

**Voices and Silences:  
Exploring English and French Versions  
at the National Film Board of Canada,  
1939-1974**

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**Abstract**

The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) is unique as a state-sponsored filmmaking institution for its bilingualism: it has consistently produced and distributed films in English and French and made versions of some of those films in the opposite language. This doctoral thesis fills a gap in existing literature on the NFB and in translation studies by taking the versions as its object of study. The corpus is drawn from the vast body of audiovisual productions made by the NFB between 1939 and 1974, when voice-over was the preferred mode of audiovisual translation. Voice-over can refer to either the translated narration that replaces the original voice of narration-led documentaries, or to the audiovisual voice-over of documentaries built around interviews and spontaneous speech.

Against the backdrop of asymmetrical language relations between English and French in Canada, this thesis offers a retelling of the NFB's early history that emphasizes the intertwining threads of English and French production and identifies several approaches to version making. From 1939 to the mid-1950s, with English-language production dominant at the NFB and little original production in French, versions from English to French were a central element of film in Quebec. They bear witness to an interventionist approach to translating, whereby the original film is treated as raw material that can be shaped to appeal to local audiences. Subsequently, an increase in French original production, reflecting changing documentary aesthetics and growing nationalism in Quebec, led to a correspondingly higher number of French-to-English versions. These versions adopted a mediating approach by adding a narrator's voice in English to originals

that eschewed narration, bringing the innovative French films into conformity with the traditional model. The period from 1967 to 1974 is one of fragmentation and is characterized by a high level of non-translation, whether of the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films or those of Studio D. The few films that were versioned, however, showed great sensitivity to language. Non-translation of a different kind can be found in many Aboriginal films produced at the NFB. The NFB's long-standing commitment to translation makes it a valuable site for studying audiovisual translation practices and changing language relations in Canada.

**Keywords: versioning, voice-over, audiovisual translation, NFB**

**Voix et silences : Une exploration des versions anglaises et françaises  
produites par l'Office national du film du Canada, 1939-1974**

**Résumé**

L'Office national du film du Canada (ONF), institution financée par l'État pour la création d'œuvres cinématographiques, se distingue par son bilinguisme, car il a toujours produit et distribué ses films en anglais ou en français tout en prenant soin de fournir une version dans la langue opposée. La thèse se penche sur ces versions et vient combler un vide dans les recherches sur l'ONF ainsi qu'en traductologie. Le corpus à l'étude provient d'une vaste production audiovisuelle réalisée entre 1939 et 1974, époque où le mode de traduction privilégié des documentaires était la voix hors-champ. Ce terme désigne autant la narration traduite qui remplace la voix originale que la voix en surimposition utilisée pour les entrevues et le discours spontané.

La thèse relate les débuts de l'ONF dans le contexte des relations asymétriques entre l'anglais et le français au Canada et porte un regard neuf sur les liens entre les studios anglophones et francophones en plus de décrire certaines tendances dans la production de versions. De 1939 jusqu'au milieu des années 1950, lorsque l'anglais dominait, par rapport aux rares films produits originalement en français, les versions françaises traduites de l'anglais contribuèrent substantiellement à la cinématographie québécoise. Elles témoignent d'une stratégie de traduction interventionniste, par laquelle le film original est considéré comme une matière première que l'on peut manipuler afin d'accrocher le public local. Par suite d'un changement dans l'esthétique du documentaire et de la montée du nationalisme québécois, les originaux en langue française s'accrurent et entraînèrent une augmentation des versions du

français à l'anglais. Celles-ci usèrent d'un mode de médiation qui consistait à rajouter une voix narrative anglophone aux films novateurs en français, du fait qu'ils avaient évacué la narration, soumettant ainsi les créations originales au modèle traditionnel. La période de 1967 à 1974 en est une de fragmentation se caractérisant par un nombre élevé de films non traduits, tels que ceux produits dans le cadre du programme Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle ou par le Studio D. Les quelques productions qui furent traduites, cependant, connurent des versions d'une grande sensibilité linguistique. Un phénomène de non-traduction, mais d'un autre ordre, s'observe par ailleurs dans certains films autochtones. Depuis longtemps, l'ONF s'est engagé à traduire ses productions; c'est ce qui en fait un site riche pour l'étude des pratiques de la traduction audiovisuelle et du changement des relations entre les langues au Canada.

**Mots-clés : versions, voix hors-champ, traduction audiovisuelle, ONF**

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## **Chapter One: Understanding NFB versions as a site of competing voices**

When film scholars and historians speak of the National Film Board of Canada as “unique in the world” (Zéau 2006, 15) and as having “an almost mythic status, both in Canada and abroad” (Druick 2007, 15), they are referring to the NFB’s central role in Canadian film history as the producer and distributor of thousands of widely screened documentaries and animated films since its establishment in 1939, as well as to its creative accomplishments as a state-sponsored institution that has been freed from the need for profitability and maintains a broad enough mandate to allow for experimentation and innovation. Yet what sets the NFB apart from all the non-commercial filmmaking institutions that now or once existed in countries around the world is that it has consistently produced and distributed work in two official languages, English and French.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it has produced and distributed versions of those films in the other official language, which has resulted not only in two separate threads of filmmaking history but in an intertwining of French and English cultural productions that have engaged with Canadian public discourse in diverse ways. While much has been written about the NFB in Canada and internationally, and while its films have been the subject of extensive analysis in both English and French, writers have focused on the original productions and made virtually no mention of the versions.<sup>2</sup> This doctoral thesis therefore fills a gap in scholarship on the NFB by placing the versions front and centre and considering them as worthy of analysis in their own right.

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<sup>1</sup> A small number of films in English and Afrikaans were produced by the National Film Board of South Africa between 1963 and 1979.

<sup>2</sup> With rare exceptions; see p. 24.

The corpus is drawn from the vast body of audiovisual productions made by the National Film Board of Canada between its establishment in 1939 and the mid-seventies, when a change in version-making methods occurred. More particularly, the focus is on documentary, the film genre with which the NFB is most associated, and on those versions that were produced using voice-over as a mode of audiovisual translation. Considered the third mode of AVT after subtitling and dubbing (O’Sullivan 2011, 93), voice-over is a multifaceted technique that involves the addition of a translating voice or the replacement of original speech with translation. Where there is onscreen speech such as interviews, the source text is translated orally through the voice of an actor or narrator heard simultaneously over the original voice. This form of voice-over is an oral reformulation like dubbing, but differs from the latter in that it does not involve synchronization of the translated speech to the lip movements of the speaker. The term “voice-over” is also used to refer to the translation of off-screen narration in documentaries constructed around a narrator’s voice, whereby the soundtrack is remixed and the original narration replaced by a translated one. In this situation, sometimes referred to as “free commentary,” the translated text does not always follow the original closely and may demonstrate creativity; it is synchronized not to the source text but to the image, which generally remains the same in original and version (Laine 1996, 198). These two forms of translational voice-over and variations on them were commonly used at the National Film Board during the period of my corpus.

Whether voice-over involves the addition of voices or the substitution of one voice for another, it alters the identity of the original production. Yet that original already contains multiple voices. In addition to the off-camera narration and the actual voices of the documentary participants, who may be speaking as experts or offering personal testimony, a documentary as a whole may be seen to speak for or to argue in favour of the point of view of the filmmaker.

Furthermore, in the case of institutionally produced documentaries like those of the NFB, the content must to some extent engage with government policy, if not act as a mouthpiece for specific social objectives (Druick 2007, 12). From this perspective, we can see documentary in general and the versioned documentaries of the NFB in particular as sites of contention in which certain voices speak—literally and figuratively—with greater or lesser force depending on the time period and other factors.

The goal of this project is therefore to assess the shifts in meaning that occur in the versions produced at the NFB over several decades when a translated voice is substituted for or added to that of the original narrator or participants or both. The shifts I observed in my research do not demonstrate a single approach to version making. Instead, they bear witness to a diversity of translation approaches that contribute to the complexity and layeredness of these productions as sites of struggle over meaning making. In this introductory chapter, I will set out the background material needed to understand the analyses of specific documentaries that will constitute the remaining chapters. First, I will provide a brief overview of the NFB's history and indicate how my very large corpus will be whittled down to a manageable number of case studies. Second, I will discuss some of the existing literature on both the NFB and audiovisual translation in general. Lastly, I will briefly explore some of the general concepts and groundwork on which this thesis will draw.

## **1.1 Interwoven threads of English and French production**

According to its Web site, the NFB has made over 13,000 productions since 1939, including documentaries, newsreels, animated films, dramas and digital content. It has distributed

those works in inventive ways, creating a complex network of non-theatrical distribution circuits that operated in conjunction with theatrical screenings and eventually, television broadcast to ensure that citizens across the country had access to the films. Founded in 1939 just a few months before Canada entered World War II, the NFB quickly became a propaganda institution, contributing to the war effort by informing citizens of the battles waged by Canadian soldiers overseas and encouraging those on the home front to do their patriotic duty. Non-theatrical screenings were organized in factories and trade unions as well as in community halls and church basements as part of rural, industrial and union film circuits. In theatres, newsreels produced monthly for the series *Canada Carries On/En avant Canada* and *The World in Action/Le monde en action* were shown just before feature films and, thanks to distribution agreements signed with Columbia Pictures for English-language films and France-Film for the French versions, played in nearly 700 cinemas across Canada. By the end of the war, these films were reaching huge audiences—three million people every month for Canadian theatrical screenings, another half million monthly for the non-theatrical screenings, and millions more internationally in countries like the United States, the UK, Australia, South Africa and India<sup>3</sup>. The NFB was one of the world's largest film studios, with a staff that had grown from a dozen employees in 1940 to nearly 800 by 1945. In its early years, the NFB was essentially an anglophone institution, with its staff, including the first commissioner John Grierson, being composed of British citizens and English Canadians. It was not until December 1941 that the first francophone, Vincent Paquette, a bilingual radio journalist from Ottawa, was hired to supervise both versions and original productions for the French-language newsreel series.

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<sup>3</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report, 1944-45, 10.

After the war ended, the NFB suffered severe budget cuts amid a spy scandal involving Grierson. Criticized from all sides, it was accused of harbouring communists among its staff, of wasting government funds through excessive bureaucracy, and of taking business away from the private sector. Whereas Grierson and his colleagues believed that the subject matter of NFB documentaries should be national rather than local in scope and of interest to Canadians across the country, a different vision was instituted under Arthur Irwin, who was named commissioner in 1950. Films could now explore specific facets of Canadian identity, moving away from a monolithic conception of the mandate “to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations” (Morris 1984, 191). Under pressure from Quebec board members and other influential figures to increase the amount of French original production, the NFB moved its head office from Ottawa to Montréal in 1956 and hired a French Canadian commissioner, Guy Roberge, in 1957. Finally in 1964, the NFB was restructured along linguistic lines and a separate French Production branch was formed under the direction of Pierre Juneau (Evans 1991, 30, 49).

A period of renewal followed the move to Montréal, leading to what has been called the “golden age” of NFB cinema, which continued through the 1960s. This period, during which the innovative style known as *cinéma direct* forged a new documentary aesthetic not only at the NFB but internationally, grew out of a cluster of factors, such as the inauguration of broadcast television in Canada and the impact it had on documentary production methods, as well as technological innovations in 16mm filmmaking that made it possible to shoot using handheld cameras and portable sync sound, leading to a spontaneous, intimate style of filmmaking. By the late 60s, further technological advances like portable video set the stage for the participatory, activist productions of Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle, which shared the aim of “community empowerment through media” (Waugh, Baker and Winton 2010, 6). Trends in

documentary can be seen to mirror developments in the social sciences (Druick 2007, 6-7); thus the crisis of representation and increased awareness of process in anthropology found a parallel in the reflexive films of the 70s and beyond, and the emergence of identity politics was reflected in the creation of filmmaking programs at the NFB for marginalized groups like women and indigenous peoples. Throughout these decades, the English and French studios were active in regions across Canada. The broad strokes of this historical overview will be filled in where pertinent as we examine the intersection of English and French production in the upcoming chapters.

## **1.2 Defining a corpus**

Of the huge number of films produced by the NFB over more than seven decades, only a few will be examined in this project. My intention is not to cover all periods of NFB history, nor is it to analyze the work of the most well-known filmmakers, those whose work is considered to form part of the canon of Canadian cinema (Druick 2007, 16-17); nor do I attempt to examine a representative sample of its films, however one might extract such a sample. Instead, I will focus on certain versions that are relevant to my central vision of NFB versions as sites of struggle between competing voices. My corpus will be circumscribed in four ways: by film genre, mode of translation, production date, and availability of both original and version. It must first be noted that the figure of 13,000 productions, given on the NFB Web site as the total number of films made since its foundation, is inflated in the sense that it includes not only “films” but also filmstrips, film loops, trailers and various other products; furthermore, it is made up of both original films and versions of all kinds. The category “Versions, revisions and adaptations” found

in the early annual reports covers language versions, revisions (films re-edited for television broadcast or short films assembled into half-hour programs), and re-released adaptations. All these variations on the original film represent a considerable percentage of the total number. For example, let us look at the breakdown of films in the 1949-50 annual report: a total of 177 films were produced, of which 125 were “major productions” of one to three reels<sup>4</sup> and the remainder were newsclips, trailers and “film stories,” i.e. segments of a newsreel. Of the 125 major productions, 66 were original films and 59 were opposite-language versions.<sup>5</sup> In other words, for this year, original major productions represent 37% of the total films listed in the annual report. (By contrast, more recent annual reports count only original productions: the 2011-2012 report, for example, indicates 97 “original NFB productions and co-productions,” in addition to interactive websites, films for websites, installations and applications.<sup>6</sup>)

The documentary genre, on which I will be focusing, has always been dominant at the NFB, starting with the influential first commissioner Grierson himself, who coined the term “documentary” and published a series of essays between 1932 and 1934 that set out his ideas on the forms and principles of documentary. As the previous information drawn from the annual report suggests, a large part of production in the early decades consisted of newsreel stories, which were grouped together and shown before feature films; they were the pendant of today’s news reports produced for television broadcast. Grierson considered that they represented a “lower category” of films which required only journalistic skills, not creativity, and consisted of “just a speedy snip-snap of some utterly unimportant ceremony” (Grierson 1966, 145). For the

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<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, film technicians referred to the length of 35mm and 16mm films in terms of reels: a reel of film is 1000 feet long and takes about 11 minutes to be projected, so films lasting one to three reels were around 10 to 35 minutes in length.

<sup>5</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 1949-1950.

<sup>6</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 2011-2012. National Film Board of Canada Web site.

most part, these will not be part of my corpus; nor will the training films and sponsored films produced for various government departments such as National Defence and the Travel Bureau, for which the NFB was responsible as part of its mandate under the National Film Act. I will also exclude the many animated films for which the NFB has garnered world renown. Animation has been a significant part of NFB production since 1942, when Grierson hired Norman McLaren to assemble a team to make films using a wide range of techniques such as pinscreen, pixillation, paper cut-outs and animated drawings. Although a French animation studio was set up under René Jodoin in 1966 and most animated films are released in English and French versions, the majority of these films are without dialogue or commentary; thus I cannot analyze the shift that occurs in the passage from one language to another. I will also eliminate those documentaries that have no words, such as the *How Do They...* series of short films and the “day in the life” films shot in Canada’s national parks. Furthermore, the NFB has at various times been the producer, or co-producer with the private sector, of fiction films. This category includes the social dramas of the 1950s, produced for television broadcast in English and French using the technique of “double shooting,” in which the script was translated and teams of actors and crew members shot both versions at around the same time, sometimes using the same set.<sup>7</sup> It also includes some of the most popular and critically acclaimed Canadian films, from Don Owen’s *Nobody Waved Goodbye* (1964) to Denys Arcand’s *Le déclin de l’empire américain* (1986) to the “alternative dramas” of Giles Walker and John N. Smith (*90 Days* [1985]; *Train of Dreams* [1987]). Because

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<sup>7</sup> I investigated the differences between English and French versions produced through “double shooting” more thoroughly in a paper entitled “Double Shooting: A Short-lived but Significant Method of Version Production at the National Film Board” (Université de Moncton, November 3, 2012, at the conference “Translation in Contexts of Official Multilingualism”).

these films are constructed through dialogue, not narration or spontaneous speech, they do not fall within the purview of this analysis and will also be excluded from my corpus.

Secondly, my corpus will also be circumscribed by mode of translation. I will only examine those films that use voice-over in their versions, whether an additional voice added to the soundtrack to provide translation of on-camera speech or a translated narration that replaces the original. During the early decades of the NFB's existence, narration was more common than dialogue in original productions because of the difficulty in recording synchronized sound on 16mm film; when technology evolved in the 1960s and it became possible to obtain sync sound when shooting on location, the aesthetics of documentary changed and narration fell out of favour. Subtitling gradually took over from voice-over as the standard way to produce versions of documentary films, although even today, for narration, the original track continues to be replaced with a translated version. By the mid-1970s, voice-over was rarely the sole method of version-production and for that reason, my research for this project does not go beyond that point.

Lastly, I will consider only films for which both original production and version exist, taking the pair as a unit made up of the audiovisual equivalent of source and target text. It should be noted that in many cases, versions were never produced or were made only when a film was re-released as part of a compilation (for example, in the recent DVD box sets released under the title "Collection mémoire," subtitled versions of all the films, including bonus material and interviews, were prepared if none previously existed). For decades, it was up to each studio to decide whether or not to produce a language version, depending on the film's distribution potential in theatrical release, on the non-theatrical circuit, and on television. The ad-hoc nature of the decision-making is reflected in this comment by André Lamy, Film Commissioner from 1975 to 1979: "Si, après réalisation, nous pouvons dire : ce film a une réelle valeur, ce film

reflète vraiment le milieu canadien anglais ou canadien français, ce film pourrait intéresser l'autre culture, alors nous prenons la décision de faire une version dans l'autre langue ou avec des sous-titres" (Lamy, quoted in Bonneville 1977, 27). It was not until 2007 that the NFB decided to formulate a policy on versioning, spurred by the fact that Torill Kove's animated film *The Danish Poet* (2006) was nominated for an Academy Award and it emerged that no French version had been produced.<sup>8</sup> The policy, released on May 30, 2008, states that all audiovisual works produced or co-produced by the NFB after April 1, 2005, must be made available in both official languages: a voice-over version in the case of animated films, a subtitled version at minimum in the case of documentary films, and one or the other in the case of other audiovisual genres.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, I must note that I am limited to using those films that I can actually view because both original and version remain in distribution or are archived at accessible facilities. When I started my research, thousands of NFB films could be screened at the private viewing stations of the CinéRobothèque in Montréal, allowing me to compare original and version in numerous instances. However, following cutbacks to the NFB's budget, the CinéRobothèque closed on September 1, 2012. Nonetheless, many films remain accessible through the online Screening Room, and I obtained permission to view many VHS or DVD copies via the NFB's in-house library. A rough count of the films listed in Donald Bidd's *The NFB Film Guide: The Productions of the National Film Board of Canada from 1939-1989, English-Language Productions*, published to mark the NFB's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that meet these criteria (in other words, by excluding all these categories: films produced using methods other than voice-over;

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<sup>8</sup> Personal communication, Christian Ruel, Assistant Director, Technical Innovations and Resources, National Film Board of Canada, June 15, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> "Politique sur les versions de l'ONF," National Film Board of Canada, 2008.

animation, fiction, sponsored and other non-documentary films; films without words; films produced after 1974; films for which no version exists and films for which only a subtitled version exists) brings the number of films potentially under consideration down into the hundreds. Of that number, I will examine several dozen films over the course of this project and refer briefly to a few dozen more.

### **1.3 Defining concepts: Beyond source and target text**

The object of study is the voice-over version, a hybrid object that contains elements of both source and target text. Audiovisual texts, unlike traditional written texts, communicate through two different channels, the visual and the acoustic, and through two different types of signs, verbal and non-verbal, resulting in four distinct components:

- (a) the verbal auditory channel, including dialogue, background voices, and sometimes lyrics
- (b) the non-verbal auditory channel, including music, natural sound and sound effects
- (c) the verbal visual channel, including superimposed titles and written signs on the screen
- (d) and the non-verbal visual channel: picture composition and flow. (Gottlieb 2001, 245, based on Delabastita [1990, 101-102])

Even when translators are mostly concerned with one aspect—the verbal auditory in dubbing, the verbal visual in subtitling—they must take into consideration that all these sign systems interact and work together to create a complex polysemiotic text. There is no neat separation between source and target, for certain signs will remain unchanged and be carried over into the version while others will be modified or replaced entirely. Zabalbeascoa (2008) takes this idea one step further and, noting that the relative importance of these sign systems varies, proposes mapping

audiovisual texts according to the following scheme: “a cline that indicates the presence (amount and importance) of verbal communication in proportion to other semiotic forms of expression; another cline for measuring the relative importance of sound in the audio channel weighted against visual signs” (29). In the area at the centre of the two clines are located “prototypical instances of the AV text” in which both audio and visual channels and both verbal and non-verbal codes act together to convey meanings, whereas as one moves away from the centre in either direction, one channel or one code takes on greater importance. Thus a television comedy adapted from a radio series may favour dialogue with few sound effects and little emphasis on the picture, whereas action films may include very little verbal communication and would be placed in the opposite corner of Zabalbeascoa’s scheme (29-30). The audiovisual translation researcher must be careful not to consider the translation to involve only the transfer of source-language words (dialogue or narration) into target-language words, as if all the non-verbal elements (image, music, graphics, etc.) necessarily remained unchanged. Zabalbeascoa points out that images are not “universal and unalterable” but are perceived differently by viewers of different socio-cultural backgrounds; similarly, all the non-verbal elements undergo cognitive and possibly material changes in the process of creating a new audiovisual text that is appropriately adapted to the new context and audience (33-34).

