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**Rendre l'équivalence dans la langue cible :
traduction communicative de *Portraits d'un
pays* vers l'anglais**

Avant-propos

Portraits d'un pays, de Naïm Kattan, est un ouvrage qui donne aux lecteurs un aperçu à la fois intime et humoristique sur les vies et carrières de certaines figures de proue canadiennes et québécoises des derniers quarante ans. En traduction, cet aperçu sera également apprécié par un public anglophone. Le traducteur qui se voit confronté à un tel ouvrage sentira, il va sans dire, le besoin d'en produire une version anglaise qui répond à toutes les exigences d'un lecteur minutieux, la plus parfaite limpidité quant à la langue et la plus nette fidélité quant au contenu.

Les portraits en question tirent un charme additionnel du fait qu'ils nous apprennent tant sur Naïm Kattan que sur les personnalités dont ils traitent. Ses sujets constituent une véritable mosaïque de personnalités canadiennes et québécoises. M. Kattan nous livre ses réflexions sur des écrivains canadiens-anglais aussi bien connus que Margaret Laurence, Marshall McLuhan, Northrop Frye, et Hugh MacLennan ; du côté québécois, il nous parle avec beaucoup d'entrain et de perspicacité d'Yves Thériault, Jacques Ferron, Hubert Aquin, et Alice Parizeau. Il nous fait en outre des révélations inattendues sur les carrières de politiciens aussi bien connus que René Lévesque et André Laurendeau. Grâce à son ouvrage, ce sont à peu près les plus grandes figures de l'histoire littéraire et politique du Québec et du Canada qui défilent devant nous.

Je me suis vite rendu à l'évidence, cependant, que Naïm Kattan n'est pas un auteur facile à traduire. Sa personnalité intellectuelle est remarquable pour son idiosyncrasie très marquée, fuyante et insaisissable, tant par le caractère enchevêtré de ses périodes que par la complexité de sa pensée. Naïm Kattan est effectivement un penseur ; il appartient à cette élite d'écrivains au Québec qui contribuent d'une façon tangible à l'avancement de la pensée. Il possède en outre le mérite de vouloir combler le fossé qui existe entre ce que le romancier Hugh MacLennan a pittoresquement décrit comme étant les « deux solitudes », c'est-à-dire les sociétés francophones et anglophones du Québec et du Canada. Peut-être ma traduction agira-t-elle quelque peu dans le même sens.

Translator's Introduction

My aim in translating Naïm Kattan's *Portraits d'un pays* is to enable the English-speaking reader to enjoy the collection of intimate, humorous, and insightful glances into the lives of some of the most influential Canadian and Quebecois political and literary figures of the last forty years that are to be had in this fine work. And strictly from the standpoint of translation, my major goal has been to provide as close a reading as possible in an idiomatic, fluent rendering in English.

But why did I choose to translate *Portraits d'un pays*? And why did I choose an author whose distinctive, even idiosyncratic, use of the French language might be expected to deter the translator?

The answer to these questions is that when I first read this book, I immediately realized it was such as no Canadian or Quebecois observer of the cultural scene could have written: this collection of biographical sketches of prominent Canadians reflects the perspective of a foreign observer who had become intimately acquainted with the Canadian literary establishment. Accordingly, *Portraits d'un pays* should be considered as genuine a contribution to Canadian comparative literature as has been published during the last twenty years. My own enthusiasm for the book stems from the realization that, when translated into English, it will potentially acquaint many anglophone readers with the names and achievements of some of the leading figures in Quebec literary history.

Although *Portraits d'un pays* is a collection of biographical sketches, it is also highly autobiographical in that all these figures were people whom Naïm Kattan knew personally. Some of these people will be familiar, and others, little known. The subjects of this collection form a veritable mosaic of Canadian personalities. Kattan writes about such prominent English Canadian writers as Margaret Laurence, Marshall McLuhan, Northrop Frye, and Hugh MacLennan, and about prominent Quebecois writers such as Yves Thériault, Jacques Ferron, Hubert Aquin, and Alice Parizeau. He also writes about leading Quebecois politicians René Lévesque and André Laurendeau, and about the well-known federal politicians Jeanne and Maurice Sauvé. These are the familiar ones, but what of the others, who make up two-thirds of the book?

