparative Literature (4-9). This volume includes chapters on translation and world literature in India, in Latin America, and in the minority literatures of the Mediterranean region.

The most active American scholar of the relationships between translation and Comparative Literature is Emily Apter, who began with *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2005), which presented an optimistic view that tried to reconcile the disputes between comparative study in the original languages and that dependent on translations in English. After the 9/11 attack in New York, the role of translation inside and outside the academy took on more urgency. Did Comparative Literature have a role to play, or was it the death of a discipline as predicted by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak? I do not think that Translation Studies can answer this question.

In her 2013 volume *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, Apter returns to the debate and criticizes Franco Moretti’s 2007 project *The Novel*, a survey in world literature and other related world literature projects. Apter’s book grew out of her translation work on Barbara Cassin’s *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles* (2004). She described it as a cartography of national differences in languages, consisting of 400 entries. It explains philosophically important words of approximate equivalence in different languages and reveals ambiguities and nuances that many readers may not always understand. In addition to Cassin, the original author, Apter worked with seven other translators to produce this 1344-page volume, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (2014).

In *Against World Literature*, Apter focuses her attacks on the entrepreneurial enterprises to anthologize and canonize the world’s cultural resources for the benefit of global publishing giants. These ventures paper over cultural and language differences and privilege dominant languages, literatures, and cultures, such as English. One of

the problems with Apter's approach is that her discussion of literature is removed from the actual literary texts, and her focus is often the theoretical exegesis of a given work. I have found this a common problem among American academics who study translation as an abstract theoretical problem rather than an everyday reality; in Canada, particularly in urban centres such as Montréal and Ottawa-Gatineau, translation is a lived reality. This was clearly demonstrated during the COVID-19 health crisis, for which all government announcements had to be bilingual, in both English and French. The subtitle of Apter's book is "the politics of untranslatability," but its focus is on abstract philosophical terms and European languages and cultures, while ignoring translation problems and politics in the US itself. Bachmann-Medick makes this observation about the focus on theory:

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At that point scholarly thinking and perceptions themselves become translational as moves gather pace towards border thinking, towards greater interest in interstices and the focus on mediation. In this framework translation is an analytical concept for social theory, action theory, cultural theory, microsociology, migration studies, history, the theory of interculturality, and so on, that no longer remains on the merely metaphorical level but is worked out on the basis of empirical processes. (4)

One book that deals directly with the politics of translation in the US is Marta E. Sanchez's *A Translational Turn: Latinx Literature into the Mainstream* (2019), the first study that explicitly combines Latino literature in dialogue with translation studies. Beyond theorizing about questions of translation and Comparative Literature, Sanchez clearly traces the long history of contact through bilingualism in Spanish and English, resulting in code-switching, multiculturalism, and tension. While many political groups in the US persist in representing the country as having one national language and one Anglo culture, the linguistic ecology is transforming major cities. A telling example of the cultural changes taking place is the phenomenon of counter-national translations from English to Spanish, a kind of bilingualism that Canadian scholars can appreciate.

A Canadian scholar who has focused on self-translation is Rainier Grutman, with work that goes beyond the theoretical questions mentioned above. He has published in English, French, Spanish, and Italian. In his research, Grutman has shown that self-translation is not as rare a practice as many readers think it is. He has found, for instance, that eight authors who have won the Nobel Prize for literature are also self-translators: Frédéric Mistral (1904), Rabindranath Tagore (1913), Karl Adolph Gjellerup (1917), Luigi Pirandello (1934), Samuel Beckett (1969), Isaac Bashevis Singer (1978), Czeslaw Milosz (1980), and Joseph Brodsky (1987). He points out that 50% of these authors self-translated into English (70). Grutman's point of reference is his experience with bilingualism in Canada and with Canadian authors. It is in discourse with the above scholars that I examine our three Canadian cases of translation problems.