In the case of voice-over versions, it is the verbal auditory channel that is most affected, with translating voices replacing or being added to original voices; this element, as we shall see, has varying degrees of autonomy or separability from the other elements. In some of the NFB films I shall examine, the visual verbal channel also comes into play and undergoes change: it was not unusual for scenes where text is visible on the screen (a newspaper headline, a street sign, a poster) to be re-shot with the original text replaced by target-language text; also, as a rule,

the opening titles and closing credits were redone, usually in a similar graphic style to that of the original. Therefore my task will not so much be to compare the voice tracks of original and version or to analyze scripts or transcriptions of the films as it will be to examine the interaction between and relative importance of these various elements, all of which contribute to conveying the meaning of the audiovisual text.

The NFB was able to carry out the kind of reshooting referred to above on its versions precisely because of its status as both producer and distributor, responsible for all steps in the filmmaking and distribution process. Over its history, version units existed alongside production units or were mixed in with them: Unit A, for example, created in 1948, was responsible for films on dance and the arts as well as versions (Evans 1991, 34). The staff involved in versions—Jacques Bobet, Jacques Godbout, Bill Davies, Stanley Jackson and many others—went on to work in production or moved back and forth between various roles with no clear distinction. They worked in film: they were not trained as translators and did not think of themselves as such. The lines were blurred between making and distributing, just as the contours of what constituted a “film” were not clearly delineated: short films were grouped into programs for distribution; some were repackaged to fit the half-hour slots of television broadcast and shown on their own or presented by a television host; some were accompanied by extensive educational material; some were considered incomplete without the post-screening discussion and interaction with the audience. Hence the position I will be working from is that the meaning of a film is not stable and unchanging or intrinsic to it, but instead is contingent on its contours at the time of screening and on the perception of viewers. Similarly, the situation that prevailed at the NFB renders inadequate the traditional concept of the translational relationship as one that holds between a source text and

target text that are fixed, separate objects or artifacts, and of translation as a single operation of language transfer occurring at the moment of distribution.

Within this perspective of translation as a fluid process, however, I will continue to focus on audiovisual texts rather than shift attention from translation to translator. When dealing with historical texts like the films produced at the NFB and their versions, it is difficult to overcome the challenge of data collection. Information about the translator is not consistently available. Indeed, we don't always know who the author of the original work was, for many of the early films did not include credits or provided only an incomplete list of crew members. Filmmakers were not thought of as creators but as civil servants or employees of a government institution; filmmaking was public duty, not artistic expression. This goes doubly for versions: the teams involved were often anonymous, and even when names can be found in closing credits or production files—on copies of contracts, for example—little is known about the individual. Instead we must work with the traces of individuals' actions and attitudes in the films themselves, traces that can be observed through the study of the films themselves using textual analysis.

In light of the above, it seems appropriate to consider the versions produced at the National Film Board through the prism of institutional translation. This concept was developed most fully by Kaisa Koskinen (2008) in her study of translation at the European Commission. She observes that while all translation is arguably institutional in the sense that it is a norm-governed activity taking place within a social system (19-20), we can distinguish a translation genre called *institutional translation* that has particular characteristics:

My definition thus is as follows: we are dealing with *institutional translation* in those cases when an official body (government agency, multinational organization or a private company, etc.; also an individual person acting in an official status) uses translation as a means of “speaking” to a particular audience. Thus, in institutional translation, the voice that is to be heard is that of the translating institution. (22)

Depending on certain factors—whether the author of the source-text is identified as a representative of an institution, whether the institution is named as author of the translation, and whether readers are aware of the institution (22-23, based on Mossop [1990])—Koskinen places translations on a continuum of *institutionality*, with translations of official documents of government agencies at the extreme end. In her experience, translation at the European Commission is “not a personal act but a collective process,” resulting in a text that bears only the name of the institution: “[M]y words are not mine,” she asserts. “The institution speaks through me” (Koskinen 2008, 24). To the extent that the institution speaks directly to its audience, presenting both the source text and its translation as written simultaneously and having equal weight, the translator’s role is hidden (25). In Canada, the institution most associated with translation is not the National Film Board but the Translation Bureau, a federal government organization founded in 1934 that provides translation, interpretation and terminology services, mainly in English and French, to federal departments and agencies as well as to Parliament and the court system. Its “translation doctrine,” at least as set out in a 1984 publication, states that translators should render “not the words or the structure of the source text but rather the message or, in other words, the author’s intention” (quoted in Mossop 1990, 354n3). As Mossop points out, the result of such a doctrine is the predominance of idiomatic translation; the translator’s decisions, in such a context, “are to a great extent pre-determined by the goals of the institution within which the translator works” (343). Does a similar influence over the translator’s decisions obtain at the National Film Board? While firmly entrenched in the media landscape in Canada, its function as a translating institution has been overlooked despite its seventy-year history of version production. The perspective I am taking, then, can open up a new understanding of the institution as a whole and the connections between its parts. To what extent is version production

either a personal act or a collective process? Can the translator be heard when the institution speaks? Does the institution speak with one voice?

Within this framework, which considers the NFB as a kind of translating institution and the voice-over version as a particular mode of audiovisual translation, working with the corpus described above, I will proceed through comparative analysis. The original and version of NFB documentaries have rarely been set in contrast to one another, as they tend to be distributed through separate networks and examined separately in reviews or critiques. If versions are even mentioned—in annual reports, in listings of television broadcasts, on the NFB Web site—the process is considered unproblematic and the resulting documents, with rare exceptions, are not recognized as having been influenced or affected by the input of the target culture. Yet through comparison it is possible to identify strategies that bear witness to translator decisions, even when we know little or nothing about the translator as a person, and beyond the level of individual films to differing approaches in English-to-French and French-to-English translation. Given that in voice-over, the changes mostly occur in the soundtrack and more particularly the verbal auditory channel, the observation of differences between original and version can give us a clearer sense of the contribution of various elements—speech, other aspects of the soundtrack (music, sound effects), image, text on screen—to the construction of meaning in the film as a whole. A second type of comparison will consider versions in relation to original productions in the same language, taking into account the varying percentages of versions compared to total output during a given period. Lastly, I will use the contextualization of translation as a means of placing the production of films as socio-cultural documents into the wider context of relations between English and French in Canada. By placing the texts in their context, we can understand ways in which versions served different purposes and interests depending on when they were

made and by whom; we can understand language in documentary as a marker of difference and conflict in Canada, yet also a vector of communication, helping people to define themselves as citizens and members of a collectivity. I set out to understand the National Film Board as the producer of two separate but intertwining streams of audiovisual productions, and beyond that, as a place of connections, of relations mirroring those of the broader community, of layered interactions that occurred in ways that have yet to be recognized.

One of the metaphors that has commonly been used to describe translation but of late has been called into question is that of bridge-building. This persistent spatial metaphor draws on the root of the word “translation” in the Latin “*transferre*,” to carry across, and calls to mind an image: “there is something *there*; it is carried across a *space between*; it is now *here*” (Round 2005, 51, emphasis in original). In this metaphor, the source and target texts exist in separate spheres which are then bridged by translation—an act that is seen as positive, although as Mona Baker points out, “No one questions whether bridges are always built for the (morally) ‘right’ reasons, nor the fact that just as they might allow us to cross over and make positive contact with a different culture, they also allow invading troops to cross over and kill, maim and destroy entire populations” (2006, 9). The bridge metaphor is based on the proposition that nations are geographically distinct entities, and that languages are spoken in territories that can be circumscribed and mapped. In regard to the Americas, Edwin Gentzler questions the existence of separate source and target spheres, arguing that “translation in the Americas is less something that happens between separate and distinct cultures and more something that is *constitutive* of those cultures” (2008, 5)—this informs his analysis of the translation of theatre and feminist novels in Quebec as a tool that “transforms culture, rewriting ideas in a new cultural context” (45). A thoroughgoing critique of the “in between” spatial metaphor of translation, especially as

adopted by postcolonial theorists, was published by Maria Tymoczko in 2003. She recognizes its appeal as an alternative to structuralist binary oppositions, but considers it problematic in positing that translation stands outside both source and target language; instead, she suggests that translation transcends language systems in a way that encompasses both, and translators are of necessity engaged in some kind of cultural framework (Tymoczko 2003, 196-197, 201).

This view of translation as a dynamic, transformative process rather than an act of bridge-building and of cultures as overlapping and diverse rather than distinct is particularly appropriate to studying the National Film Board, given its evolution: it went from being originally an English-dominated institution to one that was restructured to give more weight to French filmmakers, with production eventually being divided into two streams, to one that encouraged diversity and supported minority groups, from Aboriginal peoples to official language minority communities. NFB productions have always been distributed in both English and French across the country in theatrical and non-theatrical settings as well as being broadcast on national and local television stations. One cannot delimit separate geographical spaces where productions and versions in one language circulate exclusively; accordingly, we can neither speak of “carrying across” nor of a “space between.” While it is true that the original production is recontextualized and given new meaning through the translation process, the translation itself cannot be said to negotiate or bridge a divide between distant cultures. This understanding of the Canadian cultural space corresponds to the notion of a “transitive space” where translation is ongoing and continual, as suggested by Norman Cheadle: “Transitive is that cultural space constitutionally mediating between the descendants of the two imperial European powers that successively colonized Canada. That transitive space necessitates the act of translation from French to English,

*et de l'anglais vers le français*, in a ceaselessly transformative and reciprocal gesture” (2007, xvi, italics in original).

Building on this notion, I would like to propose a parallel to Reine Meylaerts’ analysis of literary relations in multilingual cultures (2009), in which she maps out relations in cultures where several languages are spoken within the same geographical space: “[ce sont] des sites multilingues où des productions littéraires multilingues se partagent—ou doit-on dire se disputent?—un espace commun et entretiennent des relations hiérarchiques complexes et dynamiques, à la fois locales, intra-nationales, nationales ou internationales” (95). Although she focuses on “literary relations” in the typology she proposes, taking a socio-institutional perspective, we can expand that typology to include “cinematic relations.” This idea refers to the hierarchical relations between works (literary, for Meylaerts; cinematographic in our case) produced in the dominant language, that of institutions such as administrative and legal systems, and those produced in minority languages that are less legitimate and less prestigious (99-100). As these relations are complex and dynamic, they change over time; this observation plays out in the Canadian space as the levels of English and French production go up and down and relations between versions and originals change during the period I will examine.

#### **1.4 Literature review: NFB**

The NFB seems to be the focus of renewed interest among academics and researchers in recent years, with five book-length publications on the NFB published between 2006 and 2010, and more appearing all the time. Of the five publications, three are in English and two in French; one is a collection of essays and the remaining four started out as doctoral theses: *L’Office*

*national du film et le cinéma canadien (1939-2003): éloge de la frugalité* (Zéau 2006); *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film at the National Film Board* (Druick 2007); *Le cinéma à l'épreuve de la communauté : Le cinéma francophone de l'Office national du film 1960-1985* (Froger 2009); and *D is for Daring: The Women Behind the Films of Studio D* (Vanstone 2007). The essay collection, published in February 2010, is called *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (Waugh, Baker and Winton 2010).

In her comprehensive study *L'Office national du film et le cinéma canadien* (2006), Caroline Zéau, a researcher from France, uses a combination of archival documents, interviews and previous publications on the NFB to set out, for the first time in French, a complete history of English and French production from 1939 to 2003. Zéau argues that more than any social or political factors, it was what she calls a “*désir de cinéma*,” a creative push towards greater cinematographic achievement, that spurred progress in terms of both organizational structure and aesthetic innovation (Zéau 2006, 18-19). She places not John Grierson but Norman McLaren at the heart of the NFB's accomplishments, because he valued frugality and craftsmanship as the engines of creativity; accordingly, she envisions Canadian cinema as an inverted pyramid with McLaren and his fellow animation filmmakers René Jodoin and Pierre Hébert at the base, the collective movement of *cinéma direct* in the middle, and at the top, a widening out into several streams influenced by NFB filmmakers and technicians, such as the feature film industry and the development of new technologies like IMAX. Although the study purports to cover the entire period from 1939 to 2003, it devotes most space to the emergence of francophone filmmakers at the NFB in the “golden age” of the mid-1950s to late 1960s; it skips over certain areas like women's filmmaking at Studio D and the Indian Film Unit, and covers recent years—the period

since 1984, which Zéau identifies as the beginning of the NFB's decline—in a scant few pages. One chapter is particularly useful in that it summarizes historical information dispersed over numerous sources: the comparison of the Canadian NFB to similar state film institutions in countries like New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

An approach that is concerned less with aesthetic issues and more with the relation between government policy and NFB production can be found in Zoë Druick's *Projecting Canada* (2007). She argues that the style of NFB films can be characterized as “government realism,” in that they consistently show “the everyday life of ordinary people” (26) and tell stories about typical individuals from various regions and occupations who represent larger social classes. Once these group identities have been established, government policies can be designed to support and manage them. Druick draws parallels with developments in social science in the twentieth century, noting the link between anthropology and documentary film in their shared emphasis on “social types.” In particular, she sees the social-science technique of the representative sample, in which the part stands in for the whole, as corresponding to realism as a style that characterized documentary from the 1920s on (46-48). She believes that changes in documentary form, such as the move in the 1960s toward observational filmmaking and citizen participation, can be connected more generally to shifts in theories of knowledge (182). Placing NFB filmmaking in the broader context of Canadian culture and nation building, she states that her book “attempts to examine the relationship between policy, films, and citizens in what has been one of Canada's most productive areas of cultural output” (14).

Another recently published history of the NFB, this time limited in scope to the French program between 1960 and 1985, is Marion Froger's *Le cinéma à l'épreuve de la communauté* (2009). She, too, is more interested in the social function of NFB documentaries than in their

aesthetic qualities, but whereas Druick draws on Foucault's concept of governmentality, Froger bases her analysis on Deleuze's notion of collectivity. She starts out by examining the collaborative practices undertaken at the NFB through such programs as Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle and the Groupe de recherches sociales in relation to the new social structures, such as housing co-ops and community clinics, that emerged following the decline of the Catholic Church's grip on Quebec society. Froger then provides an original analysis of the relation between documentary film and community by connecting it to anthropological studies of gift-giving, reciprocity and exchange, particularly as concerns the tripartite relation between the film spectator, the person who films, and the person who is being filmed.

Gail Vanstone's *D is for Daring: The Women Behind the Films of Studio D* (2007) differs from the previous publications in two ways: it focuses on one particular studio at the NFB, the women's studio, which existed between 1974 and 1996, and it takes an approach that is not theoretical, but based on personal interviews with the filmmakers and staff at Studio D. Vanstone considers this approach particularly appropriate for telling the story of the feminist film studio and its contribution to the women's movement in Canada and beyond; as she explains, "My use of personal interviews mirrors Studio D's own insistence on the importance of listening to women, recording and 'understanding' women's individual accounts and interpretations, believing women to be credible witnesses, albeit witnesses whose access to memory is never unmediated" (22).

The voluminous essay collection *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (2010), edited by Thomas Waugh, Michael Baker and Ezra Winton, provides the first in-depth analysis of this pioneering program in activist, social-change oriented media that ran from 1967 to 1980. The first section includes reprints of a number of

articles written during that period by NFB filmmakers and staff and published in *Access/Médium-Média*, the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle newsletter; the other sections contain chapters on hitherto overlooked filmmakers like Maurice Bulbulian, Michel Régnier, Bonnie Sherr Klein and Martin Duckworth, as well as on theoretical issues and on two examples of participatory media projects being carried out today.

These recent publications add to the already substantial number of books on the NFB that have tackled various aspects over the years. Early histories include those written in 1977 by C. Rodney James, *Film as a National Art: NFB of Canada and the Film Board Idea*, and in 1981 by D.B. Jones, *Movies and Memoranda*. Two key historical accounts are Gary Evans' *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (1991), which picks up where he left off with his previous book, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda* (1984), and the detailed description of the emergence of the French program by Quebec historian Pierre Véronneau, *Résistance et affirmation: la production francophone à l'ONF—1939-1964* (1987). In addition, there are numerous works on specific filmmakers like Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault; biographies of key figures like commissioner John Grierson and the critical reassessment of Grierson published by Joyce Nelson, *The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend* (1988); personal histories like C.W. Gray's *Movies for the People* (1973), on the NFB's unique distribution system; and publications that focus on specific themes, like Brian J. Low's *NFB Kids: Portrayals of Children by the National Film Board of Canada 1939-89* (2002). To these must be added hundreds of journal articles on specific periods, programs, films, and filmmakers.

Together, this wealth of publications forms quite a complete picture of the institution that has played such a significant role in Canadian history over seven decades. Nonetheless, writing in

English and French on the NFB often seems to deal with either the English program or the French, treating them as separate entities rather than seeing the connections between the two. These connections were to a large extent forged through version production, yet most discussions of NFB films—following common practice in film studies—treat only the original works. This practice holds even when a writer is referring to films originally made in the other language: thus for example, David Clandfield (himself a translator) writes in English about the French-language films of Pierre Perrault (2004). Pierre Pageau, in two essays—“Colin Low, un anglophone au Québec” (2006) and “Colin Low et Pierre Perrault: points de convergences” (1987)—astutely compares the cinematic themes and preoccupations of Colin Low and Pierre Perrault, but does not specifically refer to the opposite-language versions of either filmmaker’s work. Nonetheless, a few mentions of versions do occur, particularly in Gary Evans’ history and in the writings of Pierre Véronneau on the early activities of francophone filmmakers. There are two exceptions that make more than passing reference to versions: the volume *Candid Eyes: Essays on Canadian Documentaries* (2003), edited by Jim Leach and Jeannette Sloniowski; and a recent book by Vincent Bouchard, *Pour un cinéma léger et synchrone ! Invention d’un dispositif à l’Office national du film à Montréal* (2012). The first essay in *Candid Eyes*, Richard Hancox’s “Geography and Myth in *Paul Tomkowicz: Coordinates of National Identity*,” contains an extensive discussion of the implications of changes to the narration in the French version of the 1954 film *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman*. Other essays in *Candid Eyes* that deal with French-language films show awareness of the versions, and Peter Harcourt even states in a footnote, “An entire essay could be written about the imperial implications of the ‘Englishing’ of Québécois films at the NFB” (Harcourt 2003, 70n22). Vincent Bouchard’s *Pour un cinéma léger et synchrone !* examines the *cinéma-direct* movement from the perspective of technological

innovations in camera and sound-recording equipment. He undertook exhaustive archival research, combing through production files and other documents and unearthing important details about how the films were made. In certain cases, particularly that of *The Days Before Christmas* (1958) and its French version *Bientôt Noël* (1959), his research sheds light on the relation between original and version. It should be noted that while versions are rarely considered in scholarly publications on the NFB, they did often rate a mention in NFB publicity materials and documents published at the time of their release. A range of other sources completed this research, including the NFB annual reports, promotional documents, educational material, periodicals like *External Affairs*, *Access/Médium-Média* and *The CBC Times*, files at the Cinémathèque québécoise, and newspaper reviews and articles.

### **1.5 Literature review: Translation studies**

The second major source of reference material for this thesis is translation studies, and within that category, the subfield of audiovisual translation research (AVT). The practice of audiovisual translation has grown tremendously as screens of all shapes and sizes have become ubiquitous, and its study has increased correspondingly, especially since 1995, the year in which the centenary of cinema was celebrated and DVD technology was developed (Gambier 2008, 12-13). Given the high number of recent publications, dissertations, conferences and research projects on AVT, it is not surprising that the field has gone beyond its initial focus on interlingual subtitling and dubbing. AVT now encompasses other modes of translation such as voice-over and the various forms of media accessibility like captioning and audiodescription. At the same time, it has extended its purview from an almost exclusive focus on the feature-length fiction film to take

into consideration other genres of audiovisual production like documentary and anime. This thesis follows that trend by taking voice-over as its mode of translation and documentary as its audiovisual genre.