The following is a brief biographical summary of those whom I consider to be the lesser-known subjects of *Portraits d'un pays*—and I believe it is the sketches of these lesser-known personalities that make this contribution to Canadian literary biography so unique: Saul Hayes was one-time director and executive vice-president of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Jean Boucher was a high-ranking federal government official who was an instrumental force in the founding of the Canada Council. Roger Duhamel, as Queen's Printer in the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties, was another major figure in the founding of the Canada Council. Publishers J.-Z. Léon Patenaude and Yves Dubé headed the Conseil supérieur du livre, which was the federation of Quebec publishers and booksellers that advised the government of Quebec on publishing issues. Robert Élie and Andrée Paradis were noted talk show hosts and commentators at Radio-Canada. And lastly, André Belleau and François Hertel were Kattan's fellow critics, essayists, and intellectual kindred spirits. Many of these people were, along with Kattan himself, actively involved in the establishment of key Quebec literary journals and writers' conventions. André Belleau, for instance,

was a co-founder of the Rencontre québécoise internationale des écrivains and of the literary journal *Liberté*. Roger Duhamel was the editor-in-chief of the renowned nationalist journal *La Patrie*. Yves Dubé was the founder and head of *Les Éditions Léméac*. Andrée Paradis established the art review *Vie des arts*. On closer observation, the list of their contributions to Quebec culture and collaborations with intellectual figures at home and abroad seems almost inexhaustible. Suffice it to say that the subjects of these sketches, familiar or not, played vital roles in the transition of Quebec and English-speaking Canada from former colonies to national cultures in their own right.

To convey a more accurate grasp of the worth of this groundbreaking little book, I would first like to make clear who Naïm Kattan is, what he has written, and exactly what it is that gives him his unique standing among Canadian, not to mention European and Middle Eastern, writers.

Once I have done this, I will discuss the general approaches to the act of translation, the general cultural context of my translation, typical problems, and procedures in French-English translation, and finally, specific problems that I encountered in translating Kattan's *Portraits d'un pays* into English.

Naïm Kattan is a remarkable figure in Canadian literature because he has made his mark not only as a writer and literary critic, but also as a key spokesman of the arts within the Canada Council. What makes him unique, however, is the fact that he is one of the rare intellectuals to have a foot in both the Anglo-Canadian and Quebecois camps. Yet, he is of neither English nor French descent. And paradoxically, it is this very fact that makes him seem all the more Canadian to us today. Quebec writer and critic Jacques Allard has described Kattan as:

un voyageur du transculturel, soucieux de comprendre les rapports de l'Orient et de l'Occident et tout aussi bien ceux des groupes ethniques canadiens. Juif d'Arabie, Arabe de la judéité, oriental d'Occident, occidental d'Orient.... ce francophone québécois est toujours ailleurs que là où on le fixe (Allard, 7).

As an Iraqi Jew, fluent in Arabic but educated in France, Kattan can view North American culture with the kind of detachment and objectivity that one would not normally expect from the Canadian-born critic. What is most important in his work, however, is his abiding interest in creating a strong rapport between English and French culture in Canada. Kattan is one of the rare Canadian literary figures who can write knowledgeably about the literary scene in English Canada and Quebec. This explains his long tenure as head of the writing and publication section of the Canada Council—the federally funded arts foundation that has made it possible for many contemporary Canadian and Quebecois writers to publish their work. Who

better, then, to observe and comment on the lives of prominent English and French Canadian intellectuals?

For a period of over fifty years, Naïm Kattan published a commendably large volume of works ranging from novels and short stories to critical essays and literary anthologies. Although best known in Quebec as a literary critic and contributor to *Le Devoir* and in English Canadian literary circles as a prominent member of the Canada Council, Kattan is also well-known in Europe and the Middle East for his fiction and literary criticism.

Fiction: The Arabic Outlook of a Mizrahi

His first novel, *Adieu Babylone*, published in 1975, is a largely autobiographical depiction of a young Jewish man's formative years in Baghdad during the Second World War. The protagonist, Méir, describes his coming to terms with his Jewish heritage in a politically volatile and fiercely Islamic state.

Les Fruits arrachés, published in 1977, is the sequel to *Adieu Babylone*. However, rather than comment on Arab culture as a Jew, Méir broadens his outlook and dissects the former colonial record of the major imperial nations of Western Europe from the standpoint of a Middle Easterner. In *La Fortune du passager*, published in 1989, the protagonist, who is still remarkably like Méir/Kattan, broadens his outlook even further, taking in South America, North America, and present-day Israel.