The Canadian-born French author Nancy Huston has practiced translation as part of her creative process for over 40 years, and yet she explains the problem with trans-

lation as follows:

Le problem, voyez-vous, c'est que les langues ne sont pas seulement des langues; ce sont aussi des *world views*, c'est-à-dire des façons de voir et de comprendre le monde. Il y a de l'intraduisible là-dedans... Et si vous avez plus d'une *world view*... vous n'en avez, d'une certaine façon, aucune. (51)

This statement from Huston's book *Nord Perdu* (1999) implies that texts can be untranslatable because they are connected to a particular world view. Note that in her French statement Huston uses the English term *world view* in italics to highlight the fact that it does not have a French equivalent. She explains it as “des façons de voir et de comprendre le monde.” By using the English term *world view*, she acknowledges that the term captures a more complex idea than just a way of seeing the world. We could call it untranslatable. She suggests that if you hold more than one world view, in a sense you have none. These ideas are consistent with the arguments that Huston makes in her essay “False Bilingualism,” in which she explains the difference between true and false bilingualism based on her own life experience with languages. In the English version of *Nord Perdu*, *Losing North*, she explains:

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True bilinguals are those who...learn to master two languages in early childhood and can move back and forth between them smoothly and effortlessly [...]. False bilinguals (the category to which I belong) are a whole 'nother ballgame [...] I can try to describe what it's like to have the brain of a false one.

When monolinguals perceive a familiar object, its name automatically leaps to mind. In my case, the name that leaps depends on the language I happen to be thinking in. Sometimes one of the words comes to me when it's the other I need. Sometimes both pop up simultaneously or in quick succession. But sometimes the process gets bogged down, clogged up, blocked off and I could tear my hair out [...]. (40-41)

Huston first learned some French at schools in Alberta and then as a university student at Sarah Lawrence College in New York State. She went on to earn a Master's Degree in French from L'École des Hautes Études in Paris. Therefore, she did not learn French as a child as if it were a mother language. In several essays in *Nord Perdu*, Huston returns repeatedly to the notion of the mother tongue. After writing in French for years, Huston discovers that she had trouble writing in English: “I'd turned my back on my mother tongue for too long, and it no longer recognized me as its daughter” (38).

Saffie, the main character of Huston's French novel of this period, *L'empreint de l'ange* (1998), is originally a German woman who moves to Paris, gets married to a French man, and has a child. Later she realizes that when her little son Emil begins to talk, it will be in French and not in German: “Quand Emil se mettra à parler, il l'appellera non pas Mutti mais maman. C'est terminé Mutter, et Muttersprache avec: suspendues, une fois pour toutes” (74).

Saffie's mother tongue is German, the language of her relationships with her family, and it is a dramatic adjustment for her, much like Huston herself, to live in the new language learned as an adult. The learned language can never have the same

emotional associations as the mother tongue. With Saffie's realization, memories of her own childhood surface, memories which are in German and cannot be easily translated into French.

In her English version of Saffie's realization above, Huston uses 34 words to translate the 24 French words: "When Emil starts to talk, he'll call her not Mutti but Maman. Mutti is over and done with and so is Muttersprache, both are over and done with, once and for all" (67). In both the French and the English versions, Huston uses the German word *Muttersprache* since it would have a different emotional association than *the mother tongue* for both the character and for Huston herself. The idea of *mother, mère, mutti, mamma* has many associations in different languages and cultures. Among French people, if you have a French mother, or even a French grandmother, you are considered French, no matter where you were born. Saffie cannot share in this association, nor in this assurance of belonging.

138 The problem of a mother's relationship with her children is a recurring theme in Huston's novels. Even working in two languages she cannot seem to capture the qualities of such relationships; it is as though they are, by nature, untranslatable. Just to give an Italian example of the *mamma* obsession, we have love songs devoted to the mother, the best known of which is *Mamma* (1940), famously sung by Claudio Villa and often used in sentimental Italian films and TV programs. Again we can translate the words, but how do we capture the emotion and the many cultural associations that come with it, including the Madonna, the Virgin Mary, and the hundreds of paintings that try to evoke this ideal?