Scholarly work on voice-over translation is just starting to be published: the first book dedicated entirely to this mode of translation is *Voice-over Translation: An Overview*, which appeared in 2010. Its three authors (Eliana Franco, Anna Matamala, and Pilar Orero) have extensive hands-on experience and draw on their own professional practices to give a comprehensive introduction to many aspects of voice-over. The discussion of terminological issues related to the term voice-over itself, borrowed from film studies, is particularly useful, as is the chapter on translation problems that arise with this mode of translation. Since in most countries voice-over is used with non-fiction films—with the exception of Eastern European countries, which have a long tradition of using voice-over for fiction films—the issues the authors deal with are often specific to documentary, such as how to deal with spontaneous speech and whether accents of speakers should be matched to the accents of voice-over actors.

This publication builds on Eliana Franco's previous research on voice-over translation in documentary, as contained in her thesis, completed in 2000. She compares the voice-over versions of several television documentaries about Brazil and concludes that while voice-over is widely understood to stand for authenticity and faithful reproduction, it has its own dynamics and follows genre- and culture-specific norms. She also published an article in 2001 that tries to sort out the terminological ambiguity surrounding a number of terms—such as voice-over, narration, and commentary—shared by audiovisual translation and film studies. Another researcher who has focused on voice-over as a form of translation specific to documentary is Eva Espasa (2004), who has examined how voice-over contributes to the construction of authenticity in

documentaries. As well, Francine Kaufmann (2004) has written about documentary translation: drawing on her experience translating a documentary on Israeli immigrants who speak imperfect Hebrew into French for ARTE, she discusses the pressure she felt to use standardized French for the subtitles and the difficulties inherent in working with the spontaneous speech of the participants.

Within AVT studies, it is difficult to find models for the kind of project I am proposing here, one that analyzes the shift in meaning that occurs in the translation process and draws on recent work on culture and ideology in translation studies, but for which the corpus happens to be not written texts, but audiovisual documents. In 2004, Jorge Díaz Cintas suggested that Descriptive Translation Studies could provide a theoretical framework for research in audiovisual translation (2004). He noted that while DTS has mostly referred to literary works, some of its concepts could serve as tools for analysis of audiovisual works: for example, Even-Zohar's concept of the polysystem, a group of semiotic systems formed of original and translated texts of varying status that struggle to occupy and maintain a central position in relation to social and historical norms, could be adapted to refer to a film polysystem (23). Such a perspective opens up the possibility of examining the relationships among film texts circulating within the same country or culture and the various translation practices at work. Similarly, Toury's concept of norms as a tool to account for the relationship between translation policies and translator behaviour could be extended to audiovisual translation. Díaz Cintas points out that norms are applied not only by individual translators but also by production and distribution companies, broadcasters, and other players; therefore, studying them can expose the manipulation of culture by certain vested interests (27-28). He believes that DTS is at once homogenous and flexible, allowing translation scholars to share ideas from a common platform, while it also takes an

interdisciplinary perspective that transcends the early focus on the linguistic dimension of audiovisual products: “Translation is viewed as an act of intercultural communication, rather than simply interlinguistic” (31).

While Díaz Cintas’s contribution helps AVT researchers to move beyond one-dimensional approaches and start to integrate concerns of power and cultural context into textual analysis, DTS is limited in my view by its excessive focus on the product of translation rather than the process. To speak of a cinematic polysystem is to consider that both original films and their versions are unique objects that circulate in fixed form; yet this neglects the effect of the context on these objects, which are more fruitfully seen as representations that come into being in a given time and place. That is why, as mentioned, I prefer to consider cinematic relations between works that circulate in the same space, a viewpoint that emphasizes the changing networks of connections and differences between them. From another perspective, I draw on the model proposed by Kate Sturge in *Representing Others: Translation, Ethnography and the Museum* (2007), which takes representations in ethnographic museums as its corpus. Sturge examines the term “cultural translation” as it is used in cultural anthropology, noting that it has a metaphorical sense—the attempt to understand other cultures in terms that can be made understandable in the culture of the ethnographer—and a practical sense—the actual translation that necessarily occurs between two (unequal) languages in the ethnographic encounter, and is usually hidden in the writing up of that encounter. After examining several cases of ethnographic translation, as in the work of Malinowski and the study of Native American oral literature, Sturge discusses ethnographic museums as themselves translations, not in the sense that they can be evaluated for faithfulness but “by virtue of their job of representing cultures through the medium of objects—a translation from the originating world of the objects into a new network of

meanings and interpretations” (131). This perspective can usefully be applied to documentary films in that the process of creating a version or adaptation removes them from the originating world or culture and recontextualizes them in a new network of meanings, where certain influences take on more weight and others are pushed into the background. Sturge takes the position that “it doesn’t make sense to look at translation as a mainly technical process of re-encoding stable meanings into a second linguistic code. We will see that the ‘meanings’ encoded by ethnographic representation are complex, unstable, hybrid; they are born of the contingencies of the receiving system rather than those of the source” (2); this is the line of thinking I will follow in the context of documentary film.

I also draw on the perspectives offered by a recent publication on audiovisual translation that goes beyond both practical advice and linguistic analysis to examine historical, cultural and ideological issues related to film translation: the monograph *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*, published in 2007 by Abé Mark Nornes, a subtitler and professor of Japanese film studies. His initial essay, “For an Abusive Subtitling,” was published in *Film Quarterly* in 1999, and after Lawrence Venuti reprinted it in the *Translation Studies Reader*, Nornes expanded it into a full-length book on global cinema and translation. He examines the role played by translators in the “global traffic system” of moving image media, subject to regulation and norms yet open to appropriation. Nornes advocates an approach to subtitling that he calls “abusive,” after Philip E. Lewis’s use of the term in reference to texts by Derrida. Nornes considers that the vast majority of subtitles are “corrupt” because conventional practice requires extreme reduction of the source text, forcing it to conform to the rules and frame of reference of the target text (155). He calls for “experimentation with language and its grammatical, morphological, and visual qualities—to bring the fact of translation from its position of obscurity” (176-177), arguing that such

experimentation is a natural development because “we are in an age where moving-image literacy includes the ability to manage complex text/image relations” (186)—an ability that will only increase in the future.

Only by reconsidering his visceral dislike of dubbing did Nornes come to recognize the abusive possibilities of dubbing—likening it to the art of the ventriloquist. The metaphor was proposed by Rick Altman as early as 1980 in his defence of film sound and taken up by film scholar and historian Antje Ascheid in “Speaking Tongues: Voice Dubbing in the Cinema as Cultural Ventriloquism,” published in *Velvet Light Trap* (1997). She claims that because dubbing removes the characters’ voices and replaces them with lip-synchronized translations of the dialogue, the practice alters the status of the original from finished work to “transcultural decultured product” (40), one that is recontextualized in a new cultural setting. She sees the potential for “effacing the fact of the film text’s foreign origin” (39) as empowering and believes that greater acceptance of dubbing will lead to an increase in the international exchange of films. Although Ascheid does not refer specifically to voice-over, it is clear that when direct speech is translated through voice-over or when original narration is replaced by a translated one, a similar effacement of the source text occurs, with a subsequent recontextualization; in fact, the status of the voice-over version as a “radically new product” (40) is even more pronounced because it is not constrained, as is dubbing, by the need for labial synchrony.

The question of representation is central to another recent publication on audiovisual translation, Michael Cronin’s *Translation Goes to the Movies* (2009), which flips recent interest in translators as *agents* of representation and instead proposes to consider them as *objects* of representation. Cronin asks: how is the theme of translation portrayed in mainstream cinema? He proceeds to examine issues like language difference in frontier narratives, constructed languages

in science fiction, and English as a global language through films as varied as *Dances with Wolves*, the Star Wars trilogy and *Lost in Translation*. Another aspect of translation in global cinema—how foreign languages are represented in popular films—was examined in a recent publication by Carol O’Sullivan, *Translating Popular Film* (2011). By focusing on specific devices like the translating dissolve and the narrational subtitle, she connects language issues on the screen with broader questions of representation and relating to otherness.

While I am positioning this thesis as a contribution to the study of audiovisual translation, it is also part of a broader tradition of research on translation in Canada. Because of the status of English and French as official languages, established through an article of the British North America Act of 1867 and officialized with the adoption of the Official Languages Act in 1969, Canadian institutions have long utilized translation as a means to provide access to government documents and services in both languages. As a consequence, Canada has acquired a highly structured translation profession with numerous professional associations, specialized publications and university training programs. While the vast majority of translation activity has been pragmatic, literary translation has been practised in Canada since around 1960, aided since 1972 by the grant program of the Canada Council for the Arts. Theatre translation, too, has a lengthy history, with both the English-Canadian and Québécois scenes being enriched by work from the other culture. Major publications in Canadian translation studies that take a historical perspective or examine specific periods in history include, for theatre, Annie Brisset’s *Sociocritique de la traduction: Théâtre et alterité au Québec (1968-1988)* (1990) and Louise Ladouceur’s *Making the Scene: La traduction du théâtre d’une langue officielle à l’autre* (2005). Starting around the 1970s, as Canadian cultures increasingly began to consider that literature and theatre played a key role in the assertion of national identity, translation took on greater

importance as a means of providing greater access to these works. Corresponding to this increase in literary and theatre translation activity, against the backdrop of the ongoing importance of pragmatic translation in a bilingual environment, has been the emergence of the discipline of translation studies in Canada. The key role played by Canada is demonstrated by the existence of scholarly journals such as *TTR* (1988-) and *META* (1955-) and the formation of the Canadian Association for Translation Studies/Association canadienne de traductologie in 1987—the first such association in the world. In Canadian literary translation studies, numerous works have been published by such writers as Kathy Mezei, Gillian Lane-Mercier, Patricia Godbout, Sherry Simon and Luise von Flotow. These are joined by several publications on the history of translation such as Jean Delisle’s *La traduction au Canada / Translation in Canada, 1534-1984* (1987). There is no reason why a historical account of audiovisual translation in Canada should not find a place within this tradition of translation research.

## **1.6 Considering multiple voices**

The starting point for my interest in voice-over versions of NFB documentaries was a realization that “voice” was present in both literal and metaphorical senses and could be a key to understanding the shifts in meaning that occur in the translation process. We must first examine ways in which meaning is produced in the original films, and this “metaphoric proxy for authorship” (FitzSimons 2009, 131) provides a framework. I will start from the position that the films under study do not express the point of view or present the argument of a single author, whether the filmmaker or anyone else, but instead contain multiple voices or positions of authorship from which meaning is encoded for subsequent decoding by viewers, and

consequently, multiple forms of mediation between film and viewer. These voices, which speak with varying force over the decades, include the following: that of the producing institution, which is given specific mandates through the NFB Film Acts and policy statements; that of the participants or subjects of the film, whose voices may be the only ones that *speak* in the literal sense; that of the filmmaker, whose aim may range from information to artistic expression to social critique to entertainment; that of the film itself, which may in the end not be distinguishable from that of the person who directs it or the people who worked on it; and of course, that of the translator or version director, who translates either the narration, which may be written by the filmmaker, or the words of the participants, who in most cases are not performing dialogue but speaking spontaneously either in an interview or in direct speech. For the films under consideration in Chapters 2 to 5, an aspect of this concept of “voice” will be linked to the discussion at hand.

### **1.6.1 Voice-over in film studies and audiovisual translation**

The voice in cinema is a particular kind, as Michel Chion, notably, has observed. Amongst all the aural elements of a film’s soundtrack, the spectator perceives the human voice most readily, carrying out an instantaneous triage that places the human voice at the top of the perceptual hierarchy. Chion (1999) calls this natural reflex *vococentrism*: “Human listening is naturally vococentrist, and so is the talking cinema by and large” (6). He identifies a kind of voice found in cinema that is unlike that of radio or theatre: the *acousmatic voice* or *acousmêtre*. “Acousmatic” is an old word revived by Pierre Schaeffer in his research on *musique concrète* that “is said of a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen” (18). In film, sounds may

be either visualized—their source visible on the screen—or acousmatic—their source unseen. The spectator perceives these two kinds of sounds differently even though the actual source of both—in the cinema, a central loudspeaker located behind the screen—is the same. Whereas the words spoken by onscreen characters seem to emanate from their mouths, those that are only heard come from somewhere beyond the edges of the frame; the acousmatic entity may already have been seen but presently be offscreen—the spectator can connect the voice to a remembered face—or may be “a special being” who is not-yet-seen but liable to enter the visual field. In a different category is the “commentator-acousmètre”: the voice-over narrator whose face we will never see (21). In the perceptual triage carried out by the spectator, Chion suggests, the commentator’s voice is thought of as coming from an imaginary proscenium below or alongside the screen, beside the imaginary orchestra pit where an invisible orchestra plays the film’s background music (3).

“Voice-over narration,” then, is a way of describing this particular cinematic voice. The term is defined by Kozloff (1988, 5) as “oral statements, conveying any portion of the narrative, spoken by an unseen speaker situated in a time and space other than that simultaneously being presented on the screen.” In fiction, the narration is usually intradiegetic or spoken by a character in the story; the term “diegesis,” drawn from narratology, refers to the story world in which the characters evolve and events occur. By contrast, in documentary the narrator is most often an anonymous voice, described by Bruzzi (2006, 47) as “an extra-diegetic soundtrack that has been added to a film... [to give] insights and information not immediately available from within the diegesis, (...) usually that of a disembodied and omniscient narrator.” Because of the difference in function between the fictional voice-over, which narrates or tells a story, and that of documentary, which aims to persuade, demonstrate or instruct, Kozloff prefers to reserve the

term “voice-over narration” for fiction films (1988, 5). Franco (2000, 35), based on the scripts she obtained for her research and the interviews she conducted, suggests that most documentarists refer to “commentary” rather than “narration.” However, this distinction is not universally observed and certainly does not seem to be upheld in documentary practice in Quebec. Consequently, I have decided to maintain the term “narration.”<sup>10</sup> The unseen but all-seeing nature of documentary narration may be why it is sometimes called the “voice of God”; the original meaning of “acousmatic,” Chion points out, harks back to the uninitiated disciples of a Pythagorean sect whose master spoke from behind a curtain so they could concentrate on his message without being distracted by sight (Chion 1999, 19). But the “voice of God” model of documentary narration, in which a deep, booming male voice offers a single authoritative explanation for the images and “with all the insinuations of patriarchy, dominance, omniscience that term harbours” (Bruzzi 2006, 49), represents only one of many forms documentary narration can take: the voice can also be ironic and detached, poetic, informal and conversational, and openly political, among other characteristics (57).

It should be noted that “voice-over narration” can refer to either the original narration or the translated one that replaces it; as Franco points out (2001, 293), the terminological ambiguity seems to result from these terms being borrowed from film studies, a discipline that does not generally take translation into consideration. Most documentaries produced prior to the 1960s at the NFB consisted of a single voice on the soundtrack; producing a version involved remixing the soundtrack to remove the original voice and substitute that of a narrator reading the translated

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<sup>10</sup> In my personal experience as a documentary production manager, subtitler for numerous NFB documentaries, and translator of documentary proposals and festival catalogues in the 1990s and 2000s, I always heard and employed the term “narration” not “commentary.”

narration. The resulting film was not immediately identifiable as a translation. By contrast, in subtitled films, the equivalent of source and target texts are present simultaneously in the form of spoken dialogue and onscreen subtitles, so that viewers are constantly aware that they are watching a translated version. This feature of subtitling has led it to be described as “vulnerable translation,” meaning that audience members who understand the original language may constantly be verifying the subtitler’s work and calling certain decisions into question (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2007, 55).

In audiovisual translation, “voice-over” has another meaning: documentaries and other non-fiction programs commonly use a translation technique whereby the voice of an actor reading a translation is heard simultaneously over the voice of a person giving an interview or conversing on camera. Convention has it that the original voice is heard for a few seconds before the volume is lowered and the translated voice inserted; each segment of translated text is usually shorter than the original speech so that the onscreen speaker can be heard again for a few seconds at the end of the segment. This technique, though it bears the same name as the narrational voice-over of film studies, is quite different: there is still a voice over something, but “the nature of both the ‘voice’ and the ‘something’ has changed drastically (...): from an invisible *solitary voice*—the narrator’s/commentator’s—delivered over *images*, to an invisible *parallel voice*—the translation performer’s—superimposed on a *visible voice*, the onscreen source speaker’s” (Franco 2001, 293).

While many broadcasters prefer voice-over to subtitles in documentary translation as it is considered more audience-friendly, the NFB, an institution not driven by commercial imperatives and the requirements of television, has since the 1970s tended to use subtitles for participants’ speech. Some films combine the two techniques, such as Bonnie Sherr Klein’s *Citizen’s*

*Medicine (La clinique des citoyens)* (1970): interviews in which a single participant speaks to the camera are translated through voice-over, while conversations between doctor and patient are subtitled. But my research goes back to the period that preceded the widespread use of subtitles: most films from the 40s and 50s did not use synchronized dialogue and, because they tended to follow the Griersonian approach which held documentary to be primarily didactic and imbued with a social purpose, they were heavily dependent on voice-over narration to make their arguments. It was this *solitary voice* that was translated to produce versions, as we shall see in the films of the 1940s to early 1960s discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Some films made later in the 60s that were part of the *cinéma direct* movement eschewed narration, deriding it as a crutch to storytelling and preferring to emphasize the authentic speech of participants; this means that in chapters 4 and 5, the term “voice-over” will increasingly refer to the *parallel voice* speaking in a second language over that of speakers in the original language. Accordingly, I will be using the term “voice-over” in these two ways: the AVT sense of an actor’s voice providing a translation over an interview, and the film studies and film industry sense of an off-camera narration track.

It should be noted that “voice” in these contexts refers quite literally to a voice heard on the soundtrack of a film, one that is disembodied in both of the above-mentioned situations. (In the film industry, actors who specialize in this kind of work are referred to as “voice actors” or even “voices” for short (Pagoon 2007, 3)). As such, the term is associated with someone who speaks another person’s words but has not written or uttered them, someone who acts as a conduit for another. But “voice” is often used figuratively to mean, according to the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, “the expressed will of the people, a group, etc.” and “the right to express an opinion.” This figurative meaning is what underlies the uses of the term in the next sections.

### 1.6.2 Voice of the text

In documentary studies, the theorist who has engaged with the term most extensively is Bill Nichols. He introduced the concept of a “textual voice” in his seminal article “The Voice of Documentary” (1983), expanding on it in his subsequent books *Representing Reality* (1991) and *Introduction to Documentary* (2001). In the 1983 article, he offers the following definition:

By “voice” I mean something narrower than style: that which conveys to us a sense of the text’s social point of view, of how it is speaking to us and how it is organizing the materials it is presenting to us. In this sense, voice is not restricted to any one code or feature, such as dialogue or spoken commentary. Voice is perhaps akin to that intangible, moirélike pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film’s codes, and it applies to all modes of documentary” (1983, 18-19).

Nichols uses “voice” as a means to distinguish four modes of documentary that follow in roughly chronological order: the direct-address or expository films of the 40s and 50s, in which voice-over narration features prominently; the observational cinema of the 60s, which for the most part avoids narration and interviews entirely; the interview-oriented films of the 70s, which weave together a story through the voices of witness-participants; and self-reflexive documentaries—a mode that was just emerging at the time of writing—which call attention to the film’s construction and acknowledge the role of its makers. In all these modes, there is a “controlling voice of the textual system” through which the film makes known a particular point of view or expresses an argument, and which is set off from and contrasted to the other literal voices by a “gap” (24); it is located at a higher level than those of interviewees or participants and orchestrates them into a pattern. Nichols considers the first three modes problematic—direct address because of the omniscience and reductionism of voice-over narration; observational cinema because it claims to show reality without revealing that its meaning has been constructed; and the string-of-interviews film because although the “less assertive authorial voices” of

interviewees do not, like voice-over narration, attempt to stand outside history, and although they do spread out authority amongst all the participants, they nonetheless ask viewers to uncritically accept what they say as truth. Only in those documentaries that are self-reflexive and self-referential, like the work of ethnographic filmmakers David and Judith MacDougall, in which they acknowledge their role in initiating and conducting the interviews and in constructing the film's meaning, does Nichols feel that the level of structural sophistication is sufficient for the "voice of the text" to clearly assert itself (29-30).