Literary Criticism Through the Lens of the Middle East: A More Mystical Understanding of Occidental "Reality"

But Naïm Kattan's literary endeavours have not been confined to fiction; he has also achieved an enviable reputation as an essayist and political commentator. The essay collections *La Mémoire et la promesse* (1978) together with *Le Désir et le pouvoir* (1983), and the short story collections *Dans le désert* (1974), *La Traversée* (1976), and *Le Rivage* (1979), draw parallels between his own experience of emigrating to America and the biblical theme of the search for the Promised Land.

The cultural gulf between the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas is the predominant theme in not only his novels, but also his critical writings. What Kattan most insists upon are the sharply disparate conceptions of reality and imagination, and he singles these out as one of the most salient features of this cultural gulf. *Le Réel et le théâtral*, a collection of essays for which he was awarded the Prix France-Canada in 1971, examines the differences between Eastern and Western conceptions of reality and imagination. Kattan's theoretical, sometimes esoteric, analyses of the reality/imagination dichotomy also find their way into several of his sketches in *Portraits*

d'un pays, most notably in the chapter on Hubert Aquin, in which he describes what he perceives to be Aquin's rather perverse conception of reality:

L'émigré russe et lui se sentaient tous deux étrangers, à l'extérieur, cherchant à percer le réel et, à défaut de le maîtriser, ils le contournaient...

Both he and the Russian émigré felt themselves to be strangers, outsiders, trying to come to grips with the real world. And since they could not master it, they skirted it...

Pour Aquin, le réel était lourd, insupportable. Devant le mystère du monde, il se voyait démuné mais se croyait capable, par moments, d'en déceler le secret, de le maîtriser, de le dominer....

For Aquin, reality was an unbearable weight. Confronted with the mystery of the world, he saw himself as defenceless, but believed himself to be, at times, able to grasp its secret, to master it and control it...

... il disait que le réel ne se limite pas au récit qu'on en fait, que l'intellectuel ne se place en retrait que pour agir. Et si cette action n'était que théâtrale, n'accentuait-il pas d'avantage la mystification?

... expounding the view that reality cannot be confined within the limits of what we say about it and that the intellectual distances himself from reality in order to act upon it. And if such action was mere theatre, did it nonetheless not succeed in deepening the mystification?

Il se transformait en maître d'un réel fuyant. N'était-il pas le détenteur du secret puisqu'il en était l'inventeur?
(39-41)

**He was transforming himself into a master artist versed in the representation of an ungraspable reality. Since he had himself created the secret, was it not therefore his?
(30-32)**

What is striking about these passages, and several others in the chapters on André Belleau and Hugh MacLennan, is the prevalence of an obsession with the mystical in connection with such a term as "le réel"—an obsession that clearly reflects Kattan's propensity for cabalistic discourse.

The Inherent Challenge of Translating the French of a Middle Eastern Thinker into English

Naïm Kattan's frequent handling of similar themes across a wide range of genres, coupled with the customary religiosity of his criticism, makes him one of the more unconventional figures in francophone literature. In an essay entitled "Naïm Kattan, 'Le Discours Arabe,' and His Place in the Canadian Literary Discourse," critic Nasrin Rahimieh explains how a particular vision of language distinguishes Kattan's writing and imparts to it something in the nature of a mystical appeal:

On the level of linguistic and poetic expression, Kattan implies that Semitic languages have an immediate power of evocation which the West cannot grasp or recreate because of its own preoccupation with modes of mediation. Clearly, Kattan's notion of *le discours arabe* is based on the same theory: What appears as unspoken and implicit to the Western readers of his novels would have much clearer and more concrete significance for an Arab reader. This perspective allows a partial understanding of the writer's own linguistic vision, but we must recognize the extent to which Kattan's own Judeo-Islamic heritage is fragmented from within. (Rahimieh, 36)

Rahimieh states that Kattan's particular melding of genre and style and, ultimately, the rich linguistic complexity behind it, is due to "neither *le discours arabe* nor a particular 'Canadian' discourse [...], but rather [to] a transcultural discourse" (37).