ESCAPE FROM THEORY

When she arrived in Paris in 1973, Huston found that theory was very intimidating to creative writers, especially young writers. There were Nathalie Sarraute's "ère du soupçon," Bernard Noël's rejection of syntax, and Roland Barthes's rejection of character development. Barthes was her thesis advisor. It was only in 1980, when he died suddenly in a traffic accident, that Huston could consider creative writing. She tells us in *Nord Perdu*:

I decided to return to writing in English. I was starved for theoretical innocence. I longed to write long, free, wild, gorgeous sentences that explored all the registers of emotion, including—why not?—the pathetic. I wanted to tell stories wholeheartedly, fervently, passionately—and to *believe* in them [...]. (37)

In her first English novel, *Plainsong* (1993), Huston begins the narrative with a long, free sentence of 156 words:

And here is how I visualize the moment of your death: a falling away a draining and receding and lightening and melting and sliding of the world like the gradual disappearance of snow in the forest, or like colours slowly spilling outside the frame and leaving nothing on the canvas, while in the meantime your limbs grew numb and leaden, becom-

ing one with the mattress, the floor, the earth, even your rage turning to froth and its millions of bubbles bursting as your mind sank deeper and deeper into matter... I see a long highway curving across the plain and the sun beating down on it, beating you down into the asphalt, the crushed rock and tar—you're part of that road now Paddon, that endless grey ribbon of an idea about going somewhere—lying flat yes flattened at last into the plain from which you'd struggled to arise—a faintly perceptible scar on its surface. (1)

The French version of this novel, *Cantique des plaines* (1993), begins with this long statement but uses 181 words over two sentences:

Et voici comme je m'imagine ton agonie: le monde se met à tomber lentement à s'écouler à s'éloigner à s'alléger à fonder et à couler, comme lorsque la neige s'en va tout doucement de la forêt, ou comme une peinture dont les forms glisseraient peu à peu hors du cadre pour ne rien laisser sur la toile, et pendant ce temps tes membres s'alourdissent et s'engourdissent jusqu'à ne plus faire qu'un avec le matelas, avec la terre, jusqu'à ce que ta rage elle-même devienne de l'écume dont les millions de bulles éclatent à mesure que tu t'enfonces dans la matière... Je vois une route qui traverse la plaine en une courbe infinie et le soleil qui l'écrase, qui t'écrase toi contre l'asphalte, la pierre pulvérisée et le gouddron—oui désormais tu fais partie de cette route, Paddon, ce long ruban gris suggérant qu'il serait peut-être possible d'aller quelque part—tu es aplati enfin sur cette plaine, une cicatrice à peine perceptible à sa surface. (5)

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The original English version of *Plainsong* was rejected by publishers, so Huston translated it into French and then went back and rewrote the English version. She found that this process of self-translation helped her improve the language quality of both versions, and so she continued to translate all her novels from French to English or from English to French, for a total, so far, of 16 novels in French and 16 in English. Many of them are attempts to bridge the problems of the untranslatable.

THE MUSIC OF LANGUAGE

An American professor of cognitive science, Douglas Hofstadter, published a book on translation, *Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language* (1997), which began in 1987 as a project to translate a 62-word French poem by Clément Marot, who died in 1544. The book documents 75 different translations by Hofstadter, family members, his friends, colleagues, and strangers, along with detailed commentaries for each translation. The final book is 606 pages long and a testament to the joy and sorrow of translation.

TRANSLATION IN 3-D

After spending several years as an Italian journalist in South Africa, Arianna Dagnino began to write a novel set there that dealt with white Afrikaner and indigenous African characters such as the Bushmen. It was an ambitious undertaking.

Dagnino looked at two different societies and cultures in South Africa just after Apartheid had ended, and then filtered her perceptions through a third language and culture, Italian.