In a 2009 article, Australian film studies researcher Trish FitzSimons returns to Nichols' concept of voice and argues that it needs revision. Her critique revolves around the lack of consideration for the participants of documentaries, especially in the framework of the Aboriginal process of "coming to voice"; she advocates a more inclusive understanding of the multiple contributions to authorship. She notes that "there are alternate terms to construe vocal relationships between film-maker and subjects, broadcaster, audience, etc." (135) and suggests "ventriloquic voice," "dialogic voice," and "choric voice," among others. It seems to me, however, that the shortcoming of Nichols' concept is not that it is insufficiently inclusive, but that Nichols, in keeping with his structuralist theoretical perspective that gives primacy to structure over subject, conceives of the "textual voice" or "voice of the film" as something separate not only from that of the participants, but also from that of the filmmaker or, indeed, anyone involved in the filmmaking process. He ascribes agency to the textual object in a way that veils any discussion of human agency and the role of institutions, distributors, critics, funding agencies, promoters, government bodies, and more broadly, the power relations that so obviously infuse all of documentary production. This cannot be attributed solely to the date of the article (1983), because in his 2001 book, Nichols reiterates and expands upon his view of voice as

something belonging to the *text*, rather than to any individual: “The fact that documentaries are not a reproduction of reality gives them a voice of their own. They are a representation of the world, and this representation stands for a particular view of the world. The voice of documentary, then, is the means by which this particular point of view or perspective becomes known to us” (2001, 43).

In translation studies, the “sociological turn” of recent years has shifted the focus of scholarly work from texts to mediators: “We would like to know more about who is doing the mediating, for whom, within what networks, and with what social effects” (Pym 2006, 3). I believe that any examination of voice in the context of NFB documentaries must not be strictly text-based but must take into account a wide range of mediators involved in the production process, including, of course, those involved in the production of versions. This means that textual analysis will be inscribed in the larger context of the social practice of documentary production in two languages in Canada. The relation between any “voice of the text” that we may be able to identify and others such as that of the filmmaker or broader social discourses will be covered more specifically in Chapter 5, when we look at women’s filmmaking and the work of Anne Claire Poirier.

### **1.6.3 Voice of the “social actors”**

One of the defining characteristics of documentary is the presence of “social actors,” in other words participants who “play themselves,” who are not actors performing roles but individuals selected by the filmmaker to contribute to the film’s storyline (Waugh 2011, 75). Among their many possible contributions, they may provide testimony about their personal

experiences, seek out information and bring the viewer along on the journey, strengthen the film's argument as experts or witnesses, or play an oppositional role by presenting viewpoints different from that of the filmmaker. These individuals are chosen by the filmmaker for their "expressive capacity" and ability to convey "some sense of an interior dimensionality" through their words and behaviour (Nichols 1991, 121). In most cases, they do not take part in the filmmaking process beyond the shoot; once filmed, their image and words become part of the raw material that the filmmaker will shape into a coherent whole. The historical person is transformed, or indeed reduced, into a coherent form of cinematic character: within the complex whole of the person's life, only those aspects that fit with the storyline—as determined by the filmmaker—and that build up the sense of wholeness in the character will be maintained in the final edit. The cinematic character may be "acting naturally," as if the camera were invisible, or may acknowledge its presence as if posing: Thomas Waugh has proposed the concepts of "representational" and "presentational" discourse to distinguish between documentary participants who are representing their lives as if they were unaware of being filmed and those who are presenting themselves for the camera (Waugh 2011, 76). In films that fall into the "string-of-interviews" category—considered by Nichols to form the "third style" of documentary after the narration-based mode common in the 1950s and the observational mode of the 1960s (Nichols 1983, 17)—the participants are not only present visually, but are quite literally "given voice," that is, they express their opinions and emotions through the platform that the film represents. These voices, of course, must be translated when versions are produced, either through subtitles or voice-over. The interview as a specific form of linguistic encounter used in NFB documentaries, and the challenge of representing participants' voices through voice-over translation, will be touched upon in Chapter 4, when we look at the participatory media

productions made through the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle program as well as the films made by and about Aboriginal peoples.

But not all documentary participants can be considered to be playing themselves, for that implies that their identities as individuals are relevant to the film's subject. Prior to the mid-1950s, participants were not usually named and rarely spoke on camera; instead, they served as visual representatives of social types. As Druick observes, "Films made under the influence of Grierson are concerned with anonymous individuals who are typical of particular population or occupation groups" (2007, 49). The anonymous individuals represent categories like children, residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, career women, and immigrants. It is this aspect of documentary, she suggests, that parallels the technique of the representative sample, developed in social science in the 1920s and 1930s, in which a small subset of the population stands in for a larger group (48).

The fact that participants did not often speak on camera was partly the result of the limits of existing technology: simultaneous sound and image recording in documentary was rare, so most used voice-over narration rather than on-camera speech (whether interviews or conversations), and music and sound effects rather than synchronous sound. As technology evolved and sync sound recording became possible, voice-over narration began to be criticized as too authoritative, too closed to potentially different interpretations of the film's meaning than that of its director, and too skewed towards speaking "for" the subject being filmed. At the same time, tastes were changing under the influence of television, which began broadcasting in 1952 in Canada, and its emphasis on storytelling. While this evolution may be the result of changing technologies, it may also be a reflection of broader changes in epistemology. Druick notes that documentary form has developed in parallel with changing ways of expressing knowledge in

social science, so that around the same time as documentary rejected the authoritarian “voice-of-God” narration in favour of observational cinema, social science and more particularly anthropology were questioning the omniscient narrator of traditional ethnographic writing (2007, 6-7). This resulted in the “crisis of representation” that led to a questioning of the relationship between the person doing the filming and the person being filmed.

This distinction between anonymous representative of a social type and identified participant points not only to changing aesthetics over the years, but also to different conceptions of the filmmaker’s role. Whereas the Griersonian director was working on behalf of “oppressed minorities and others who were denied access to the means of producing their own image and who lacked the skills necessary to make images” (Ruby 2000, 197), the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle director was concerned with facilitating access to the media by various disenfranchised and minority groups. One such group for whom the relation between the filmer and the filmed was particularly important was Aboriginal people. In the second part of Chapter 4, I trace the movement in NFB films from representation of Aboriginal people on screen as anonymous groups for whom the narrator “speaks” in voice-over to self-representation in films made by the Indian Film Crew for Challenge for Change, among others. This pattern—from speaking for to speaking with and speaking by—can also be found in the history of ethnographic film, and the issue of voice is considered central by such writers as David MacDougall (1998) and Jay Ruby (2000).

These questions are just as critical for the documentaries produced at the NFB. If the only voices that are literally heard in a film are those of the participants, are they speaking as individuals or as representatives of social types, occupations, or marginal groups? If the participants represent larger categories of people, what happens when the film is versioned into

another language? Are such categories language specific? To take an example from the NFB context, if a typical working-class family is portrayed in an English film, can it stand in for working-class families across Canada in the French version? On the other hand, if the participants are identified as individuals, what is the relation between these “recruited voices” and that of the text or of the filmmaker? Should there be a hierarchy, with “the voice of the text remain[ing] of a higher, controlling type than the voices of interviewees” (Nichols 1983, 24)? In shaping the raw material of interviews into a structured film that sets out an argument or makes an assertion, the filmmaker is performing an act of interpretation on the participant’s words—this implies that those same words hold other potential meanings that could have been foregrounded. When those words are translated into voice-over or subtitles, which interpretation should be favoured? In a translational framework, we could put the question as follows: who is the author of the source text? The speaker or the filmmaker? To whom must the translator be “faithful” if the goal of equivalence is pursued?

Clearly, the definition of “voice” provided by Bill Nichols with regard to films in their original languages is inadequate as a tool to analyze NFB versions. We need to look farther afield, such as to the definition used by Jan Blommaert in his introduction to the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA). He draws on the work of Dell Hymes in linguistic anthropology to define “voice” as follows:

Voice stands for the way in which people manage to make themselves understood or fail to do so. In doing so, they have to draw upon and deploy discursive means which they have at their disposal, and they have to use them in contexts that are specified as to conditions of use. (...) Voice is the issue that defines linguistic inequality (hence, many other forms of inequality) in contemporary societies. An analysis of voice is an analysis of power effects—(not) being understood in terms of the set of sociocultural rules and norms specified—as well as of conditions for power—what it takes to make oneself understood. (Blommaert 2005, 4-5)

From this perspective, what matters is not so much being able to identify a “voice of the text” and to observe how that voice changes in the process of translation, but to understand the function that is desired and achieved through language—how utterances become understandable across different contextual spaces (Blommaert 2005, 78). When we are dealing with translation and therefore with language difference, that function changes as utterances travel from one set of values linked to linguistic signs to another set of values; the possibility of misunderstanding (by the hearer or audience) or manipulation (by the producer of the translated utterance) is high.

It should be noted that while I am dealing with audiovisual documents, which are of course characterized by the simultaneous presence of image and sound, the focus of my analysis will be how language is used in these audiovisual documents. I am not examining all aspects of NFB films as a film studies scholar might; I am specifically interested in the role of language—scripted and spontaneous—in the construction of meaning through the movement from source to target text. Accordingly, I will explore the link between language as it is used in the films and as it shapes the English and French communities. The link between film and language community and the way translation operates a movement across communities will become most clear in Chapter 3, when I discuss French-language *cinéma-direct* films and their versions produced for broadcast in English on the CBC.

#### **1.6.4 Voice of the translator**

The last aspect of the term “voice” that will underlie my discussion of the shifts that occur in the translation process is the idea of a “translator’s voice.” The expression has been proposed by, among others, Brian Mossop, who defines voice in a limited sense as “the result of choices

among alternate wordings—stylistic choices” (2007, 18). Mossop specifically excludes the metaphorical sense of voice as ideology or viewpoint to focus on voice as the outcome of the translator’s lexical-syntactic style choices (23). The meaning is fleshed out more thoroughly by Theo Hermans and Giuliana Schiavi in two complementary essays published in *Target* in 1996, and in a subsequent paper by Hermans (2001). Schiavi starts by observing that in narratology, authors like Seymour Chatman analyze texts originally written in English (such as work by Joyce, Hemingway and Conrad) alongside English translations of texts originally written in other languages (such as work by Flaubert and Diderot) without taking into consideration the fact of translation (1996, 2). Yet if one examines the diagram of narrative communication that Chatman proposes (real author – implied author – narrator – narratee – implied reader – real reader) and attempts to represent a translation on it—Schiavi gives the example of the Italian version of *Anna Karenina*—one runs into a problem: the implied reader in the text, who is addressed by the implied author, does not share the language of the real reader of a translation, thus the link is interrupted (11). The diagram needs to be revised to acknowledge that the function of the implied reader is “intercepted and isolated” (15) by the translator who, sharing a language with the real reader of the translation and thus a set of presuppositions and frames of reference, re-processes the original author’s message. It is this “extra presence within the narrative structure” (9) that Schiavi and Hermans call the translator’s voice.

Starting from the position that “translated narrative discourse always contains a ‘second’ voice, to which I will refer as the Translator’s voice, as an index of the Translator’s discursive presence” (1996, 27), Theo Hermans examines three situations in which this voice is discernible. These occur when the translator provides additional information for the reader, often in the form of a Translator’s Note, to ensure that cultural references and allusions are understood (28-29);

also, when the original text is self-reflexive, such as when it refers to the language in which it is written, forcing the translator to draw attention to his or her intervention in the discourse (30); lastly, when there is “contextual overdetermination” that makes readers’ willing suspension of disbelief impossible and requires that the translator explain the disparity that has opened up (41). Hermans points out that in these situations, the “Translator’s discursive presence” can be discerned not only through comparison with the source text but in the translated text itself, even if the reader does not have access to the original (33); elsewhere he suggests that shifts that can only be detected by comparing the original and translation represent “a much more insidious and more ominous kind of intervention” (2001, 2). Nonetheless, he concludes that because instances in which the translator’s presence is detectable do occur, if rarely, this presence must be postulated for all translations and therefore, must be included in a revised model of narrative communication that accounts for translated narrative, a model that “incorporate[s] the Translator as constantly co-producing the discourse, shadowing, mimicking and, as it were, counterfeiting the Narrator’s words, but occasionally (...) emerging into the open as a separate discursive presence” (1996, 43).

Hermans goes on to suggest that, despite “tight controls on translators and interpreters to guarantee their trustworthiness, to ensure that they speak exclusively with their masters’ voice” (2001, 6), a gap inevitably opens up in translation, creating “an opportunity for translators and interpreters to insert or at least to insinuate their own agenda into the texts they are producing” (6-7). Perhaps because Hermans is often discussing written narratives, he tends to mix the vocal metaphor (“voice,” “speaking subject,” “audible asides”) with a visual one, as in this statement: “My interest here is in those instances where the translated text itself shows visible traces of a discursive presence other than the ostensible Narrator” (1996, 28). Because I am dealing with

actual voices in the form of either narrators or voice actors performing translations of the speech of participants, I believe it is appropriate to use the vocal metaphor to identify the presence of the translator in documentary films. It is, indeed, characteristic of the films under consideration in my research that translation is carried out audibly, in the soundtrack, rather than visibly, on screen. Yet visual metaphors seem so deeply embedded in our language generally, and the language used to talk about translation more specifically, that they cannot be eliminated entirely. Nonetheless, we will attempt to discern the voice of the translator—as an audible discursive presence—throughout this project, particularly in the next chapter, in which I examine English-to-French versions produced at the NFB during the 1940s and 1950s.

## **Conclusion**

This extended discussion of the concept of voice has allowed us to see how the term is used in the disciplines of documentary studies, ethnography, critical discourse analysis, narratology and translation studies. Through these parallel concepts, I have outlined several ways to identify and explore the voices heard in NFB documentaries. I have proposed that the NFB documentaries under study are characterized by the existence of multiple voices that participate in a web of meaning production and that can pull the film in various directions. These voices are both literal and metaphorical: on the one hand, the audiovisual translation technique used in these films is centred on the audio track and operates through the substitution or addition of voices; on the other, I have identified other figures in the production of meaning such as the filmmaker, the participant, the version director, and the producing institution, all of whom seek to communicate with audiences and to express their own points of view through film.

Furthermore, these acts of communication have taken place in the particular geographical and political space of Canada. For decades, the NFB has been a site of contact between English and French Canada, contact that has at times played out as co-operation, as when anglophone and francophone crew members worked together on the celebrated *Candid Eye* series produced by Unit B in the late 1950s, and at other times erupted into conflict, as when, again in the late 1950s, *Le Devoir* spearheaded a press campaign to denounce the lack of francophone representation at the NFB. Over the past half century, one of the dominant subjects of debate in Canadian society has been the place of Quebec in Confederation, in light of the growth of Quebec nationalism. Public discourse on the sovereignty movement, federalism and Quebec identity has thrived in the media for decades and has certainly found its way into NFB productions, both English and French, original and version. This project, in considering the translational shifts that occur in the English and French versions of original NFB productions, is in a unique position to shed light on the pervasive and sometimes contrasting narratives that circulate in the Canadian public sphere. What I am seeking to understand is how individuals, communities and linguistic groups in Canada tell their stories through film, how those stories are altered in the versions, and how voice-over—whether the solitary voice of the narrator in translation or the parallel voice of the actor providing audiovisual translation—contributes to meaning-making in the complex web of relations that also includes the original narrator, participants, and filmmaker as well as the institution itself and the wider discourses of Canadian society.

## **Chapter Two: Translation as intervention, 1939-1956**

On May 2, 1939, with Canada on the brink of war, Parliament passed the National Film Act, creating an institution to produce and distribute films and coordinate filmmaking for all the government departments. It would be headed by a Government Film Commissioner, whose duties were to “advise upon the making and distribution of national films designed to help Canadians in all parts of Canada to understand the way of living and the problems of Canadians in other parts” (Canada 1939). Almost immediately, the priority was diverted from general subject matter towards making propaganda films as the NFB, under commissioner John Grierson, undertook to convince Canadians to take collective action in support of the war effort.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, as early as November 1939, Grierson insisted that the aim of the NFB was twofold: “to develop national unity and to describe war activities and related themes” (Evans 1984, 58). Despite the importance of the NFB’s wartime propaganda, the crucial question of English-French relations in Canada made its way into the mandate right from the institution’s inception and would continue to be central throughout its history. And one arena in which this issue played out was in versioning.

In its first decade, the NFB had few French Canadians on staff and the majority of its films were originally produced in English. As a result of internal and external pressure to better reflect the linguistic reality of Canada, the situation changed starting in the mid-1950s. The changes were anticipated by the revision of the Film Act in 1950, strengthened by the move of the NFB’s head office from Ottawa to Montréal in 1956, and culminated in the creation of an

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<sup>11</sup> Gary Evans spells out what this collective action entailed: “to enlist, buy victory bonds, sacrifice, salvage, produce munitions and aircraft, cooperate with management, understand inflation, eat nutritionally, avoid loose talk, prepare for electrification, and perform a whole host of other communal activities whose purpose was to unite the nation” (1984, 4).

autonomous French production section in 1964. In the meantime, one way for francophones to gain a voice within the NFB—given the scarcity of original French productions—was through versions of English productions. The predominant role of cinema as mass entertainment in the pre- and early television era and the virtual absence of private film production meant that if French Canadians wanted to see “de contenus qui correspondent à la culture, à la mentalité et aux valeurs de la société québécoise” (Véronneau 1987, 5), they would have to do so through NFB documentaries. Could this content derive only from original French productions, or could versions play a role? In this chapter, I shall examine the French versions of English newsreels and documentaries produced in the 1940s and early 1950s to determine their contribution to a body of film work—the total French-language output at the NFB during that period. I shall focus on the influential figure of Jacques Bobet, who in his capacity as version director supervised the production of over 500 French versions. Through an analysis of the original and version of several productions, I shall offer some observations on Bobet’s underlying attitude to translation, and more broadly that of French production. I will suggest that we can identify a gap between original and version and, as observed by Theo Hermans, “[t]hat margin of difference creates an opening for translators to insinuate their own agenda, their own discursive voices and subject positions into texts which they are forbidden to claim as their own” (2001, 8).

## **2.1 The shifting dynamics of English and French production**

Starting in April 1940 with the ten-minute film *Atlantic Patrol* by Stuart Legg, the NFB began producing and distributing a monthly series called *Canada Carries On* that aimed to show the country’s role in the war to the Canadian people. Two years later, it added a second series,

*The World in Action*, with a view to reaching an international audience. More than half of the films produced before 1945—34 of the 54 newsreels in *Canada Carries On* and 20 out of 37 in *The World in Action*—were versioned into French and became part of the series' French-language counterparts, *En avant Canada* and *Le monde en action* (Véronneau 2008, n.p.). The newsreel series were essentially “shot and shell” films composed of stock shots: given the wartime shortage of raw film stock and the difficulty of sending crews overseas, the filmmakers made use of previously shot material obtained from foreign news correspondents and other allied sources, as well as captured enemy footage shot by German, Italian and Japanese crews. This material was supplemented by a small amount of original shooting by crews in Canada and by camera units attached to the Canadian armed forces overseas (Goetz 1977, 63). Some of the films addressed Canada's role on the world stage, particularly in terms of transportation and communication; others covered wartime production in factories and on farms; others stressed the new roles of women in wartime, and still others dealt with Canada's war aims and its preparations for a postwar world (Evans 1984, 118-119). The footage was edited together and commented in narration, usually voiced by radio broadcaster Lorne Greene. Another French series, *Actualités canadiennes*, was produced monthly from September 1941 to March 1943, when it was renamed *Les reportages* following the hiring of French Canadian staff members; under the new name, production continued until March 1946. Its orientation was slightly different: although most of the reports focused on the war, many scenes were shot locally by the fledgling French Unit headed by Vincent Paquette and juxtaposed with the international footage. This allowed the series to touch on subjects like trade unionism, religion, the status of women and military life in Quebec, and to emphasize the French Canadian angle in its outlook (Véronneau 1987, 13; 1996, 166).

While the theatrical screenings of newsreels were popular, many Canadians lived in rural areas or did not have access to commercial cinemas. Starting in January 1942, the NFB set up some thirty rural film circuits: regional agents were appointed and projectionists were recruited to travel from town to town by car, train, snowplane or whatever method of transportation could get them to their destinations, carrying their 16mm projectors and screens and showing films to schoolchildren during the day and adults in the evening (Gray 1973, 40). They set up programs of short films on the war and on educational subjects, adding the occasional comedy or musical like Norman McLaren's *Chants populaires* series. Industrial film circuits and trade union circuits were also organized for workers, and itinerant projectionists with close community ties brought their equipment to such venues as factories, trade union halls, community centres, schools and church basements (Evans 1984, 149).

