

From Translating between Colonial Languages to Minoritizing Translation

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Two translators of Canadian and U.S. Indigenous literary creations present their respective translation projects in this section. In “From One Colonial Language to Another: Translating Natasha Kanapé Fontaine’s ‘Mes lames de tannage,’” Lianne Moyes analyses her English translation of one of the Innu poet’s most important slams in order to address the relationship between Indigenous literatures—in particular its oral tradition—and settler languages in general, and the translation of French-language Indigenous literature from Québec into English in particular. Translating into English broadens the interpretative community of Indigenous writers across North America: a clear gain. However, translating into English a writer who works primarily in the French but whose mother tongue is Innu-aimun, a language that she is relearning, highlights the losses incurred by moving from one colonial language to another. As a settler-translator, Moyes is fully cognizant of the losses and seeks out translation strategies to compensate for them, from disrupting the English version by including French and leaving words un-translated, to exposing her mediating work of settler-translator. She hopes that Kanapé Fontaine’s “mobilization of French for a writing of decolonization” will result in her work being translated into Indigenous languages, along the lines of the translation work into Cree undertaken by Tomson Highway. By contrast, Isis Herrero López takes her inspiration from Lawrence Venuti to develop a minoritizing translation project in “A Practical Proposal to Use Venuti’s ‘Minoritizing Translation’ for Native American Literature.” Herrero López considers Native American literature a minor literature in the Deleuze and Guattari sense, yet her corpus of Sherman Alexie’s, Louise Erdrich’s, Zitkala-Ša’s and N. Scott Momaday’s novels is domesticated in Iberian Spanish translation to conform to target literary system norms of linguistic and syntactic fluency, and refined stylistics. As a result, the source text Indigenous cultural and literary differences are not transferred into the Spanish translations, and the socio-political activism tends to be downplayed. Herrero López’s aim is to encourage Spanish readers to familiarize themselves with the foreign cultures portrayed in the novels, even if the process is destabilizing. Readers will undoubtedly gain new knowledge from familiarizing themselves with the linguistic hybridity that results from the socio-linguistic power imbalance to which Indigenous groups are subjected in the Americas, and the political battles that they must wage to overcome injustice.