The Italian novel, *Fossili*, was published in 2010 while Dagnino was in Australia. There she decided to publish an English version and investigated having it professionally translated. In a 2018 essay on the collaborative nature of translation, Dagnino explains her first experience with a professional translation of her Italian novel into English:

It was undoubtedly a good translation, and professionally done; however, I must admit I was far from satisfied with it. To me the text sounded hollow—almost soulless. My voice, the rhythm of my literary voice, was not there. (85)

140 What Dagnino found was that the music of the language was missing from that English version. The chapters in English were rejected by three publishers, so she abandoned the idea at that time and focused on her PhD work at the University of South Australia. By 2015, Dagnino was in Canada teaching at the University of British Columbia and turned to her novel once more:

This time, however, I decided I would translate it myself. I would try to find my voice in another language, infusing my work with the right rhythm and poetic tone. It took me almost two years to complete the self-translation [...] (85)

Dagnino soon became aware of the differences between her Italian style and the needs of the English style. By its nature, Italian can be a wordy language, which is difficult to reduce to English plain style. From her Italian perspective, Dagnino wanted to keep as much as possible of the sensory aspect, the physicality, the sentimental and poetic qualities of her original text. The English text needed to be detached, restrained, and succinct. The French call this problem *les belles infidels*, the need to make changes in the target language in order to suit the tastes of the given audience. The new title was now *The Afrikaner*; the English translation of the Italian title was “Fossils,” which would have suggested a text on anthropology rather than a novel.

In my reading of *The Afrikaner*, I found it a successful work of translation. The author was able to keep the sensual and rich description of the desert landscape:

South African territory has spectacular red sand dunes, with solitary black-maned lions roaming the open pans. Occasionally, mighty baobabs rise amidst arid plains [...] Some of those giants are more than a thousand years old. (92)

The original Italian version of this passage has several differences from the English:

Territorio sudafricano presenta spettacolari dune di sabbia rossa su cui si aggirano leoni dalla criniera nera [...] Solo ogni tanto dalla arida prateria emergono baobab. (123)

Here the lions are not solitary, the baobabs are not mighty, and there is no reference to “giants [...] more than a thousand years old.” To my reading, the English revision is an improvement over the original Italian version.

The English adaptation begins with a glossary of 100 Afrikaans words used in the text. In the novel, these Afrikaans terms are often in italics; nevertheless, they seem to fit easily into the flow of the English, possibly because of the common Germanic roots of many of these words. In the Italian edition, the glossary is at the end of the book. These Afrikaans words cannot be translated by one word, so the glossary has an explanation of what they mean and how they are used.

How well do the Afrikaans words fit into the flow of written Italian? The Afrikaans words are in italics, along with some English words such as *hijacking* and *trek*. In reading the Italian version, there are places where it seems exotic and tends to separate the reader from the story. In the English version, the reader remains in the realism of the moment.

Could it be that because of the African setting and the hybrid quality of English, the novel is a better work in English than in Italian? This quality becomes evident upon close reading and the feeling that it could not exist in any other language. The collaborative process of self-translation that Dagnino discusses in her 2018 essay led her to make many changes to the original text, as she was rewriting it in English (90). From her Italian perspective, Dagnino may feel a sense of betrayal of her original Italian text; however, she said in that 2018 essay that she realized self-translation can be a collaborative process, a creative combination leading to a sense of cultural roundedness and artistic integrity (97). Her collaborative process involved having different readers review her English translations as she was working on them.

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I was introduced to South Africa in high school through the reading of Alan Paton's novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948). The geography of South Africa was conceived and translated into English and/or Afrikaans terms for the Western world. To me, it is difficult to see how you can conceive it in Italian. Do you try to translate it from the English into Italian, or do you reconceive it from scratch and write it into Italian? Dagnino's Italian version of her novel was a difficult enough undertaking, as difficult as trying to translate the idea of *mamma* from Italian into English; and then she translated her novel from Italian into English. She overcame the untranslatable passages of the Italian text by rewriting them entirely in English.