It is Kattan's use of language, and no doubt the "linguistic vision" posited by Rahimieh, that makes *Portraits d'un pays* so compelling an opportunity for the translator. The myriad styles of writing in *Portraits d'un pays*, styles which can vary considerably from sentence to sentence, demand the most open-minded approach to translation possible.

Approaches to the act of translation have traditionally been described in terms of free versus literal translation, two poles of a continuum between which translators usually strive to respect both the intention of the original text and the idiom of the target language. In Western literary history, the distinction between free and literal translation can be traced to pre-Christian Rome when the Classics were being translated from Greek into Latin. The schism between free and literal translation was firmly entrenched at that time.

Yet either extreme poses its own risks: overly literal renderings can be unidiomatic, nonsensical, or ludicrous, whereas an overly free interpretation can seriously distort the original meaning and betray the author's intent. The translator must carefully choose his path between the two.

Peter Newmark, a well-known British translator and scholar noted for his studies in the field of linguistics, describes a spectrum of approaches to the act of translation, ranging from what he calls “semantic translation” at one end to “communicative translation” at the other. Roughly equivalent to the traditional “literal translation” is his semantic translation, in which the translator attempts “to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original” (*Approaches to Translation*, 38). At the other end of the spectrum is communicative translation, which focuses on the reception of the text, attempting “to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on readers of the original” (38).

Newmark also states that certain literary genres are better suited to one type of translation than to the other. For instance, he says that a semantic translation is more appropriate to “expressive” texts, such as poetry or fiction which derive their origin from “mind of the speaker, the writer, the originator of the utterance” (*A Textbook of Translation*, 39). Conversely, a communicative translation is, in his opinion, more appropriate to “informative” and “vocative” texts which explore “the reality outside language, reported ideas or theories,” and more important still, are intended to enlighten “the readership, the addressee” (39).

As a series of biographical sketches, *Portraits d'un pays* might appear to fall into the informative mode in that it treats specifically of what Newmark has called the “reality outside language.” But we must not forget that Naïm Kattan, the biographer and literary critic, displays a marked fondness for narrative devices and themes more typical of his works of fiction. *Portraits d'un pays* thus presents the translator with a complex fusion of vocative, informative, and expressive modes. Kattan is sometimes matter of fact, sometimes lyrical and rhetorical, and sometimes both. Clearly, the translator faces a challenge if he is to reflect the multiple dimensions of the author’s work.

With this in mind, I chose to orient my translation principally toward the English-speaking reader, attempting to produce a readily accessible text that communicates Kattan’s ideas clearly in the target language. And while my approach to the translation of *Portraits d'un pays* is ultimately more communicative than semantic, there are, nonetheless, a great many passages in the original text, particularly those which highlight Naïm Kattan’s distinctive writing style and his sometimes-mystical approaches to literary criticism, that are best translated from a semantic approach. In his book *Approaches to Translation*, Peter Newmark makes an observation that reinforces my own attitude toward the translation of *Portraits d'un pays*, a text that is essentially informative, yet expressed with particular rhetorical and lyrical flourish:

There is no one communicative or semantic method of translating a text—these are in fact widely overlapping bands of methods. A translation can be more or less semantic—more or less communicative—even a particular section or sentence can be treated more communicatively or less semantically (*Approaches to Translation*, 40).

Notes on French-English Translation for Quebecois-Canadian Administrative Purposes

Translation between languages and cultures extremely remote one from the other poses huge obstacles for the translator. However, translation between two linguistic groups that share similar geographic, cultural, historical, and political backgrounds significantly reduces the gulf that the translator must span. By its very content then, *Portrait d'un pays* reflects the bicultural nature of a country that is officially, although to varying degrees, bilingual. Accordingly, the translation of place names, institutions, organizations, and events was not particularly problematic. For those with bilingual titles, I was careful to use the correct form of the corresponding English title in my translation. Thus, “le Conseil des arts,” “le Conseil de la radiodiffusion et télévision canadiennes,” “le Congrès juif,” “le Citoyen,” “la Foire du livre,” “l’Institut canadien des affaires publiques” were translated as “the Canada Council,” “the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission,” “the Canadian Jewish Congress,” “the Citizen,” “International Book Fair,” “the Canadian Institute of Public Affairs.”