After the war ended, the propaganda imperative lessened, but Grierson continued to push his vision of film as an educational tool and a public duty within a centralized, unified state. He believed that local or regional reality was not appropriate subject matter; films should deal with national subjects and be of interest to Canadians across the country (Véronneau 1987, 12). By 1945, when Grierson resigned from the NFB, he had expanded this educational vision to the international level, arguing that film could promote exchange and cooperation among countries on shared concerns (Evans 1984, 266). The post-war period was difficult, however, and the Film Board was criticized from all sides. In the transition to a peacetime agency, staff was cut by almost a third. Grierson was forced to resign amidst allegations of involvement in a Soviet spy ring; his successor, Ross McLean, was fired after five turbulent years. NFB employees were suspected of being communist sympathizers and obliged to pass security clearance in what amounted to a "witch hunt" (Druick 2007, 90-91). At the same time, private film producers,

disappointed that the NFB had not been closed after the war, complained of unfair competition, while politicians attacked its productions as a waste of taxpayers' money (Evans 1991, 6).

Against this backdrop of Cold War tensions and domestic questioning of the Board's purpose, the 1950 National Film Act, written by newly appointed commissioner Arthur Irwin, ushered in a period of renewal. The Board became more autonomous, with more powers vested in the film commissioner, and was given greater separation from the government and its own working capital fund (Zéau 2006, 126). The revised wording of the mandate expanded the audience to include not only Canadians but people in other countries: "The Board is established," stated Section 9, "to initiate and promote the production and distribution of films in the national interest and in particular, (a) to produce and distribute and to promote the production and distribution of films designed to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations." Now, films could move away from Griersonian didacticism and become, as Grierson's successor Ross McLean put it, "an expression of the Canadian ethos" (quoted in Morris 1984, 191). Like other art forms, they could make a contribution to Canadian culture. Here were the seeds for a new flowering of documentary that would lead by the end of the decade to the innovative *Candid Eye* films of Unit B and the emergence of the acclaimed *cinéma direct* of French Canadian filmmakers.

In addition to its English and French versions, the NFB fulfilled its mandate "to interpret Canada (...) to other nations" by producing foreign-language versions. The International Distribution Division was set up to distribute Canadian films theatrically through trade commissions and diplomatic posts, with the Department of External Affairs taking responsibility for non-theatrical distribution. During the 1950s, the commentary of NFB films was translated in up to 20 languages, including Spanish and Portuguese for the Latin American market and Hindi,

Urdu, Japanese, and Korean for Asia. The films had tremendous impact in places where there were few other sources of information or entertainment: a Greek Army theatre that screened films for soldiers in the Greek Civil War in 1949;<sup>12</sup> an outdoor theatre near Leopoldville in the Belgian Congo;<sup>13</sup> a village near Bombay where watching movies was a once-a-year experience.<sup>14</sup> The NFB even tried its hand at dubbing, using lip-synchronized translation as in fiction films, for the first time in 1962 when Roman Kroitor's film on Paul Anka, *Lonely Boy*, was dubbed into Spanish.<sup>15</sup> All these efforts testify to the centrality of the voice-over version to NFB production and distribution in its early decades.

Further change at the NFB was sparked by the advent of television in Canada, with the first TV station, CBFT in Montréal, going on air on September 6, 1952, quickly followed by CBC Toronto and stations in Halifax, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Within a few years, the stations were linked through microwave relay towers into a network that broadcast from coast to coast. CBFT was initially bilingual, but it started broadcasting exclusively in French in 1954 when an English-language sister station, CBMT, was launched. This marked the end of bilingual programming, as public television, like radio, evolved into two separate streams: the English-language CBC and the French-language Radio-Canada. Although the two networks maintained shared headquarters in Ottawa, most programming and production decisions were taken in the program centres in Montréal and Toronto (Rutherford 1990, 55-56). In contrast to the extensive connections between French and English film production at the National Film Board, Canadian radio and television broadcasting evolved in two distinct spheres—despite rhetoric such as that of

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<sup>12</sup> "Film Notes," *External Affairs*, Vol. 2, no. 4 (April 1950), 163.

<sup>13</sup> "Canadian Films Abroad," *External Affairs*. Vol. 4, no. 3 (March 1952), 106.

<sup>14</sup> Becker, Jane. "Movies Come To Indians Only Once Every Year," *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 15, 1956.

<sup>15</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 1962-63, 11.

the 1951 Massey-Lévesque Commission, calling television “a valuable instrument of national unity” (Bird 1988, 234), and the 1957 Royal Commission on Broadcasting, calling it a tool in “the development of a Canadian sense of identity” (254).

The NFB envisioned it would play a major role as a supplier of programming, but the CBC, intent on carving out its own territory, was wary of its older sibling. The parties agreed to avoid duplication—the NFB would handle information and public affairs, while the CBC would focus on entertainment—but relations between the two institutions developed more as a rivalry than a partnership (Evans 1991, 34, 39). In order to supply the broadcaster with material, the NFB had to adjust to producing programs quickly, for a low budget, and to a standardized length and to delivering them on a weekly basis. The first French-language series, *Sur le vif*, which ran in 1954 and 1955, included a total of 26 15-minute films, all originally produced in French; they were not versioned into English. This was followed by *Passe-Partout*, which ran from 1955 to 1957 and was composed of documentaries along with docu-fictions and dramatizations; it included original French films, versions of films produced in English for the corresponding series *Perspectives*, adaptations of English films, and updates of older French productions. But the NFB found it increasingly difficult to conform to the demands of television; by the early 1960s, both Radio-Canada and the CBC were producing their own programming, mostly variety shows, newscasts and talk shows, and had little room in their broadcast schedules for the NFB’s social documentaries (Evans 1991, 41; Rutherford 1990). The window of opportunity for the NFB to be a major provider of television programming closed; nonetheless, this period represented an advance in terms of French production (Véronneau 1987, 28).

The most profound change to the bilingual and bicultural status of the NFB came in 1956, with the move of its head office from Ottawa to Montréal. After the revised Film Act passed into

law in October 1950, commissioner Arthur Irwin began to lobby for a centralized building in which to house all the production, distribution, administrative and storage facilities. If it were located in Montréal, it would be easier to recruit French-speaking employees, and the balance between the two communities could be improved (Evans 1991, 18). In 1953, as preparations were underway to construct a new building in a suburb of Montréal, two new production studios were added to the existing four: Unit E, under Bernard Devlin, responsible for French and English television production; and Unit F, under Roger Blais, which focused specifically on French production. Three years later, a second French studio would be added, under Jacques Bobet, to handle versions. Once the NFB was established in its Montréal headquarters, the idea that it should be organized into separate French and English sections surfaced with increasing intensity. In 1957, the francophone press, led by *Le Devoir*, embarked on a campaign that criticized the lack of salary equity between French and English employees, charged the NFB with discrimination, and called for the creation of an autonomous French section. Seven years later, the idea became reality.

## **2.2 The importance of versions in comparison to originals**

At its foundation, the NFB was essentially an anglophone institution, with strong ties to Britain. It was established on the recommendation of the founder of the British documentary movement, John Grierson, who became its first commissioner; in fact, as documented by Zoë Druick (2007, 29-30), the British government sent Grierson to Canada as part of its colonial policy, as a means of furthering the international communications strategy of the British Empire. Most of the staff hired to the new institution was British and had previously worked with

Grierson at the General Post Office Film Unit or the Empire Marketing Board: Stuart Legg, who became senior producer of theatrical films; technical expert Raymond Spottiswoode; Stanley Hawes, senior producer of non-theatrical productions, who later became Producer-In-Chief of the Australian National Film Board; cameraman J.D. Davidson; and Norman McLaren, who set up the animation unit (Ellis 1970, 8-9). Although the first francophone at the NFB, Philéas Côté (who later became a Member of Parliament as an Independent Liberal, then as a Liberal), was hired as early as December 6, 1939, he worked not in production but in distribution. It would be December 8, 1941, before a French Canadian, Vincent Paquette, was brought in as a film director, on the strength of a distribution report by Côté that pointed out certain characteristics of Quebec and noted that in some cases, more than half the total audience of a film in Canada came from Quebec (Véronneau 1987, 12).

Along with Côté, who moved from distribution into production, Paquette formed the core of a francophone production group that would include about 15 employees by the end of 1943. Its main task was to produce the monthly newsreel *Actualités canadiennes*, renamed *Les reportages* around this time, and to supervise versions of English-language productions such as those in the *Canada Carries On* series. The first two French versions made at the NFB were of films produced by the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau, the institution that pre-existed the NFB and was absorbed into it in 1941: *Notre Héritage*, with narration by Genest Trudel, based on J. Booth Scott's 1939 film about the rehabilitation of Prairie farming after years of drought; and *La visite royale*, based on Scott's 1939 film about the cross-Canada tour by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The first original French productions were a series of eight films for *En avant Canada* about Quebec military camps, starting with *Un du 22e* (1940, shot by a crew from Associated Screen News), in which a soldier on leave from the Royal 22e Régiment in Valcartier

describes life in the military. In 1942, Vincent Paquette directed *La cité de Notre-Dame*, a commemoration of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Montréal, which focuses on its religious heritage. From that point until the end of the war, French production was relatively well represented within total production at the NFB, reaching a peak in 1945 of 40% of the total number of films produced (Véronneau 1996, 167).

But this level of representation was short-lived: in the post-war period, virtually no francophones were hired and the number of original French productions dropped from 30 films in 1945, to 20 in 1946 and 1947, to 5 in 1948 and to only 2 films in 1950, which corresponded to 2% of the total number of films shot: “a catastrophic situation that allows us to assert that it [French production] was practically at the brink of extinction,” according to Quebec film historian Pierre Véronneau (1996, 168).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, when the NFB reorganized its production sector in 1947-48 into four units, each headed by an anglophone producer, francophone technicians were dispersed among the units; between 1950 and 1952, even directors who had previously made films in French began directing films in English (Véronneau 1987, 21-22).

What was the attitude of Grierson and the NFB administration towards bilingualism in Canada and French production? According to Zoë Druick, Grierson was aware of the French presence when he arrived from Britain but viewed it mainly as a force against Americanization: “One third of her [Canada’s] people are French-speaking. They have no sentimental regard for England, and sometimes the opposite. Yet paradoxically, for fear of losing their separate language and separate culture, they would be the ultimate barrier to absorption of Canada into the

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<sup>16</sup> However, the drop in documentary production corresponded to the “first wave” of French-language feature filmmaking in the private sector, which saw the successful release of such films as *Le père Chopin* (Georges Freeland and Fedor Ozep, 1945) and the melodrama *La petite Aurore enfant martyre* (Jean-Yves Bigras, 1951). (Véronneau 1979).

United States and the ultimate defence of the Commonwealth tie” (Grierson quoted in Druick 2007, 43). One comment on Grierson’s view of French production comes from Paul Thériault, who was hired in 1944 as a liaison officer charged with recruiting francophone staff, supervising the production and distribution of French films, and advising Grierson on French-Canadian issues. In an interview conducted in English by James Beveridge for a 1973 film on Grierson directed by Roger Blais, Thériault states that because of his Scottish origins, Grierson was attracted to the temperament of French Canadians and understood “the really pretty desperate odds the French Canadian faced on the whole North American continent” (Thériault quoted in Beveridge 1978, 207). Grierson, claims Thériault, “was profoundly disturbed that after four years [i.e. in 1944], except for marginal creating activity in film production, the bulk of the French-Canadian contribution was simply to dub the French versions of the numerous English films produced by the board. This he felt was intolerable. He was very preoccupied [*sic*] that the French Canadians should contribute very extensively to the whole creative field of the National Film Board” (206). However, Pierre Véronneau questions Thériault’s recollection, noting that if anyone had the power to change the situation, it was Grierson, yet he did not do so (1987, 15). Véronneau quotes a comment made by Grierson during a February 21, 1941, board meeting: “Ce film [*Un du 22e*] a coûté 9 000\$. La réalisation de films de ce genre n’est pas économique au vu de leur faible circulation. Pour satisfaire les besoins des francophones nous préparons une version des actualités et nous envisageons de créer un magazine mensuel en français” (quoted in Véronneau 1984, 5). He summarizes Grierson’s attitude thus: “Pourquoi réaliser un film important (c’est-à-dire destiné aux salles et tourné en 35mm) en français alors que l’on peut pourvoir le Canada français de versions moins coûteuses” (1987, 12).

The attitude of the NFB board of directors was similar: it was not particularly concerned about whether French-language production was original or took the form of versions, as long as films in both languages could be listed in the annual report and Parliament was satisfied with the NFB's efforts towards bilingualism (Bobet 1989a, 8). This position was reiterated after the war by commissioner Ross McLean who, although he issued a directive to ensure that government departments had French versions made of their sponsored films, believed that versions were preferable to original French films because they cost less and amounted to the same thing (Véronneau 1987, 19). As the number of French originals dropped in the post-war period, the number of versions increased correspondingly. By the release of the 1951 Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences chaired by Vincent Massey, the lack of original documentary production had become a source of concern. In Chapter XIX on the National Film Board, the Commission recommended as follows:

We have been told that French-speaking Canadians (less well-supplied than their English-speaking countrymen who can readily supplement National Film Board films with English language films from the United States) need more and better documentary films. It has also been suggested to us that National Film Board films on French Canada emphasize too much the picturesque, old-world aspects of French Canada to the comparative neglect of contemporary subjects.

We therefore recommend:

- k. That continued attention be given to the production of suitable films produced specifically for French-speaking Canadians.*
- l. That efforts be made to facilitate the evaluation and procurement of more documentary films in French from abroad.* (Canada 1951, 312-313)

The reference to “picturesque, old-world aspects of French Canada” reflects the complaints of Gratien Gélinas that too much emphasis was placed on “folkloric” subjects as opposed to contemporary, urban issues, and that English Canadians were likely to think of all French Canadians as “habitants” (Véronneau 1987, 22).

Although Véronneau argues that the limited amount of original French production stemmed from the fact that the administration saw no need for French Canadians to represent their own reality and values on screen (1987, 21), Gary Evans points out that NFB films could not in any case be freely distributed in Quebec because of censorship; the Board was therefore unwilling to commit funds to films that would have limited distribution (1991, 22). As he put it, “[I]n Quebec the autocrat Maurice Duplessis used Communist scare tactics to exclude Film Board films from schools and continued bad-mouthing the federal agency until his death in 1959” (16). In 1944, the Bureau de censure du cinéma had refused to allow the distribution of Tom Daly’s *Our Northern Neighbour*, a newsreel on cooperation between Canada and its ally the Soviet Union, “on account of revolutionary and subversive ideas” (quoted in Hébert, Lever and Landry 2006, 511). However, because the Bureau’s mandate covered only 35 mm films, the NFB’s travelling projectionists continued to screen it in 16 mm. Starting in 1947, Duplessis had the Bureau’s mandate extended to cover all films distributed in 16mm as well (Lever 2008, 141). At a weekly press conference in 1948, Duplessis told reporters that although “many eminently respectable organizations” showed 16mm films, others took advantage of the lack of censorship to show “Communist propaganda”:

Without censorship, said the premier, the films “offered no guarantees” and some were of “Communist origin.”

The bureau undertook censorship of National Film Board productions to guard the rights of Quebec “in this domain as in others.”

His government’s decision to censor film board pictures “prevented the showing of federal films with Communist tendencies,” he declared.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *The Globe and Mail*. October 16, 1948.

The local clergy, furthermore, did not view NFB films with a favourable eye. Jacques Bobet recalls watching a film program in a church basement in Trois-Rivières not long after he joined the NFB in 1947 (Bobet 1984a, 17-18). One short film, made during the war, showed women factory workers wearing overalls. Following the screening, according to Bobet, the local priest summed up his reaction thus: “[S]i l’ONF entend à l’avenir nous montrer d’autres femmes en pantalon, travaillant hors de leur foyer, la civilisation du Québec va se faire sans l’ONF.”

While the reasons behind the imbalance between French versions and original productions remain complex, there is no doubt that versions made up the bulk of French-language production at the NFB from its establishment in 1939 to the move of its head office to Montréal in 1956 and beyond. At the start of this period, there was virtually no private French-language production in Quebec, although fiction filmmaking picked up between 1944 and 1954, with 19 feature-length films being released, four of which were in English. The introduction of television broadcasting on Radio-Canada later opened up demand for new programming. Translation therefore was central to French-language cinematographic production as a whole at a time when there was little scope for the direct expression of French-Canadian culture. If audiences were to connect with what they saw on the screen, that culture would have to be filtered through the English-language original films.

### **2.3 Awareness of audience in the first English-to-French versions**

Although about a hundred films of 10 to 30 minutes were produced for the wartime series *Canada Carries On/En avant Canada* and *The World in Action/Le monde en action*, virtually all of them were originally in English. French versions were produced quickly and distributed at the

same time in theatres served by France-Film. In most cases, there are no credits identifying the people responsible for the versions, except perhaps for the narrator, who was often a familiar voice from radio broadcasting like Miville Couture or Jacques DesBaillets. The versions display certain shifts from the original that can be partially attributed to the mode of translation itself. In contrast to subtitling, in which the simultaneous presence of spoken dialogue and onscreen translation means that bilingual viewers have access to both, the original narration track of these documentaries was removed and replaced by a new one. Since viewers could no longer hear the original narration, they could not make any comparisons. This gave considerable freedom to the version producers, who often paraphrased or adapted the narration as they saw fit. Right away, these anonymous translators seized the opportunity to craft narrations that spoke to French-Canadians in subtle ways. Although the versions did not offer as much scope as original productions to express the reality and sensibility of life in Quebec, they contain numerous small adaptations and interventions that show a desire to connect with local audiences.

These subtle adaptations are present in versions made as early as 1940, only months after the founding of the NFB. In one 10-minute short film shot specifically for the *Canada Carries On* series, entitled *Letter from Aldershot* (1940), a soldier describes the living conditions of Canadian troops overseas, using the device of a letter written to his mother. The narrator frequently refers to Canada and the Canadian provinces, but avoids pinning down exactly what part of the country he might have come from; instead, he simply refers to “home.” The opening narration is as follows:

Aldershot, England. These barracks have been the home of the First Canadian Division since they left Canada last December. [Over a shot of a man writing a letter, on which the viewer can make out “Dear Mother” and the next sentences up to “getting to grips”] “We may not be here much longer now. Our training is nearly through, and pretty soon we’ll be getting to grips with the job we came to do. But you ask how we’ve been making out

since we got here. Well, I'll tell you the story of all that's happened to us since we left home.”

In the French version, the end-point of the journey—Aldershot, England—is the same, but the text puts less emphasis on the starting point, avoiding references to “home” through a careful rewording:

Aldershot, Angleterre. Voici l'endroit où était casernée la Première division canadienne depuis son départ en décembre dernier. [As there were no changes to the image in the French version, the words of the soldier's letter remain in English] « Bientôt nous devons nous atteler à la tâche qui nous a amenés outre-mer. Mais vous vous demandez quelle sorte de voyage nous avons fait, et comment nous avons employé notre temps depuis. Bien. Je vais tout vous raconter depuis le commencement. »

In a later segment of narration, the place where “home” might be for the soldiers differs in the English and French texts:

And so we arrived at Aldershot, after a journey that had brought some of the boys 6,000 miles from home.	Puis après un voyage de 3,000 miles, nous arrivâmes à Aldershot, pour y commencer un entraînement intense.
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The English text implies that not only had all the soldiers sailed the Atlantic, some of them also travelled across the country before departing from the port of Halifax. In the French text, by contrast, only the Atlantic crossing is referred to. Once again, the starting point of the journey is blurred. Already, the makers of the French version seemed to recognize the specificity of their audience—and the more conflicted response to the war effort among French Canadians—and tailor the narration in consequence.

Another rewording that bears witness to an awareness of audience can be found in a *Canada Carries On* film that dates from 1944: *Break-through*, a compilation film on the Allied landing in Normandy. The English narration states: “And crowding the landing craft were our men—the men who trained at Borden, at Shilo, at Gordon Head and Debert, who manned the defences of Britain in the fateful months after Dunkirk.” The places referred to are Canadian

Forces bases or military camps in Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia, respectively. In the French version, *L'assaut*, the list is changed and the Gordon Head Military Camp in British Columbia is replaced by one in Valcartier, Quebec: “Massés dans les péniches du débarquement, voici nos gars, ceux-là mêmes qui ont reçu leur formation à Borden, à Shilo, à Debert et à Valcartier. Et qui maintenant sont mûrs pour la campagne décisive.” The insertion of a reference to Valcartier was no doubt intended to increase a sense of belonging among French Canadian viewers at a time of heated debate over conscription: despite strong opposition to the measure among Quebec residents and political figures, Prime Minister Mackenzie King decided to send conscripts overseas starting in the fall of 1944.