In her critical writing, Dagnino continues to investigate the problems of translation and self-translation and how this study may help her understand her own creative writing practices. In her article "Breaking the Linguistic Minority Complex through Creative Writing and Self-Translation" she reviews the work of a number of world authors who consciously decided to switch languages in mid-career and/or self-translate. Much of the article focuses on Italian-Canadian writer Antonio D'Alfonso, who composes in French, English, or Italian and then self-translates his text into one of the other languages. In this apparently free movement from one language to another, D'Alfonso sometimes confronts the untranslatable passage or poem. We can determine that Dagnino is building on the previous work done by Susan Bassnett and Rainier Grutman.

INDIGENOUS LITERATURE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE UNTRANSLATABLE

In 2018, the new Royal Alberta Museum opened in downtown Edmonton. When we enter the large display on human history in the territory of Alberta, we are met by several large examples of stone circles. These structures were usually created on hills that had a large view of the surrounding prairie. The stone circles have large arrangements of stones in round patterns and sometimes with radiating lines going out in several directions. They have been created over hundreds of years as meeting places for the nomadic Indigenous people who lived and hunted on the great plains. There were probably hundreds of them all over North America, but there are now only a few, which are preserved as important historic sites.

142 In order to explain the significance of these stone circles, there is a huge screen on one wall of the museum with a video of a senior archaeologist speaking with an Indigenous elder. The two men are carefully walking around one of these large stone circles somewhere in southern Alberta. The archaeologist asks the elder questions about the meaning of the structure, and the elder answers in general terms. He makes it quite clear that this is a sacred place that should not be disturbed in any way: no digging in the ground. He explains that he cannot share the stories about these circles, stories that are passed down to only a few chosen people in his Indigenous community. These stories only exist in an Indigenous language such as Cree and should not be translated into English or French; they are untranslatable because they are sacred.

This is a concrete example of a problem that researchers into Indigenous culture and oral literature are encountering. How do you talk about sacred stories that cannot be shared or translated? In the last twenty years, there has been a very significant development in the growth of Indigenous literature in Canada. We now have dozens of authors who are exploring all the difficulties of life for people from First Nations, both on and off reserves. How do they deal with the prohibition of not using or sharing the sacred stories of their community? In “The Task of the Translator,” Benjamin briefly explores the spiritual dimensions of translation in bringing these qualities out from the original text, but I am not sure that his remarks would help us with this question of Indigenous stories that are sacred.

Here I mention just a few examples to indicate the need for more research into this question of sacred stories. My former colleague at Athabasca University, Tracey Lindberg, published her novel *Birdie* in 2015, about a young woman, Bernice, who leaves her reserve in search of a better life. Lindberg included elements of Cree folklore and oral tradition in her story. Was she able to do this because they were not considered sacred? In interviews, Lindberg explained that she was apprehensive about returning to her northern community, the Kelly Lake Cree Nation, to launch her book there. What would the reaction of her community be with regard to her

using their stories?

These questions about the appropriation of stories need further research. I am now conducting a survey of a number of Indigenous writers in Canada, with questions about the use and translation of their stories. I am already getting results that indicate some level of disagreement among the various Indigenous communities across Canada. To mention some examples of works that include Indigenous myths, folklore, and spiritual traditions, Richard Wagamese explores the traditions of the Ojibway community in *Keeper 'n Me* (1994); Louise Bernice Halfe brings out the mythical qualities of Indigenous teachings in *Blue Marrow* (1998); and Thomas King focuses on the oral traditions of Indigenous people in *Truth and Bright Water* (1999). There are many different First Nations communities across the vast geography of Canada, and it is a mistake to think that they are all the same simply by using the general term *Indigenous*.

One writer who challenges the notion that all Indigenous people are one large homogeneous population is Thomas King. In his much-anthologized essay “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial,” King attacks the view of all Indigenous literature as a reaction to colonialism, rather than an extension of longer and many distinct native traditions. In King’s opinion, the term *postcolonial* serves to reinforce the legacy of colonialism.