The only institution with a bilingual title that required special clarification in translation was “Radio-Canada” which I translated as “the French-language CBC” so as not to confuse it, in the mind of the English-speaking reader, with the overseas branch of the CBC, “Radio-Canada International.” Simply translating “Radio-Canada” as “the CBC” would not have been accurate either, since French-language programming has almost always been separate from English-language programming. Quebecois intellectuals such as Robert Élie, Jean-Guy Pilon, and Andrée Paradis are generally not familiar to most English-speaking Canadians as “CBC” radio and television personalities, and describing them as such would be misleading, even though “the CBC” and “la Société Radio-Canada” are in fact the very same institution.

In the cases of place names, institutions, organizations, publications, and events with no official English equivalents like “le Bulletin du Cercle juif,” “le Conseil supérieur du livre,” “École des beaux-arts,” “Rencontre québécoise internationale des écrivains,” and “Salon du livre,” I kept the French titles and provided English explanations for each one in translator’s notes at the bottom of the page.

The Historical and Contextual Vagaries of French-English Translation

A comparison of Kattan's text and my translation reveals some of the typical differences one would expect to find between a French original and its English translation. These differences can be explained in terms of procedures laid out in Vinay and Darbelnet's *Stylistique comparée*—a book that has provided me with a concrete terminological framework for describing features of my own translation.

Two common procedures evident throughout my translation of *Portraits d'un pays* are “modulation” and “transposition.” Modulation describes a change in perspective, that can be observed in virtually any translation. Vinay and Darbelnet define it in greater detail as “une variation obtenue en changeant de point de vue, d'éclairage, et très souvent de catégorie de pensée” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 11). Vinay and Darbelnet divide modulation into eleven predominant types, some of which recur fairly frequently in my translation—namely, “renversement de point de vue,” “abstrait et concret,” “cause et effet,” and “intervalles et limites”:

On n'avait pas célébré
son retour au pays.
(73)

**His return to Canada elicited
no enthusiasm.**
(62)

This one excerpt shows examples of two types of modulation: “renversement de point de vue,” in which there is an obvious change in focus from the doer of the action (“On”) to the result of the action (“His return”); and “abstrait et concret.” Literally translated, the words “au pays” would be rendered in English by the words “to the country,” which could have two possible meanings: first, the nation being alluded to by the word “pays,” or simply, “a rural setting.” To avoid confusion, I found it necessary to render the more abstract and general word “pays” into English with the more concrete and specific “Canada.” There are many other examples of modulation between abstract and concrete in my translation of *Portraits d'un pays*. In most cases such as these, I found that idiomatic English tends to favour concrete terms over abstract ones. The following excerpt illustrates how my translation, which is oriented toward the English-speaking reader, reflects a more concrete perspective in order to produce the same effect on the English-speaking reader as the original does on the French-speaking reader.

Nous en restâmes là.
(24)

I heard nothing further about it.
(16)

The term “transposition” describes a grammatical change in translation in which the meaning of a word belonging to one part of speech in the original is rendered by a

word belonging to a different part of speech in the translation. In this next excerpt, there are two separate instances of transposition: first, from a noun in French to an adverb in English; and second, from a verb in French to a noun in English.

... je n'avais par conséquent
aucun pouvoir de censurer.
(24)

**Consequently, I had no power
of censorship.**
(17)

The following excerpt also demonstrates how a fairly straightforward sentence can undergo numerous structural changes in order to be readily comprehensible in translation:

Cette liberté... est une grande
tentative pour établir une
civilisation d'autoprotection
et d'aménité...
(87)

**This freedom.... contributes
in a major way to the
establishment of a civilization
that both protects and enhances...**
(76)

Here, the noun “tentative” is rendered by the verb “contributes,” the adjective “grande” by the adverbial phrase “in a major way,” the verb “établir” by the noun “establishment,” and the nouns “autoprotection” and “aménité” by the verbs “protects” and “enhances.”

Modulation and transposition are essential procedures in any translation and therefore play a major role in my rendering of *Portraits d'un pays*.