The tricky question of Quebec’s relation to the British Commonwealth arose again in Jane Marsh Beveridge’s *Women Are Warriors* (1942). Beveridge was one of about a dozen women employed by the NFB during World War II—a group that included Saskatchewan filmmaker Evelyn Spice Cherry, American ethnomusicologist Laura Boulton, and cinematographer Judith Crawley—but she was the only one who wrote and directed films on the war. *Women Are Warriors* is a powerful celebration of the active role of women as members of the Canadian Women’s Army Corps and as farmhands, anti-aircraft gun operators, pilots, factory workers, skilled mechanics, nurses and front-line firefighters, among other occupations. The film takes an international perspective, adding footage from England and the USSR to scenes shot in Canada. In the opening and closing sequences, the narration refers “the United Nations.” This term evokes not the international organization of member states, which would not be founded until 1945, but the bloc of Allied nations fighting in World War II. It was proposed by U.S. President Roosevelt in 1941 and used in the English-language *Declaration by United Nations*, signed by 26 governments including Canada on January 1, 1942. It was taken up by Prime Minister Mackenzie

King in his April 1942 speech on the “national security plebiscite.” But the French version of *Women Are Warriors*, known as *Les femmes dans la mêlée*, eschews the term and refers instead to “la patrie” and “notre pays.”

<p>Out to the farthest reaches of the countryside, as the world swings into its fourth year of war, goes the call for manpower. Manpower, needed to forge the striking force of <b>the United Nations</b>. And today, from the homes of fighting democracy, a new response emerges: women today are mobilizing alongside men in the structure of total war.</p>	<p>La guerre n’est pas confinée aux horreurs des champs de bataille. Elle se fait sentir partout, loin du feu de la mitraille, dans les villages, les campagnes. <b>La patrie</b> a besoin de ses hommes pour frapper directement l’ennemi. Mais les femmes jouent également un rôle de première importance.</p>
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<p>Today, Canada seeks a solution to the vital question of manpower. From the hands of a determined people comes the answer. Across the skies of the world, they write their message—a message of strength from the women who fight in the factories, from women who are manpower for <b>the United Nations</b>.</p>	<p>Elles savent, nos ouvrières canadiennes, que chacune d’elles doit faire contrepoids aux travailleurs de l’ennemi. Aussi les avions de nos usines sont-ils devenus symboliques de la détermination farouche de tout un peuple assoiffé de liberté. Les avions du Canada vont dans tous les cieux démontrer la puissance combative et productive de <b>notre pays</b>.</p>
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The rewording may reflect the fact that the expression “Nations Unies” was not commonly used in French at the time. Whatever was behind the change, it had an impact: the resulting narration turned emphasis away from the need for a concerted international response to the problem of manpower in wartime, towards an appeal to local audiences to support their country.

A different type of shift occurs in the documentary that Jane Marsh Beveridge made a year later, *Alexis Tremblay: Habitant* (1943), which featured camerawork by Judith Crawley and became one of the NFB’s most popular short films. It shows the Tremblay family—a typically French Canadian, Catholic, rural family—at their home in the Charlevoix region of Quebec carrying out traditional farm tasks, from harvesting and soap-making in the fall to ploughing the

land and planting crops in the spring. As Jim Leach points out (1990, 103-104), a contrast is set up between the images, which stress the family's ongoing self-sufficiency and the idyllic nature of *habitant* life, and the narration, which introduces several references to changing agricultural technology and modernization, such as Alexis's participation in a local co-operative creamery. The narration also serves to introduce the family members: Alexis; his wife Marie; their children, especially the youngest, Michel; and Thérèse, the aunt who lives with them. Strangely, however, in the French version of the film, *Terre de nos aïeux*, the characters are no longer identified by their real names, but by invented ones: Alexis has become Thomas Bouchard and his wife is named Louise; the youngest son is Pierre and the aunt is Catherine. It was not unusual for the names of characters in early NFB films to be changed in the French or English versions; for example, in Raymond Garceau's *Le cocher (The Calèche Driver)* (1953)—part of the *Faces of Canada / Silhouettes canadiennes* series—the calèche driver is named Téléphore (no last name given) in the original French film, yet for no reason that I can ascertain the name has been changed to Onésime Lamothe in the English version. But the name change is even more unusual in *Terre de nos aïeux*. In fact, an error occurs partway through the film when the French narration accidentally reverts to the participants' real names:

Mai. Les hommes font les semences tandis que **Louise et Pierre** vont travailler au jardin potager. (...) Et maintenant, aux labeurs et à la connaissance des méthodes modernes rurales de Thomas se joint la bénédiction d'antan. **Marie et Michel** savent maintenant que la récolte surgira, verte et forte, de la terre nourricière.

The original narration in this passage is as follows:

May. Before the men go out to sow, **Marie and Michel** come into the garden together with a solemn task... planting blessed seeds. (...) Now to Alexis's good husbandry and knowledge of modern methods is added the age-old blessing, and **Marie and Michel** know that the crop will come up green and good, out of the earth.

What makes the change of names most remarkable is that Alexis and Marie Tremblay later became two of the most celebrated characters in all of Quebec cinema. After moving across the Saint Lawrence from Les Éboulements to Île-aux-Coudres, a small island a few kilometres away by ferry-boat, they were filmed by Pierre Perrault in his Île-aux-Coudres trilogy, *Pour la suite du monde* (co-directed by Michel Brault, 1963), *Le règne du jour* (1967), and *Les voitures d'eau* (1968). Their voices, barely heard in the 1943 film, were central to the later films as the speech patterns and idiomatic expressions unique to the Île-aux-Coudres came to signify the distinctness of Quebec. But although *Alexis Tremblay, Habitant* glosses over the issue of language by favouring the voice of the narrator over those of the on-camera participants, they are nonetheless real people living in a real village. Les Éboulements is actually located on a map shown at the start of the film to emphasize the village's authenticity. Turning the Tremblay family into fictional characters in the French version takes away from their individuality and instead offers them up as archetypes, as representatives of a collective identity.

#### **2.4 An influential figure: Jacques Bobet**

One of the few francophones hired to the NFB during the second half of the 1940s was Jacques Bobet. Born in France, he went to New York to study audiovisual education at Columbia University. From there, he visited the NFB in 1947 and was invited to come back as a potential replacement for the retiring music composer, Louis Applebaum. Within a few weeks, he was busy working on French versions (Bobet 1984b, 8; Bobet 1989a, 7-8). Before long, he was given full responsibility for “French versions, revisions and adaptations,” and by 1956, when the head office moved from Ottawa to Montréal, he had been involved in the production of more than 500

French versions. When the NFB was restructured into separate French and English sections in 1964, Bobet became one of four executive producers of French Production. There, he took on the role for which he is most remembered today, as a mentor and inspiration to numerous young Quebec filmmakers. An insightful, open-minded producer, he groomed the talents of such directors as Jean-Claude Labrecque, Gilles Carle, Denys Arcand, Pierre Perrault and Anne Claire Poirier, producing a total of 233 films. He directed several films himself, often about sports, such as *Game in 21 Points* (1968), which reflected his passion for table tennis. One of his most significant accomplishments was producing the official film of the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montréal. Bobet retired in 1984 to teach music, his first love; he was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1992 and died four years later (Czach n.d.).

Given the sheer number of versions on which he worked throughout the 1950s and the high percentage of versions in the total film output in Quebec, Bobet is an important—if unrecognized—figure in translation in Canada. At a time when the flow of translation at the National Film Board was almost entirely from English towards French, his was a forceful voice. By examining various interviews he gave as well as the films themselves, we can make some observations about the approach he took to version production.

In his comments introducing an interview he conducted with Bobet, documentary filmmaker and writer Jean-Daniel Lafond describes him as a *bricoleur*—someone who improvises and adapts his methods to the circumstances and materials at hand. Lafond notes that this meaning of the term entered the common language just after the war, when shortages had taught people resourcefulness and self-reliance (Lafond 1989, 6). Bobet’s recollections of his early years show that although he had no training in translation, he threw himself into his work with enthusiasm and a sense of urgency: as he put it, he simply “rolled up his sleeves and said,

Well, what do we do now?” (Bobet 1984b, 9). Because he represented “a branch of the great tree of French culture,” Bobet commanded a certain respect and was not intimidated by the English environment. In contrast, “the French Canadians, the Québécois who weren’t known as Québécois then, felt much more strongly than I—for generations they had felt frustrated by the English who always ran the show” (1984b, 9).

Bobet describes version-making as a simple process: “C’était très facile à cette époque-là parce que les films n’étaient que visuels avec des commentaires hors champ. Alors je traduisais les commentaires, je déplaçais légèrement la musique, et ça allait. On a fait cinq cents versions comme ça” (1989b, 26). He notes that there was plenty of work, no shortage of money, and little oversight by the administration: “Personne n’a eu les mains plus libres que moi” (1989a, 9). Bobet frequently refers to the speed at which he worked, seeming to favour quantity over quality: “On enregistre comme des possédés. Rien de très génial ” (1984a, 15); “[O]n avait enfin mis au point un système de versions rapides – des films faits ( – vraiment fait, eux – ) en anglais” (1984a; 18). In fact, Bobet worked on so many films he lost count: “Pendant ce temps-là j’avais vraiment fait marcher «la machine à adaptations». Je ne sais plus combien j’ai pu en faire: deux, quatre cents?... Aucune importance” (1989a, 8). Narrators like Roger Baulu, Jacques Desbaillets and René Lecavalier drove to Ottawa from Montréal after their day’s work as television or radio hosts to record the narration texts that Bobet and his colleagues had written the previous day or even that morning (1984a, 14). Bobet’s biggest challenge, in his view, was to establish a stable team at the French Unit, as staff members rarely stayed longer than a year at the English-dominated institution and new employees were continually being hired and trained. His other challenge was to improve the quality of versions by installing what he calls “la notion de dignité égale entre les deux versions d’un même film” (1989a, 9). He goes further—and it is here that he

comes closest to setting out his approach to translation: “J’ai commencé par établir le slogan: « La version est toujours meilleure que l’original »” (1989a, 9).

By what criteria might the versions be considered “better” than the original films? It should be noted that the leading playwright and actor Gratien Gélinas, who sat on the NFB board of directors from 1950 to 1952, had criticized the poor quality of the French versions and their “amateur” style (Véronneau 1987, 58n51). A partial answer to this question is provided by an example along with Bobet’s own comments on his translation. This comes from a 1949 vignette, about three minutes long, in the newsreel series *Eye Witness/Coup d’oeil*. Called “Underwater Round-up,” it describes lobster fishing in New Brunswick through close-up shots of the lobsters and images of the fishermen at work. The tone of the narration is light-hearted and the lobsters themselves are addressed as if they were model citizens. The narration concludes thus:

New Brunswick lobsters go out full of vim and vigour. In a matter of hours from the time they leave their icy Atlantic water, they’re on the table in famous restaurants, about 30 million pounds of them a year. That’s quite an underwater round-up!

In a 1984 text, Jacques Bobet recalls how this narration was translated.

Finalemnt notre rêve s’accomplit: nous avons écrit en vers libres tout un texte sur l’élevage du homard. L’envoi, je m’en souviens, était touchant:

Et voici le sort

Pathétique

Des homards du Nouveau-Brinswouique [*sic*].

Ils ont vécu et ils sont morts

Pour les restaurants d’Amérique.

Nous n’avons jamais eu d’échos de telles prouesses stylistiques. Nous n’en avons pas besoin. Notre bonne conscience nous suffisait. (Bobet 1984a, 15)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bobet’s recollection of the narration, 35 years later, is not quite accurate. The recorded version was somewhat different but it also rhymes:

Et voici la très triste histoire

Des homards du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Ils sont partis de l’Atlantique

Où leur vie était sans histoire.

Ils ont vécu et ils sont morts

Clearly, in his view, translating the prose of the original narration into rhyming free verse is a stylistic accomplishment; indeed, he refers to “writing” not “translating.” The fact that the narration differs markedly from the original—and that a key statistic has been omitted—is of no concern. Bobet’s claim that the versions were always better than the originals can be kept in mind as we turn to an analysis of several films versioned under his supervision during the 1950s and observe a number of shifts in tone and content that occur in the movement from English to French.

## 2.5 Versioning as intervention

Let us start with *Toronto Boom Town (Toronto : ville champignon)* (1951, 10 min.), which is, once again, a film in the newsreel series *Canada Carries On/En avant Canada*. Produced by Sydney Newman and directed by Leslie McFarlane, the film shows how Toronto has become a bustling metropolis with soaring skyscrapers, ambitious construction projects and a busy stock exchange. It is difficult to determine who translated the narration into French, as the opening credits attribute the French version to Jean Sarrazin whereas the NFB Web site lists Roger Baulu as responsible for “voice and narration,” which is the usual credit for the person who both wrote and recorded the narration. Nonetheless, the film falls within the period when Jacques Bobet was directing French versions.

The film looks at Toronto through the eyes of two visitors—probably professional actors—who are assigned a name and hometown: the sophisticated Mr. Chester Vanderwick of

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Sans amertume et sans remords.  
Ils ont gagné l'éternité  
Pour le bien de l'humanité.

Cleveland, Ohio, and “young Albert McConniky” from Pine Tree Rapids, a place name that seems intended to conjure up small-town Canada. In the French version, however, the young man is identified as a French Canadian, Joseph Dumouchel. When the two visitors meet in a bar at the end of the day to give their impressions of the city, Mr. Vanderwick claims he feels right at home, but Mr. McConniky has another opinion: “Toronto’s a great place for a visit but it’s too big for me. I wouldn’t live here if you gave me the place!” In the French version, Mr. Dumouchel, like his English counterpart, finds Toronto too big for his taste, but concludes, “J’aimerais mieux rester chez moi!” The reference to Mr. Dumouchel’s community represents a shift from the English text, which remains centred on Toronto. Was it intended to be a subtle message to French Canadians, implying that they need not be envious of Toronto? Earlier in the film, the English narrator describes the city as one that “reflects the dynamic growth of all Canada. The Toronto of today is vastly different from the Toronto of half a century ago. Back in those far-away times, when you could buy a good suit for ten dollars and a half [over an image of a man in the street wearing a suit], Toronto became known as the Queen City.” The French version, by contrast, makes no reference to Canada and, over the same image, adds a comment on Toronto’s puritanism: “Aujourd’hui, la grande cité des bords du Lac Ontario n’a plus la taille ni la mentalité du Toronto d’il y a cinquante ans. À cette époque, Toronto se vantait d’être un des piliers de l’empire, et Toronto la puritaine s’est toujours réjouie d’être appelée la Ville Reine.” Was this a veiled way of telling French Canadians they’re just as well off not living in Toronto? These asides constitute an intervention on the part of the translator that circumvents the director’s message and sets up direct lines of communication with the target audience.

Another film in the *Canada Carries On/En avant Canada* series, produced two years later, is *Farewell Oak Street (Adieu rue des Chênes)* (1953, 17 min.), which had a relatively high

budget and used dramatization. It starts by showing the squalid conditions in the Regent Park slum neighbourhood of Toronto, which was razed and replaced with modern low-income housing. The film generated some controversy for its forthright portrayal of poverty (Evans 1991, 37). The French version is credited to Jacques Bobet; the narrator is unidentified. Again, we find an unexpected aside to French Canadians, but this time it is not contained in the narration: it is inserted into the written text on screen—part of the verbal visual channel. Part way through the film, a father—identified as “Jim Brown” in the English original but as “Gilles Blais” in the French version—shows his family a newspaper with a headline that reads “CITY TO REBUILD SLUMS.” We can make out part of the subheading: “Total Demolition Planned for Area Run Down Oak St.” In the French version, the film has been re-edited, as was the usual practice: any English text visible on the screen—such as the opening and closing credits—was replaced by French text. Accordingly, the newspaper headline reads “Des taudis vont disparaître,” with the subheadline “La ville commencera bientôt à démolir rue des Chênes.” However—whereas in the English original the only other visible headline is the unrelated “Tiny Island Bears Flood Brunt”—under the French headline is a smaller one, positioned in the middle column so it is centred on the screen. It reads, “Le bilinguisme sur tous les chèques fédéraux est réclamé.” A little farther down and to the left but still clearly visible is another headline, which says, “La question des écoles séparées inopinément soulevée à Ottawa” (the reference is to the publicly funded separate-school system that provides religious education in certain provinces and was supported by Quebec’s Catholic Church). The message is almost subliminal, allowing viewers to absorb the information while barely realizing they are reading it. Again, the translation process has opened a window for intervention, through which the translator—the version director—has shaped the original work in pursuit of his own agenda.

A similar strategy was used in an earlier film in the same series, *Careers and Cradles*, and its French version *Carrières et berceaux*. Produced in 1947, the year Jacques Bobet was hired, it credits Roger Baulu as narrator and was probably one of the first versions supervised by Bobet. The film looks at the changing role of women in Canada since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The original film starts with a title card on which is written, “Let’s go back to the days when the hand that rocks the cradle was shaking the world.” This is a rewording of the famous refrain of a poem celebrating motherhood by William Ross Wallace, first published in 1865: “For the hand that rocks the cradle / Is the hand that rules the world.” The film goes on to evoke the actions of the suffragettes in the U.S. and Great Britain. The French version, however, opens with a very different title card: “Des femmes qui s’en vont à la besogne aussi capablement et d’une si belle humeur... il n’y en a pas beaucoup, Maria...” This quote from *Maria Chapdelaine*, a novel by Louis Hémon published in 1916, may have resonated with French Canadian viewers, but it has little connection to the subsequent images of suffragettes. Furthermore, the reference to “berceaux” in the film’s title, a translation of the English *Careers and Cradles*, no longer makes any sense.

In each of these cases, the translator’s intervention serves to establish and strengthen communication with French Canadian viewers. The shifts in translation generally fall within the bounds of accepted audiovisual translation practice: the replacement of characters’ names with ones from the target culture is a fairly common strategy; the substitution of one onscreen text for another, such as an image of a newspaper with French headlines for the original image, is an effective way to avoid the awkward situation of having subtitles present at the same time as text in a different language. Nonetheless, it is clear from these films and others for which Bobet produced the French version that he did not feel compelled to abide by notions of fidelity to the

original. The pattern that seems to emerge, coupled with his comments on working speedily and churning out the versions, is that Bobet considered the original film as raw material—almost as if it were archival footage like that used in the compilation films produced in English and French during the war.

After proposing the notion of *bricolage* to characterize Jacques Bobet’s inventiveness in the face of an indifferent NFB administration, Jean-Daniel Lafond brings in a related concept, that of *détournement*: “Jacques Bobet énonce une morale du détournement, une liberté par la ruse” (1989, 7). The term originated with the Situationist International, an influential European artistic and political movement that developed a critique of capitalism and consumer society in the late 1950s and 1960s. *Détournement* refers to the re-use of existing artistic elements in a new work to alter the message and critique or subvert the original, and was defined in the first issue of the journal *Internationale Situationniste* as follows: “Short for ‘détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements.’ The integration of present or past artistic productions into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of those means.”<sup>19</sup> In cinema, *détournement* was put into practice by René Viénet, who in 1973 released *La dialectique peut-elle casser des briques?*—the “French version” of a Hong Kong martial-arts film dubbed with humorous new dialogue that celebrated the revolt of the proletarian masses against an oppressive bourgeoisie (Chollet 2004, 90-91). While Bobet did not go as far as to claim to be creating new work, his assertion of “equal dignity” between version and original seemed to allow a creative approach to translation that considered the resulting work not as derivative but as a product in its own right.

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<sup>19</sup> “Definitions,” *Internationale Situationniste* #1, June 1958. Translated by Ken Knabb. *Situationist International Online*, 2003.

If the first three instances of translator's intervention can be considered to fall within the bounds of common practice, this was not always the case in Bobet's versions. Following the passage of the National Film Act in 1950, Arthur Irwin, the new NFB commissioner, developed a low-budget theatrical series called *Faces of Canada / Silhouettes canadiennes* that showed individuals from various walks of life and different regions of Canada. The fourteen Canadians portrayed included a blacksmith, a charwoman, a sexton, a lock-keeper and a taxi driver. Some of the films were made in English and versioned into French, while others were the opposite. One film in the series, *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman (Paul Tomkowicz : nettoyeur d'aiguillages)*, directed by Roman Kroitor in 1953, has achieved considerable success and remains in distribution today. It follows Polish immigrant Paul Tomkowicz through a night of work in the winter cold of Winnipeg, where his job for the past 23 years has been to keep the streetcar rail-switches clear of ice and snow. Carrying a bucket of salt, a lamp and a broom, he spends the night going from one switch to the next, sweeping and salting. In the morning, he heads to a lunch counter for a well-deserved breakfast of coffee, bread, sausages and boiled eggs.