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My final example is a positive project in translation that rescued an Inuit novel from an English translation that was not faithful to the original intentions of the author, Markoosie Patsauq. In 1969, Inuit writer Patsauq published *Harpoon of the Hunter*, the first novel on Inuit culture and in the Inuktitut language. After it appeared in the Inuktitut magazine, the director of this publication, James McNeill, helped Patsauq translate it into English, and *Harpoon of the Hunter* was published in Montreal in 1974. The story deals with an Inuit boy in a coming-of-age quest confronting starvation, hypothermia, and a deadly polar bear, all told in the raw details of the Inuktitut language. In trying to make the original story more palatable to English readers, McNeill made many embellishments that are not in the Inuktitut text and do not represent the author’s original intentions.

In 2015, Valerie Henitiuk, a professor at Concordia University, Edmonton, became interested in producing a better version of the Inuit novel. With the help of Marc-Antoine Mahieu of the Sorbonne Paris Cité Université, and the cooperation of Markoosie Patsauq himself, Henitiuk produced *Hunter with Harpoon*, which was published in 2020. The scholarly edition includes the original Inuktitut text, a new English translation, and a new French translation. Prof. Mahieu, a linguist in Inuktitut, points out that “Markoosie’s writing is calm and beautiful. It is very different from that suggested by the 1974 English adaptation, which is full of representations that are foreign to the Inuit world view” (“Markoosie Patsauq”). By putting the three versions of the novel together in one book, the two translators hoped to bridge that gap across the untranslatable divide.

I began this essay with a brief review of the discourse on translation and its relation to comparative studies. In the many texts that I examined on this topic, I found

no references to Indigenous literature. Only the Australian writer Joshua Mostafa, in his critique of Emily Apter's *Against World Literature*, made conscious links to the Indigenous writers of Australia and referred to Indigeneous educator Jeanie Bell's critical essay in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians* (2003) (22-24). In 2019, Susan Bassnett and David Johnston called for the much-needed inclusion of minority writers in the ever-growing enterprise of translation studies:

What the idea of an Outward Turn entails must be the recognition of the need for an increasing plurality of voices from across the globe...that different traditions maintain their perspective and assert the value of their own anxieties and insights within the homogenizing contexts of international student recruitment patterns [...] and the perceived prestige of Anglophone publishing. (181)

144 For many years I had my students read Howard O'Hagan's novel *Tay John*, which he published in 1939. It is loosely based on the historical Indigenous figure Tête Jaune, or Yellowhead. In the novel, O'Hagan has a number of different narrators tell different versions of the story, but we never read what Tay John speaks for himself. In his acknowledgements, O'Hagan lists the sources of his information about Indigenous people: Diamond Jenness's *The Indians of Canada* (1932); Charles Hill-Tout of Vancouver, who provided information about the Salish and Shuswap communities; and Jonnie Moyé and Joe Sangré of Fish Lake, Alberta, who shared stories of their people. We cannot pretend that this work speaks *for* Indigenous people; it only speaks *about* them. This is as far as translation has gone in this work.

CONCLUSION

My three examples, including the individual authors Nancy Huston and Arianna Dagnino, as well as more general challenges faced by the translation of Indigenous Canadian literature, demonstrate some of the different problems that we face with translating literary texts. It is clear that the untranslatable text is not limited to individual works, but can owe to a more general cultural context and belief system. In the past I have had to confront similar translation problems among Italian-Canadian writers. I explored this question in the essay "1978: Language Escapes: Italian-Canadian Authors Write in an Official Language and Not in Italianese." My fifty years of work in Comparative Literature have taught me that the problems of translation, self-translation, and the untranslatable will always be of interest to literary scholars, students, and readers. I demonstrated this belief in the book that I co-edited with Giulia De Gasperi, *Comparative Literature for the New Century* (2019). We included five essays by bilingual or trilingual contributors that explored translation questions and code-switching in different languages, and this critical discourse is ongoing.

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