Certain features of the French language which have no direct equivalent in English can pose problems for the translator. In this next case, I have explained the social implication of using the second person singular as opposed to the second person plural in French, an opposition that has no equivalent in English:

«Ce qui m'a le plus fait souffrir
en politique... c'est la
familiarité forcée, le tutoiement.»
(13)

**“What pained me the most about politics...
was the forced familiarity, having to act
as though you were close friends with
with people you barely knew.”**
(6)

The translation of the French pronoun “on” almost always arises in French-to-English translation. Depending on the context, there are a multitude of possible renderings of the French pronoun for “one.” In some formal contexts, “on” can be simply translated as “people”:

...car elle était
capable de voir et
de comprendre qu'on
pouvait être
différent.
(80)

...**for she was able to
see and understand that
people need not be of the
same mind.**
(68)

(In the last phrase of the above sentence, we can also observe a modulation of the type that Vinet and Darbelnet call a “contraire négativé.”)

At other times, “on” serves as such a vague, empty pronoun that the agentless nature of the action is best rendered by a passive construction:

On lui reprochait parfois de
n'être pas plus direct...
(13)

**Sometimes he was criticized for
not being more direct...**
(5)

And sometimes 'on' can be 'explicitated':

... dès qu'on prenait acte de
mes origines...
(25)

... **as soon as prospective employers
noted my origins...**
(20)

Like 'on,' the adverbs 'ainsi' and 'alors' are fairly vague expressions with a range of meanings. I have translated them in a variety of ways which have often resulted in 'explicitation'—a translation procedure that makes explicit ideas that are naturally implicit in the original text. Vinet and Darbelnet define explicitation as:

un procédé qui consiste à introduire dans la langue d'arrivée des précisions qui restent implicites dans la langue de départ, mais qui se dégagent du contexte ou de la situation. (9)

The following excerpts show how 'ainsi' and 'alors' imply meanings that I have made more explicit in English:

Ainsi, André était
aussi un homme de
passion.
(45)

**It was now obvious to me that
André was also a man of strong
feelings.**
(36)

Ainsi, ce sont les
traductions de Jean Paré
que les Éditions du Seuil
publièrent.... à Paris.
(63)

**The result was that it was Jean
Paré's translations that were
published by Éditions du Seuil
in Paris**
(52)

Je perdis alors la
nécessaire sérénité
qu'impliquait mon rôle.
(72)

**When this became obvious to me,
I found myself unable to keep the
bland tone that went with my role.**
(60)

Naïm Kattan's distinctive writing style, coupled with his affinity for mystical discourse, presents the translator with what I conceive to be a major problem: to what extent must the translation reflect the elliptical style of the sentences in the original? Should the translator write as tersely as Kattan, omitting key verbs, or should he expand on the original phrasing in order to adapt it to the target language idiom?

In sentences from the original that are elliptical, I found that my only solution was to make fully explicit in the translation what is merely hinted at in the original. One particularly telling feature of Naïm Kattan's style is his predilection for the sentence fragment. Explication is the term that best describes the way I have translated these sentence fragments in English. In the following excerpts, I felt that too close an emulation of Kattan's style would undoubtedly have led to a substantial loss of comprehensibility for the English-speaking reader:

Route semée d'embuches.
(83)

**The path that Andrée Paradis had
chosen was fraught with many perils.**
(72)

Elle n'est plus parmi
nous. Bilan prestigieux.
(84)

**And although she is no
longer with us, she has
left a remarkable legacy.**
(73)

Prophétique ?
(88)

Was his vision a prophetic one?
(78)

Naïm Kattan, a writer with a distinctly enigmatic bent, renders themes of a daunting complexity in prose of a deceptive simplicity. Elliptical and allusive passages occur throughout *Portraits d'un pays*, but most particularly in the chapters on Hubert

Aquin, André Belleau, François Hertel, and Hugh MacLennan. Conversely, in the chapters on Robert Élie, Jean Boucher, and Jeanne and Maurice Sauv , Kattan's style is unquestionably matter of fact. In the passages that highlight his philosophical and mystical slant, especially those in which he uses the terms "l'autre" and "le r el," I have adopted a considerably more semantic approach, retaining as much of the original style as possible, yet explicating ideas where clarity so requires. The following excerpts illustrate the challenge I faced:

Dans le silence, dans cette
supr me discr tion qui marque
le respect de l'autre dans ce
qui le distingue, elles pouvaient
se croire exemplaires de ce
qu'est la rencontre avec
l'autre. Et elles l' taient.
(61)

Cette solitude devient ainsi
non pas l'obstacle, mais la
condition d'une rencontre.
Aller vers l'autre, le rejoindre
reconna tre son visage, afin
de l'accueillir avec sa
distinction et sa diff rence.
Certes, l'amour donne l' lan,
la volont , et cimente
l'agr gat.
(88)