The narration is based on Tomkowicz's own words and read by actor Tom Tweed in a heavy Polish accent: "Winnipeg's all right. In Winnipeg you can go in the streets—daytime, nighttime. Nobody is bother you [*sic*]. My sister wrote me from my village in Poland: the soldiers came in the night. They got 29 people. My brother, my brother's wife. Why they do that? I don't know." The film is clearly situated in time and place, with its reference to the safety of Winnipeg and the incomprehensible violence of wartime Europe. However, the French version of the narration, written by Jacques Bobet and voiced by Jean Duceppe, refers to Tomkowicz solely in the third person and turns him into an entirely mythical figure, disconnected from the world around: "Cet homme, bâti comme Hercule, transporte un fanal, comme Diogène, et un balai

comme les sorcières. Ce sont aussi les attributs du nettoyeur d'aiguillages.” This change in perspective, from a personal voice to a conventional “voice of God,” alters one of the key elements of the film: the way it constructs a character—here, the hard-working European immigrant who has found a place in Canadian society—through first-person speech.

Jacques Bobet altered another passage of narration in a manner that is even more perplexing, by moving the action from Winnipeg to Ottawa: “Un tramway qui doit tourner à gauche ne doit pas tourner à droite. À gauche, c’est Ottawa, l’Ontario, la langue anglaise. À droite, ce sont les ponts, la ville de Hull, la province du Québec. On va à droite ou on va à gauche.” What can explain this out-of-the-blue reference to the dividing line between Ontario and Quebec—with the implication that no French is spoken west of Hull—in a film about an immigrant Canadian that is explicitly set in Winnipeg? Director Roman Kroitor was not informed of the change and in fact, only found out about it 46 years later, when Richard Hancox interviewed him in 2000 while researching an article on the film (Hancox 2003, 16). Hancox points out that Winnipeg is significant in Canadian discourse because it represents the linking of Eastern and Western Canada through the “space-binding technology of the railroad” (22). The French version, by contrast, “reassigned the street-railway switchman to the role of *uncoupling* at a divisional point—the Ottawa River border of Quebec and Ontario—rather than letting him continue *connecting* the rest of Canada at its western ‘gateway’” (23, italics in original).

This “reassignment” of Tomkowicz’s location was no doubt rationalized by the French version producers by the need to call attention to the reality of Quebec. However valid that objective might have been in a general sense, the elimination of the Polish immigrant’s own words—his memories of the horrors of war in Europe and reflections on his lonely life in Winnipeg—results in a distortion of the film’s meaning. Furthermore, the altered narration strips

the central character of his individuality. Unlike the people portrayed in other *Faces of Canada* films like *The Sexton* and *The Village Notary*, he is identified by name as well as by trade—in fact, the film’s working title, *The Switchman*, was changed during production to include Tomkowicz’s name. But although the French title maintains his name, the narration refuses to acknowledge his individuality and emphasizes instead the routine and banality of his life: “Toutes les nuits, depuis 23 ans, il songe à la Pologne. C’est une nostalgie sans tristesse. Il a pris l’habitude de songer à la Pologne, entre deux aiguillages, et voilà tout.” Indeed, the narrator seems to have little to say and resorts to repeating the obvious, as when, over a shot of Tomkowicz wiping his nose, the narrator comments, “Il en profite aussi pour se moucher”—going against one of the basic tenets of narration writing that says it should supplement the image rather than duplicate it (Rabiger 1992, 241).

This is a case where the translator’s interventionist strategy goes beyond adaptation to the target audience and deliberately alters an essential element of the original work. In doing so, it fails to respect the director’s intentions and by extension, the film’s artistic integrity. After supervising versions for a decade, Jacques Bobet moved on to a role as producer of original French-language films, where he continued to take advantage of the “hands-off” attitude of the NFB administration to nurture the groundbreaking work of a generation of Quebec filmmakers. The French Unit directors had gained confidence through their work on versions and this helped them get projects approved for original productions, such the feature-length fiction *Le chat dans le sac* (1964) by Gilles Groulx (Bobet 1989a, 9). As Bobet put it, “[T]he effort kept us working. It gave us a continuity. It established us at the Board. They knew there was a French Canada somewhere, and we gave them something to *distribute*” (quoted in Jones 1981, 90). Yet these accomplishments came at a price, one that only becomes evident when we examine the shifts in

meaning that occur in certain versions supervised by Bobet: the original English-language works were stripped of their cultural specificity and recontextualized for a French Canadian audience.

### **Conclusion: Translator's voice in narration**

The translations examined in this chapter, dating between 1940 and 1954, were carried out at a time when the cinematic relations between language communities in Canada were highly asymmetrical. English-language production at the National Film Board was dominant and featured a high proportion of original works. French-language production, by contrast, was characterized by a dearth of original films and the predominance of versions; within the overall system, versions played a central, not peripheral, role. Because there were so few original productions, it was mainly through versions from English that Quebec audiences saw the lives of other Canadians represented on the screen. And it was through versions—the French versions of films like Laura Boulton's *Land of Quebec* (1944) and Grant Crabtree's *Painters of Quebec* (1944)—that Quebec audiences saw their own lives reflected back at them. That image was at times distorted, as was the case in *Alexis Tremblay, Habitant (Terre de nos aïeux)*, which was shown to French Canadians in a manner that fictionalized the family and contained very little speech by the characters themselves. Lastly, it was through versions that the Canadian government carried out its propaganda objective to convince citizens to serve their country and support the war effort. Even *Québec, tremplin stratégique* (1942), the film most clearly aimed at persuading French Canadians to enlist—at a time of widespread resistance to conscription—was the version of an English original, *Quebec Path of Conquest*. Directed by Frank Radford “Budge” Crawley, who with his wife Judith headed the influential Crawley Films, the 16-minute film

asserts that the Nazis had designs on the territory of Quebec and hoped to conquer it by sending submarines down the St. Lawrence River—unless French Canadians contributed to the Canadian war effort.

With versions being made monthly and constituting such a significant part of French-language output, an opportunity arose to take advantage of that central role by writing French narrations that diverged from those of the original film. In the wartime films, the divergences seemed to take the form of increased ambiguity with reference to the State. It was only when a personality with the talent and energy of Jacques Bobet arrived at the NFB in 1947 that the potential of translation began to be exploited more fully. Bobet simply got down to work with the tools at hand—the original films. Working quickly and without a lot of supervision by the NFB administration, he and his team churned out film after film. In the years following the war, when compilation films consisting partially or entirely of existing footage had been prevalent, it would not have been out of place for Bobet to look upon the English originals as raw material to be utilized as he saw fit. The narrations of these French versions testify to an approach I have called interventionist: Bobet seized the opportunity to “insinuate [his] own agenda” (Hermans 2001, 6-7). His intervention allowed for the translator’s voice to be heard, a voice in service to Quebec audiences: narrations that were comprehensible and relevant to Quebecers—albeit lacking in fidelity to the originals!—went some way towards compensating for the lack of original films in French.

These versions are part of a rich history of the early years of filmmaking in Quebec and have a story of their own to tell. They helped change the dynamics of the two language communities and paved the way for the creative explosion that would occur in Quebec a decade later with the development of *cinéma direct*—a documentary movement that will be the subject of

discussion in the next chapter. Whereas some commentators consider *cinéma direct* to represent the starting point of Quebec cinema—it forms the first episode of the TéléQuébec series *Cinéma québécois* under the title “L’ivresse des débuts”—this research points to the need to go back to an earlier beginning and integrate into Quebec film history the contribution of versions, which harnessed the voice of the translator and began to express Quebec identity.

### Chapter Three: Voice-over as performance, 1956-1967

In 1958, the NFB released a short film that is now considered to mark a turning point in the history of French production and represents, according to some critics, “the birth of modern Quebec cinema.”<sup>20</sup> *Les raquetteurs*, by Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault, records in a lively and spontaneous if slightly mocking style the festivities surrounding a snowshoe competition in Sherbrooke. Asked to produce a three-minute report on the event, Groulx and Brault, along with sound recordist Marcel Carrière, came up with a fourteen-minute “ethnographic”<sup>21</sup> document that gives a comical touch to such scenes as snowshoers parading through the streets or racing around a track, a brass band marching in place as it waits for a train to pass before the parade continues, and the newly crowned queen receiving a kiss from Maurice Richard for the photographers. *Les raquetteurs* was groundbreaking in several ways: it was not fully scripted in advance, as had been the norm at the NFB, and instead of being filmed with a telephoto lens it relied on a hand-held camera with a wide-angle lens, which obliged cameraman Brault to circulate among the participants as if he were living the event himself (Loiselle 2007, 39). Although sound and image were recorded separately, one scene—in which the mayor of Sherbrooke gives the keys to the city to a group of snowshoers—was synchronized in the editing stage and is considered to mark the beginning of synch sound recording.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the soundtrack—composed of ambient sound and music, fragments of dialogue, public address announcements and bits of speeches—

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<sup>20</sup> For example, the title of Chapter 2 of André Loiselle’s *Cinema as History: Michel Brault and Modern Quebec* is “Images and Sounds of a Collectivity: *Les Raquetteurs* and the Birth of Modern Quebec Cinema.”

<sup>21</sup> This is how Jean Rouch characterized the film on seeing it at the Flaherty Seminar in California in 1959, where he was the guest of honour.

<sup>22</sup> Laroche, André. “50e anniversaire du tournage du film *Les raquetteurs*,” *La Tribune* (Sherbrooke), February 4, 2008.

contains no narration, as the filmmakers felt the story could be told without commentary (Zéau 2006, 286-287). The refusal of narration was not only an aesthetic decision, but an attempt to “give voice to the people of Quebec” (Loiselle 2007, 41). It is this last aspect that provides the starting point for the examination of the role of narration that will be undertaken in this chapter. Documentary scholars like Sarah Kozloff (1988, 8) and Stella Bruzzi (2006, 47) have observed that attitudes toward narration changed starting in the late 1950s, with some filmmakers expressing dissatisfaction with its perceived didactic nature or redundancy. Although the move to reject or transform narration occurred across documentary traditions in Canada and elsewhere, it was characterized by a high degree of experimentation and innovation in French production at the NFB.

In the previous chapter, we looked at short films in which narration was the central element of the soundtrack, in part due to technological limitations that made it difficult to record synchronized sound outside a studio. These films had little or no on-camera dialogue; given that the participants or actors did not usually speak and were often not identified by name, they tended to function not as specific persons but as social types. The films fall within the category of what Zoë Druick calls government realism, a style of documentary filmmaking in which “typical individuals representing a range of population subcategories from different regions and cultures are depicted as members of class and occupation identities” (Druick 2007, 27). The language these typical individuals use to express themselves is not relevant, as the filmmaker constructs a story without their speech and instead writes narration that takes the place of individual voices. In the versions, such as the hundreds of English-to-French versions that were supervised by Jacques Bobet in the 1950s, the narration was generally written by the version director, who played a dominant role in conveying the film’s stance on the subject at hand. The version director had

considerable scope to intervene in the storytelling process, by altering anything from details like the names of military bases, as was done in the French version of *Breakthrough*, a 1944 newsreel on the Normandy landings, to aspects as fundamental as the city in which the film is set, as was done when Winnipeg is referred to as Ottawa in the French version of *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman*.

By the late 50s, the technological advances and aesthetic innovations that were nascent in *Les raquetteurs* pointed to a renewal of the documentary form, which led to what would be known as *cinéma direct* in Quebec and to the development of other forms of observational documentary elsewhere in North America and Europe. Referring to filmmaking at the NFB, commentators like David Clandfield and Gary Evans describe the period following the nomination of Guy Roberge to the position of film commissioner in 1957 as “the golden age of Quebec documentary” (Clandfield 1987, 42; Evans 1991, 49ff). Much has been written about the impact of lightweight, portable cameras and wide-angle lenses on the filmic image (eg. Marsolais 1997, 159-163), yet the soundtrack also underwent a profound change. The single, omniscient voice of the unseen narrator was replaced by a more polyphonic voice track in which various techniques were explored: participants were recorded in unscripted interviews and conversations and their voices, sometimes together with off-screen voices, were edited together to form a narrative thread. Some filmmakers—and here the figure of Pierre Perrault looms large—sought to incorporate authentic speech into the construction of a complex soundtrack containing diverse voices; recorded speech became both a vehicle for storytelling and a means of documenting the speech patterns of individuals and communities. As we shall see, the new complexity of the soundtrack had particular implications for versioning.

During the first two decades of the NFB's history, a large part of the total French-language output consisted of French versions of films originally produced in English—which is why the previous chapter was devoted to English-to-French versions, particularly those supervised by Jacques Bobet. I identified an approach that I characterized as interventionist: the original film became raw material that could be manipulated to establish a line of connection between translator and audience. After the move of the head office from Ottawa to Montréal in 1956, the ratio gradually changed: the number of productions originally made in French rose, diminishing the weight of versions in the total output. This also led to a correspondingly higher number French-to-English versions. Most of the original French productions in the early years were not versioned into English: the newsreel series *Actualités canadiennes* (22 episodes in 1941 and 1942) and *Les reportages* (118 episodes between 1942 and 1946), for example, and the first two films produced in French, *Un du 22e* (1940, which was actually directed by an anglophone, Gerald Noxon) and *La cité de Notre-Dame* (1942). It was not until 1944 that the first English versions of French films were produced, with two short films by Vincent Paquette: *La culture du tabac à Joliette / Tobacco Raising in Quebec* and *Invitation à souper / A Friend for Supper*, the latter a dramatized classroom film in which a teacher explains to her schoolchildren the importance of not wasting food when there is hunger around the world. In subsequent years, a number of films by Paquette and his colleagues, including Jean Palardy, Guy Glover and Roger Blais, were versioned into English; some of these were narration-led documentaries and others were fiction films that used the technique of double shooting, whereby two sets of actors performed scripts that had been prepared in two languages. Double shooting became especially prevalent in the 1950s with the arrival of television and the increased production of half-hour “social dramas.”

In this chapter, therefore, we turn our attention to English versioning, and we find a quite different approach from the interventionist one detailed in the previous chapter. Granted, the newly complicated soundtrack obliged the version director to find creative ways to translate the polyphony of voices, and we shall examine several inventive versioning methods. But going beyond the question of techniques that account for multiple voices, we find a different stance with respect to the French originals. Rather than seeking to minimize evidence of the films' origins, the English versions produced in the period under study acknowledge them as expressions of the collective identity that was emerging in Quebec. At the same time, the versions resist letting the voices simply speak without mediation; they add an English narrator or increase the narrator's aural presence. The narrator provides an explanatory voice that supplements the diegetic voices and occupies an intermediary position between film and audience. As a result of this mediating approach, the original French films—which challenged the traditions of documentary form and content at the NFB—tended, in their English versions, to be brought into conformity with the traditional model of narration-led documentary.

### **3.1 Renewal in French production: “Faire l’inventaire de ce qu’ils sont”**

In 1984, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of French production at the NFB was celebrated with a retrospective of films and the publication of *La Production française à l'ONF : 25 ans en perspective*. An autonomous French Program had been created in 1964, only 20 years earlier, yet it was 1959 that was designated as year one of French production: “Il y a 25 ans,” notes Carol Faucher in his introduction, “de jeunes cinéastes canadiens-français, qui se diront bientôt québécois, sont assis à table. Ils se concertent. Ils travaillent. Ils font des films. Ils ne sont pas

encore très nombreux, mais ils ont déjà entrepris, au moment où s’amorce ce formidable bouillonnement culturel qu’on appellera la ‘Révolution tranquille’, de faire, avec le cinéma, l’inventaire de ce qu’ils sont” (Faucher 1984, 3). A cluster of events occurred in 1959, making it a pivotal year: there was renewal in terms of the administrative structure of the NFB, the subject matter of French-language films, and Quebec society as a whole. After Guy Roberge, the first francophone commissioner, took office in 1957, he instituted a number of changes that increased the visibility of French at the NFB, from insisting that in-house forms be bilingual to hiring and promoting many French Canadians. More employees meant that two new French units were formed—“F” and “H”—while Unit G under Jacques Bobet continued to be responsible for versioning (Evans 1991, 53). The television program *Panoramique*, broadcast on Radio-Canada between November 1957 and June 1959, consisted of 26 short films grouped into mini-series on the same subject, which aimed to recount Quebec’s social history starting from the 1930s. It covered a range of issues like conscription (*Il était une guerre*), agricultural modernization (*Le maître du Pérou*) and the colonization of Abitibi (*Les brûlés*). Because of the sociological relevance and progressive nature of the themes explored, historian Yves Lever argues that it was *Panoramique* and not *Les raquetteurs* that represented the birth of modern Quebec cinema (Lever 1991, 31, 669). Another program, *Temps présent*, co-produced by the NFB and Radio-Canada and broadcast weekly from 1958 to 1964, was similarly innovative in content, if not in form. Using several genres, from news reports to portraits of celebrities to short fictions, it explored such themes as unemployment, poverty, agriculture, the rural exodus, and immigration. For example, one series produced for broadcast on *Temps présent* was called “Profils et paysages,” and its aim was to depict the dynamic personality of Quebec novelists, artists, educators and other figures. Yves Lever notes that aesthetically, these films were of little interest and consisted

mostly of interviews in static close up, but in terms of subject matter, he believes that the series represented a profound shift:

J'y vois tout de même le début de la constitution de l'album québécois, ce désir de rassembler l'héritage et de regrouper les forces au moment où de nouvelles idéologies politiques essaient de se définir. C'est surtout le moment où le cinéma québécois se met à s'intéresser davantage aux biographies qu'à la géographie, plus aux personnes qu'aux événements, davantage aux cuisines qu'aux façades des maisons. (Lever 1991, 35)

The *Rapport annuel* of 1959-60 used similar language to describe the series: “En somme, la série *Temps présent* a tenté de faire l'inventaire—forcément incomplet—du paysage géographique, intellectuel, poétique, scientifique du Canada français.”<sup>23</sup> The renewal of the late 1950s, then, occurred on the level of administrative structure, with the consolidation of French production into *l'équipe française*, and on the level of subject matter, with a move towards a “sociological cinema” that would turn attention to the people and practices typical of modern Quebec society—“l'inventaire de ce qu'ils sont.”

A third dimension of this period of renewal comes from the changes taking place in Quebec society at the time. Maurice Duplessis, leader of the Union Nationale, died in 1959, marking the end of many years in power, as he had been premier of Quebec from 1936 to 1939 and 1944 to 1959. A controversial figure, he is credited with improving the province's infrastructure by extending electrification in the countryside and building highways, schools and hospitals; with preserving Quebec's power of taxation and defending its autonomy in federal-provincial relations; and with measures like adopting the fleur-de-lys as Quebec's flag. At the same time, he is criticized for his anticommunism, repressive policies towards trade unions, allegedly corrupt electoral methods and encouragement of foreign control over Quebec's natural

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<sup>23</sup> Office national du film du Canada. *Rapport annuel 1959-1960*, 13.

resources (Sarra-Bournet 2000, n.p.). After his death, the Union Nationale lost the election to Jean Lesage's Liberal Party, which campaigned under the slogan "C'est le temps que ça change" and quickly undertook a program of economic and social reform. The cultural sphere was modernized, too, and restrictions on film viewing were gradually loosened starting in 1961: finally, the ban on showing NFB films in schools was lifted. Furthermore, an amendment was voted that allowed children to attend film screenings in the evenings, provided the films had special approval. Drive-in theatres, which had been banned under Duplessis, were opened, as long as they showed films "for all" (Hébert, Lever and Landry 2006, 421, 222). The Bureau de censure du cinéma, which had been extremely active under Duplessis, changed its approach and no longer required that scenes be cut from films; instead, the entire film would be accepted for distribution or rejected. In 1967, the cinema act was modified and censorship replaced by a system of classification by age.

Yet another key event occurred in 1959: with the support of 2,000 employees who refused to cross picket lines, 74 producers at Radio-Canada went on strike in an attempt to obtain the right to unionize. The strike lasted ten weeks, ending on March 7, 1959, when management agreed to recognize the newly formed Association des réalisateurs de Radio-Canada. As Gary Evans notes, it was "the most public manifestation of the changing climate and for many Quebeckers in the media it was probably the pivotal event of the decade" (1991, 56). The strike contributed to politicizing the French filmmakers at the NFB and was strongly supported by the Quebec population, which held several large demonstrations; it was also notable for the lack of solidarity shown by producers at the CBC, Radio-Canada's English-language sister network and

for the role played by then-journalist René Lévesque, who emerged as an electrifying speaker and entered politics soon after as a member of the Quebec Liberal Party.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, the period of renewal in French production that had its starting point around 1959 was spurred by technological change. *Les raquetteurs*, the seminal short film made by Groulx and Brault, was screened at the 1959 Flaherty Seminar on documentary film. There, French filmmaker Jean Rouch saw it and, impressed by the mobile camera style that Michel Brault had been experimenting with, invited him to act as camera operator on *Chronique d'un été*, which Rouch was co-directing with sociologist Edgar Morin. Shot in Paris in the summer of 1960 while war was raging in Algeria, *Chronique* is constructed around interviews with passersby, who are asked if they are happy. Using a prototype of the hand-held 16 mm Éclair camera that became the industry standard, Brault developed a unique style of filming that involved walking rather than pushing the camera on wheels or mounting it on a tripod. The sound, too, was recorded in a non-conventional manner, as Brault brought with him to France lavalier microphones that could be hidden under the speaker's clothing and connected to a Nagra tape recorder (DiIorio 2007, 32-33). The result was, in the words of Edgar Morin, "an authentic talking cinema. (...) The words burst forth at the very moment when things are seen—which does not occur with postsynchronization" (Morin 2003, 252).

