

Ladouceur, Louise. *Dramatic Licence: Translating Theatre from One Official Language to the Other in Canada*. Translated by Richard Lebeau. Preface by E.D. Blodgett. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: The University of Alberta Press, 2012. Pp. ix, 279, Paperback \$34.95. ISBN: 978-0-88864-538-8

The word “translation” generally evokes a sense of dread and ennui. To painstakingly comb through an unappealing text in order to find exact – or near exact – correlations in the target language while keeping in mind the audience, available translation strategies, type of text and genre, is not necessarily considered to be a stimulating pastime. However, a gander through Ladouceur’s *Dramatic Licence: Translating Theatre from One Official Language to the Other in Canada* will reveal that translation can be an intimate, exciting and evolving process and play a key role in the discourse between languages. Translation is the “site where literatures meet and interpenetrate, and as such, it is shaped by the relationship they foster” (2).

A professor of Theater Studies and Translation at the University of Alberta’s Campus Saint-Jean, Louise Ladouceur serves as the Associate French Editor of *Theatre Research in Canada*. Trained in the dramatic arts, her theatrical expertise is clearly demonstrated in her book, as she incorporates a methodology, theoretical apparatus, and synchronic and diachronic analyses to uncover the nature and translation of a play. E.D. Blodgett describes the goal of translation as to “open up to the foreign text and get it accepted within the receptive literature” (Preface x). Blodgett and Ladouceur follow the Tel Aviv functionalist methodology, which claims that a translation is evaluated based on its function within the target context. Antoine Berman, who the text’s historico-cultural context and the subjectivity of the playwright and the translator, informs Ladouceur’s critical analysis. This approach creates an exceptionally rich study of Canadian theatre, a state with a multitude of languages and dialects that generate centrifugal and centripetal forces in their battle for attention and autonomy. Moreover, the immediacy and orality of theater make it the perfect channel through which to observe how language functions within a culture; language is constructed and produced onstage and then consumed and digested by a unique audience, Quebecois, Canadian, or otherwise, an exchange that echoes of Bakhtin.

Chapters one through three provide an overview of discourse on translation of literary and drama repertoires in Canada, while four through six deliver a descriptive analysis of plays by twelve authors and fifteen translators ranging from 1961-1999. Ladouceur analyzes plays representing “the greatest congruity in francophone and anglophone translation activity,” that had been produced on several occasions and published (32). Theatre translation in Canada did not gain popularity until 1960 because of anti-establishment turmoil, therefore, Ladouceur focuses on the time period after 1960. Furthermore the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957 and the Centre d’essai des auteurs dramatiques in 1965 facilitated support for the art, which in turned created a higher demand for it.

With each play, Ladouceur performs a meticulous analysis of preliminary data, macrostructural data, microstructural data, and concludes with comparisons of systemic context. A particularly interesting play Ladouceur examines in her chapter on the French repertoire translated into English is Jovette Marchessault’s *La terre est trop courte, Violette Leduc*, produced in Montreal in 1979. The play made great contributions to feminist theater and divided audiences due to its provocative nature. After providing background information on the play, Ladouceur launches into macrostructural analysis indicating changes made between the play’s original and translated versions. The microstructural analysis is the most fascinating part of the textual examination as it focuses on the levels of language within the play and the culturally motivated reasons for changes in dialect, grammar, vocabulary and syntax. Marchessault’s translator, Susanne Lotbinière-Harwood, succeeded in transferring some meaningful grammatical structures to the target text – for instance, the emphasis on the feminine “une bâtarde” to “another woman’s sorrow, a bastard.” Marchessault’s

play, then, necessitates that the translation be performed by a feminist who would better understand and communicate feminist messages embedded within the text. The microtextual analysis also includes omissions due to excessive cultural alterity; however, Ladouceur criticizes the removal of a female bonding scene, which favors the text's acceptability and harms the play's feminist aims. According to Ladouceur, the play received mixed reviews from anglophone critics due to the characters' verbosity, explained by Quebecois use of theater as a dialogue or symposium with society. The author elucidates that the novelty of feminist discourse motivated the Anglophone audience to borrow the play, however, the radical nature of Quebecois feminism that was spurred by the 1960s Quiet Revolution divided the audiences. However, translation fills a need, and thus anglophone and francophone feminist communities collaborated to transfer the text to an Anglo-Canadian audience.

While Ladouceur writes about the nature, triumphs and successes of theatre translation, she also touches on a larger issue: the relationship between two languages coexisting within a complex political and social landscape. Her book is both the study of translation and the study of a nation. Theater translation's popularity occurred during intense political turmoil in Quebec and created an intriguing conversation on identity. The fear of acculturation, the difficulty in translating the orality of Quebecois *jeu*, and the tension within the dominant-dominated language relationship all rendered translation a strenuous but rewarding task. This rocky relationship between the anglophone and francophone cultures in Canada led to a large asymmetry in the ratio of French and English translations (French was translated into English at a much rate) and, until the 1980s, also led to the predominant use of adaptation as the translation strategy, foregoing intertextual connections in order to translate the culture to suit the target audience. In her book, Ladouceur successfully demonstrates the cultural exchanges and power struggle through the nature of theater translation between two official languages of Canada. Furthermore, in recognizing the individuality and subjectivity of the translator, Ladouceur illustrates the process of translation as a true art, giving the translator the respect they are due.

The French edition of Ladouceur's book is titled *Making the Scene: la traduction du théâtre d'une langue officielle à l'autre*, and was published in French in 2005 by Éditions Nota Bene. This version won the Gabrielle Roy Prize in Canadian and Québec literary criticism, along with the Ann Saddlemyer Book Award for theatre research in Canada.

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