Au-del  de la th ologie,
nous cherchions, dans la
distinction, l'Esprit,
le lien.
(74)

**In the silence and utmost
discretion which marks respect
for the other, a respect founded
on an appreciation of the
other's differences, they could
well have claimed to epitomize
meeting with the other--
because this they truly did.
(57)**

**Solitude such as this
becomes a condition for,
rather than an obstacle to,
meeting with the other:
reaching out to him, making
contact with him, and
recognizing him in order
to welcome him with his
distinctions and
differences. Undeniably,
love is the factor that
provides the impetus,
furnishes the will, and binds
together the disparate
elements.
(77)**

**Transcending our theological
differences, we were striving
to uncover the common
denominator in our disparate
conceptions of the Supreme Being.
(62)**

Certes, le point de départ
était l'innocence, une quête
de pureté dont l'épaisseur,
la dimension était une
sensualité acceptée,
intégrée à l'être.
(43)

**Everything stemmed, of course,
from innocence, a quest for purity
whose very dimension was a
sensuality accepted, undenied, and
integrated into his inmost being.**
(34)

L'émigré russe et lui se
sentaient tous les deux
étrangers, à l'extérieur,
cherchant à percer le réel
et, à défaut de le maîtriser
ils le contournaient, opposant
à l'insondable secret du monde
le leur, celui-ci fût-il une
mystification.
(39)

**Both he and the Russian émigré
felt themselves to be strangers,
outsiders, trying to come to grips
with the real world. And since they
could not master it, they skirted it,
pitting their secret
against the unfathomable secret
of the world, even though the
secret they nurtured was akin
to mystification.**
(30)

“The Better Part of Valour”: Translating Factual Inaccuracies

Two final problems that I encountered in the original were the presence of several factual inaccuracies and the use of terms which have no direct English equivalent, terms referring to ideas, customs, and history that the English-language reader might not be familiar with.

I resolved the problem of factual inaccuracies in two different ways. First, in the chapter on Hugh MacLennan, there are factual inaccuracies that I corrected in my translation: namely the fact that Halifax is not Hugh MacLennan's birthplace (he was born and spent his early childhood in Glace Bay, NS) and that the event which Kattan refers to was not a fire, but the Halifax Explosion of 1917. I thus translated “ville natale” and “incendie” as “hometown” and “explosion.”

Halifax, ville natale de
l'écrivain.
(85)

—Halifax being the writer's hometown.
(83)

Si MacLennan a parlé
d'Halifax et surtout de
son incendie....
(85)

**... MacLennan speaks of Halifax, and
particularly of the explosion.
(83)**

The other approach I took was to retain the inaccuracy and indicate it with a [sic] symbol. This is what I did in the chapter on Northrop Frye in which Kattan mentions the Saint James version of the Bible. I assume this to be an error on Kattan's part and that what he really meant was the King James version of the Bible.

Frye... lisait la Bible dans
la version de Saint James,
c'est-à-dire en anglais.
(69)

**Frye... read the Bible in English,
in its Saint James [sic] version.
(64)**

For exclusively French terms such as “anti-gaulliste,” “réveillon,” and “à la petite semaine” on pages 30, 46, and 51 respectively, I kept the French words, footnoted them, and provided the necessary information in translator's notes at the bottom of the page. For example, the translator's note for the term “anti-gaulliste” on page 30 of my translation reads:

The term “anti-gaulliste” refers to a supporter of the pro-German Vichy government of France during the Second World War, often associated with right-wing political factions. The anti-gaulliste movement had close ties with the Roman Catholic Church and exercised considerable political influence in the province of Quebec during the 1930's and 1940's.

The mind of many a translator must be haunted by the old Italian proverb, “*traduttore, traditore—A translator is a traitor.*” Mine was, at any rate, when I began translating Naïm Kattan's *Portraits d'un pays*. And sometimes, on rereading my English version, I think it still is.

Yet, literalism does not ensure fidelity; it is more likely to result in betrayal. And you may claim to have accurately translated an author's work only when, in addition to transferring the “full contents” of that work, you have also made clear to the reader “the full intention that goes with them” (Barzun and Graff, 274). Do both these things, and you cannot possibly have betrayed your author, whatever that surly Italian proverb writer may say. On the contrary, you have served your author well.

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