These innovations drew on experiments carried out at the NFB since the mid-1950s to find cameras that were light enough to be hand held yet quiet enough to allow sound to be recorded on location, and to find tape recorders that could be synchronized to the camera while

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<sup>24</sup> For example, in "Rising Voice in Quebec: René Lévesque stirs nationalist passions in Quebec when Radio-Canada goes on strike," *Le Canada, A People's History; Une histoire populaire*. CBC, 2001, English producer Erich Koch states, "We had no feeling, no thought, that they were colleagues. The world was divided into the English and the French."

remaining portable (Evans 1991, 71). The new portable equipment was embraced by key members of Unit B, one of four units set up in 1948 under a system that saw each unit assigned certain areas of interest. Unit B had a wide mandate ranging from science and educational films to art films and animation, and executive producer Tom Daly had a reputation for attracting talented young minds who wanted to break out of the traditional mould (68). They developed a philosophy, drawn from Henri Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment* (1952), that what mattered was not extraordinary events but everyday moments, the significance of which can be recognized and captured on film by the photojournalist or documentarian. Daly believed that a film could be structured around the "emotional flow" of the material, which gave the various elements a wholeness and stimulated the viewer (72). These ideas converged in *The Days Before Christmas*, filmed in Montréal's busy downtown streets, at Eaton's department store and in other locations and consisting of scenes of typical activities carried out in preparation for Christmas. It was shot in December 1957—only a couple of months before *Les Raquetteurs*—and completed over the following year for broadcast on CBC in the *Candid Eye* series. The film is notable for bringing English and French crew members together, with cinematographers Georges Dufaux and Michel Brault joining directors Terence Macartney-Filgate, Stanley Jackson and Wolf Koenig.

Both these technological developments and the change in subject matter called into question the "traditional" documentary form that had been characterized by a realist style, the use of anonymous participants representing social categories, and a reliance on voice-over narration to tell the story. Although the majority of documentaries continued to be produced in this traditional style, a small but cinematographically significant number made by Unit B for *Candid Eye* and by *l'équipe française* broke out of the mould. The *Candid Eye* films were, in Gilles

Marsolais's view, limited by the filmmakers' reliance on the telephoto lens as a way to observe events yet go unnoticed themselves; Brault and the *équipe française* recognized the difficulty inherent in this desire for objectivity and sought instead to shoot wide-angle from within the event as it occurred (Marsolais 2011, 63). The *cinéma-direct* aesthetic modernized documentary shooting with its preference for small, polyvalent crews and minimal intervention over unfolding events, and with its rejection of scripts and detailed shooting plans. It brought international attention to the NFB and connected the Quebec filmmakers with their counterparts in France and the United States who were exploring the same techniques. And by favouring diegetic voices over off-camera narration, it opened up new challenges in version production.

### **3.2 Questioning the role and presence of narration**

“For film-makers on the leading edge, narration can be a killer,” states Robert Drew, an American filmmaker best known for the ground-breaking *Primary* (1960), which follows presidential candidates John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey in a primary election and contains only two minutes of narration. “Words supplied from outside cannot make a film soar. Exposition, whether narration or voice-over from characters, may maintain a certain level of interest but it can rarely build. To do that, a film must generate power from within” (Drew 1983, 271-273). This position is typical of the stance taken by filmmakers in the observational-cinema movement, whether in North America or Europe. They felt that narration encouraged filmmakers to “[commit] the terrible sin of lecturing” (Youdelman 2005, 401). It was an intrusion on the filmic space and the logic developed within that space; it was not neutral but spoken in the tone of a teacher or authority figure—hence the label “voice of God”; it distanced the film viewer with

its ready explanations and single perspective on events; in short, it was “the filmmakers’ ultimate tool for telling people what to think” (Bruzzi 2006, 47-48). It should be noted that Bruzzi argues this view of narration, while prevalent, is grossly oversimplified and fails to take into account the many other models of narration, such as ironic commentary, personal expression, playful response, and “dialectical tool” that leaves open the possibility of alternative interpretations (72).

Nonetheless, at the NFB, “voice of God” narration was certainly the main model in the early propaganda films and those made just after the war. It played a structuring role: as Bruce Elder describes the process, filmmakers “prepared a shooting script that included a tentative version of the narration the film would use and a description of those sound effects and images that would illustrate these ideas. (...) The filmmakers would then set out to fetch the illustrative material that was needed” (Elder 1989, 129). What was original about the *Candid Eye* films is that they reversed that process, with the filmmakers doing away with the shooting script and writing narration during post-production as needed. Elder locates the start of the changed approach to narration in Colin Low’s *Corral*, a 1954 film in the *Faces of Canada* series that shows a cowboy rounding up wild horses on a ranch in Alberta. Although narration had been planned, Stanley Jackson recognized that the film could tell its story without it: “I studied the film... and tried a few tentative goes at a commentary. This was very difficult. It began to feel like intrusion. By the end of the morning, I had decided that it didn’t *want* a commentary. A commentary would be a fifth wheel” (quoted in Jones 1981, 64). The film was released with only a simple guitar ballad on the soundtrack. Most of the *Candid Eye* films, however, maintained some narration; the principle behind them was that viewers would have “unmediated access” to the reality captured by the camera, with the filmmakers commenting on that situation through editing and narration in a tone of “distanctiated irony” (MacKenzie 2004, 119).

A range of narration techniques was used in *Candid Eye* and other Unit B films, demonstrating the filmmakers' inventive approaches. Most of the narrations were read by Stanley Jackson, who was not only a key member of Unit B but had been a stalwart of the Film Board since World War II. A former schoolteacher from Winnipeg, he was the "house writer" and narrator and voiced close to 80 films (Evans 1991, 70). His narrations, according to Peter Harcourt in his well-known article "The Innocent Eye," carried "just the right degree of respect and awe" while at times having "the right tinge of irony" (Harcourt 1977, 72). Sometimes the narration was straightforward and explanatory, as in Terence Macartney-Filgate's *The Back-Breaking Leaf* (1959), on the transient workers who harvest the tobacco leaf in Ontario. It starts as follows: "People in town call it the jungle: the ravine where some of the boys sleep when they first arrive. But they're not hobos. They're fellows who've run through their money and haven't got a job..." At other times, the narration is expressive and thought-provoking, as in Colin Low's *City Out of Time* (1959), on Canaletto's paintings of Venice: "Millions of pictures, photographs, paintings, every year, yet very few remain as anything more than personal mementos. What is the difference between just a picture and something that will be treasured through ages? The Venetian gentleman in the square who every day dashes off a canvas: is he shaping anything of lasting value? What will endure? What is art?" On occasion, the narration is based on a personal story, as in Pierre Berton's recollection of his childhood in Dawson City in *City of Gold* (1957), directed by Colin Low and Wolf Koenig: "This was my hometown, and my father's town before me. It's a quiet place: a few stores, a restaurant, three—maybe four hundred people. Hard workers, most of them. (...) But I must tell you that this town, where I spent my childhood, isn't really like any other town in the world." Despite the increasing diversity of rhetorical styles, the

narration of English-language films following *Corral* generally remained within the confines of NFB tradition.

On the French side, however, experimentation went farther and included a questioning of the role and the very presence of narration. One of the key aspects of the new documentary aesthetic was the ability to simultaneously record image and sound, such that speech and ambient noise became intimately linked to the unfolding action as well as being an integral part of both the shooting and editing stages. The advent of synchronized sound added an element of authenticity, freeing filmmakers from traditional narration and its ambiguous relation to the image (Marsolais 1997, 211). It also changed the way films were shot, as Michel Brault observed in an interview: “If you know that you’re not going to rely on voice-over, the film has to be shot in a way that people will understand, because there is nobody who is going to explain what is going on there.”<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, synchronized sound carried with it an ethical dimension by bringing to the forefront the issue of the source of speech in documentary: where does speech emanate from in relation to the filmic world? Echoing both Edgar Morin’s characterization of *Chronique d’un été*—“the words burst forth at the very moment when things are seen”—and Robert Drew’s insistence that “a film must generate power from within,” Marsolais summarizes this characteristic of *cinéma direct*: “Ce fait de fonder le cinéma sur la parole *captée dans son surgissement même* et d’en *assumer pleinement les conséquences* est déterminant pour distinguer *l’esprit du direct* : c’est le critère de base de son éthique” (1997, 212; italics in original). Michel Brault, interviewed in *Le direct avant la lettre*, describes this position in pragmatic terms: “Pour faire du direct, en plus de toutes les conditions techniques qu’il faut avoir, il faut que les gens que

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Scott Birdwise, “A Dream of Communication,” *POV: Point of View Magazine*. Issue 86, Summer 2012. <http://povmagazine.com/articles/view/a-dream-of-communication>

tu filmes génèrent leur propre langage. C'est eux qui décident de parler. C'est eux qui décident quand parler puis qu'est-ce qu'ils vont dire" (Desjardins 2005). Narration, from this perspective, comes from outside, whereas the spontaneous speech of participants comes from within.

The filmmakers of *l'équipe française* demonstrated their critical approach to narration by finding inventive ways to alter, reduce or eliminate it: whereas *Corral* remained an anomaly in English production with its absence of narration, *Les raquetteurs* set a precedent for what was to come. *Au bout de ma rue* (1958), made in the same year, contains an unusually small amount of narration. It follows a young boy in a poor neighbourhood who seizes an opportunity to escape his backyard and explore the docks of Montréal's busy port. The simple 13-minute story is told through sound effects, music and only two sentences of narration: "Les rues du vieux Montréal descendent vers les longs quais de son port fluvial. Ici mouillent les navires et les rêves du monde immense." A year later, Claude Fournier made *Télesphore Légaré, garde-pêche*, which questions the use of pre-scripted narration read by a professional voice. Yves Lever (1991, 423) comments, "Le film participe ainsi de l'esthétique du direct qui veut éliminer le commentaire savant ou poétique récité par une belle voix et il évite aussi le piège de l'interview, trop souvent terne." Produced for the "Profils et paysages" series within *Temps présent*, the film differs from others in the series by focusing not on a public personality but on an ordinary person: a 78-year-old fish-and-game warden who lives with his wife in isolation in the forest. The narration was created by showing a rough cut of the film to the couple, who commented on the images as they watched. Their comments were recorded and edited into the film's soundtrack: "Là, on s'en retourne au lac," says Télesphore. "On prend la côte à Dion, qu'on appelle. Ça, c'est ben le chemin en longueur." "Oui, c'est ben ça," answers his wife. "Mon dieu. On l'a pris ben des fois, ce chemin-là. Il faisait pas toujours beau. En hiver, surtout. Moi j'ai dit, trotte pas dans les côtes, j'aime pas

ça, c'est dangereux." A similar procedure had been used by Jean Rouch in *Moi un noir* (1958), which was screened at the same Flaherty Seminar as *Les raquetteurs*, but Claude Fournier claims the idea came to him from Shirley Clarke's *Skyscraper* (1958), in which construction workers describe the building being built (Marsolais 1997, 97n30).

A different technique is found in the opening narration of *Golden Gloves*, a Gilles Groulx film made in 1961 for *Temps présent* on the sport of boxing. Over a shot of young hopefuls lining up to participate in the Golden Gloves amateur boxing tournament, the narrator—Claude Jutra—reads a text that, unlike most narration, was not expressly written for the film, but is part of an actual document: the liability waiver the boxers must sign stating they will not hold the organizers responsible for any injuries they may sustain. Speaking in the first person ("Considérant que vous acceptez mon inscription, je, soussigné, renonce, tant pour moi-même que pour mes héritiers ou exécuteurs testamentaires..."), the narrator could be any or all of the wiry, well-built fighters waiting to weigh in, clad in their undershorts, their faces betraying nervous excitement.

Another film by *l'équipe française* that constructs its narration in an inventive manner is *La lutte* (1961), directed by Claude Fournier, Michel Brault, Claude Jutra and Marcel Carrière and, once again, broadcast on *Temps présent*. Influenced by an encounter with Roland Barthes, who had written about wrestling (known in France as "le catch") in *Mythologies* (1957), the directors filmed a professional wrestling card at the Montréal Forum, turning it into a spectacle of good and evil along the lines of classical theatre. The main bout pits world champion Édouard Carpentier—smiling and clean-shaven, French-speaking, described by the sportscaster as "a fine physical specimen of manhood"—and teammate Dominic DeNucci against a pair of wrestlers known as the Fabulous Kangaroos, composed of Al Costello and Ivan Kalmikoff—a bearded,

snarling “Russian” who rails against the referee in English—along with their flamboyant manager Red Berry. Shot by five cameramen who capture the action from all angles, the film cuts back and forth between the men grappling on stage and the audience—including many women—shrieking in delight and apprehension.

The complex soundtrack of *La lutte* is built up through dialogue, ambient sound, and music: using a Brechtian distancing technique, the recorded sound during the opening matches is replaced by a Bach-Vivaldi harpsichord concerto. Both at the time of its release and later, film critics noted that the film has no narration: writing in *Objectif* in October 1961, Jacques Lamoureux states, “Cela est quasiment incroyable : croyez-le ou non, mais ce film, réalisé par l’ONF ne comporte pas de commentaire!”<sup>26</sup>—a comment that reflects the attitude that narration was a crutch best avoided. In 1979, Pierre Véronneau remarks, “Le film poursuit l’expérience des *Raquetteurs* en ne comportant aucun commentaire : seuls l’image et le son d’ambiance parlent.”<sup>27</sup> And in 1997, Gilles Marsolais also lauds the absence of narration: “Ce film passionnant réussit aussi le tour de force de n’être assorti d’aucun commentaire” (1997, 94). But, as Marsolais goes on to acknowledge, to say there is no narration is not entirely accurate. For about 10 minutes of the film’s 28 minute-length, we hear play-by-play commentary by Michel Normandin, a well-known sportscaster who covered the Wednesday night wrestling shows. Although Normandin is not identified in the credits, he is filmed ringside introducing the evening’s fighters. His voice was immediately recognizable to sports fans of the time, who knew him not only for his skilled commentary during wrestling cards at the Forum, but also for the play-by-play of local baseball games and Montréal Canadiens matches. The filmmakers obtained the play-by-play commentary

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Yves Lever, *Le cinéma de la Révolution tranquille*, “La lutte.”

<sup>27</sup> *Copie zéro*, 2, 30. Quoted in Yves Lever, *Le cinéma de la Révolution tranquille*, “La lutte.”

by asking Normandin to come in to the studio and improvise while watching the edited fight sequence (Bouchard 2012, 100)—a procedure that recalls that of *Télesphore Légaré*. The commentary plays a role similar to narration in guiding the viewer through the film but is non-traditional in that the viewer perceives it as having been spoken during the event itself. Incidentally, *La lutte* is notable for being among the first NFB films to use subtitles: the final scene takes place in the dressing room of the Russian wrestler (actually an American playing the role of bad guy), whose rant in English (“We did not lose the match tonight, that’s the positive truth!”) is subtitled in French. In a humorous touch by the filmmakers, when he exclaims “Pravda! Pravda!” the subtitles are in Cyrillic.

A similar effect of binding images and sound together in a common space is created when diegetic music, which emanates from a source within the film itself, is heard on the soundtrack before or after it is performed on camera. This occurs in Arthur Lamothe’s *Les bûcherons de la Manouane* (1962), another *Temps présent* film. In addition to the narration, recorded voices, and *musique concrète* created by Maurice Blackburn based on the rhythmic sound of axes chopping at trees, the soundtrack contains folk songs performed by the lumberjacks themselves. In one scene, we hear guitars strumming over stark images of the faces of lumberjacks, then see several men sitting wearily on bunk beds during the long winter evening, one singing the plaintive folk song “Je suis garçon dans le monde.” The filmmaker has the song play again in audio only over the final shot of lumberjack Guy Charron of Rivière-du-Loup taking his horses out on a bitterly cold morning; it continues as the closing credits roll, filling the misty air with its lament. In a different manner but again creating an integration of sound and image, the opening scene of *Golden Gloves* contains a rhythmic montage of the boxers training accompanied by a song

written especially for the film by the popular duo Les Jérolas: the sound of the boxer's explosive jumps segues into the beat of the song when the guitar comes in.

What these inventive sound and narration techniques have in common is a rejection of the *position* of the narrator as a figure entirely external to the filmic world. The narrator is no longer on the outside looking in, but is on the same plane as the interviews and recorded speech; he or she partakes of the community being portrayed—or is an actual member of that community, in the case of *Télesphore Légaré*. Here we must recall the traditional tripartite distinction between *voice-in*, *voice-off*, and *voice-over* made in film studies: *voice-in* refers to speech which is perceived to emanate from a person visible on the screen; *voice-off* is understood to have its source with a speaker who is located within the diegetic world, but who is off screen; whereas *voice-over* emanates from a verbal source that is not only off screen but absent from the world of the film. It is this absence that gives voice-over its particular character: “la voix plane, tel un esprit, *au-dessus* du monde diégétique d’une part, dans l’espace de la salle d’autre part” (Boillat 2007, 24). By referring to this spatial dimension, Boillat recognizes that voice-over may be at once more or less distant from the characters in the filmic world, who cannot hear it, and more or less distant from the spectators occupying the acoustic space of the theatre, who can hear the voice-over although its source is obscure. In *La lutte*, that distance is reduced when voice-over narration is replaced by *voice-off*: the viewer perceives Michel Normandin as being just outside the frame when he speaks, watching the wrestlers and calling the action. This positioning of the narrator within the world portrayed is particular to the French-language films; it reflects the search for a culture and identity that was shared by filmmakers and audience and played out during the weekly television broadcasts. It differs from the personal narrations occasionally found in English production, which are individual in nature and remain within the sphere of *voice-over*.

The contrast in voices points to a broader difference between *Candid Eye* and the *équipe française*, described by Scott MacKenzie:

The *équipe française* was not interested in capturing individuals partaking in daily life (...). Instead, they ignored individual traits in order to capture, address and construct the collectivity, to capture the Québécois as a homogenised group with an identity, history, and tradition all its own. This collective cultural identity was in transition and in conflict as this group of filmmakers began to document it; this turned the different versions of the Québécois collective identity as represented onscreen into different constellations to be debated in the public sphere. (MacKenzie 2004, 124)

Positioning the narrator within the space of the film was an aesthetic device, then, that allowed the filmmakers to alter their relationship with the audience. As Vincent Bouchard observes in his discussion of the new forms of narration explored by the generation of francophone filmmakers who entered the NFB in the 1950s, “[l]eur objectif est de donner la parole aux personnes filmées, d’éviter à tout prix cette voix omnisciente qui dicte le sens (...) Ce cinéma québécois est basé sur la voix. Le son direct devient une manière de revendiquer une différence” (Bouchard 2012, 99). How can that difference be maintained when the films are versioned into English, as so many were in order to fill the weekly television broadcast slots?

### **3.3 French-to-English versions: A return to tradition**

If producing versions of films that experiment with the voice of narrator and participants poses new challenges, one way of dealing with the situation is to simply not make a version at all. Decisions on versioning were made on a case-by-case basis depending on the film’s distribution possibilities and on broadcaster interest; films that are now considered classics may not have been seen as having high distribution potential at the time they were produced, and various other factors influenced whether or not versions were made. Whereas most of the 13 *Candid Eye* films

were translated into French for broadcast on *Temps présent*, many of the French films in the latter series remained untranslated. *Télesphore Légaré garde-pêche*, for example, was part of a series called “Profils” produced for *Temps présent* that portrayed, for the most part, Quebec arts and culture personalities such as Wilfrid Pelletier and Alfred Desrochers. None of the programs in the series was versioned into English. The spontaneous speech of the Légarés, recorded while they watched a rough cut of the film, would have been difficult to deal with—but of course not impossible. In particular, the version producers would have had to decide whether to make the English narration imitate the style of the French, with actors playing the roles of Mr. Légaré and his wife and simulating their improvised comments, or instead, to turn the speech of the characters into a third-person narration spoken by an anonymous narrator.

As for *Les raquetteurs*, it can now be viewed on the NFB Web site with English subtitles for the few sections in the film that contain French speech, which in addition to the mayor’s speech as he welcomes the snowshoers include an excerpt from a radio broadcast and the announcer giving instructions to the majorettes and race participants. These subtitles were created by Robert Gray of Kinograph in 2005, when the four-DVD box set of Michel Brault’s work was produced for the Collection mémoire. Prior to the production of this subtitled version, the film was screened in French in Canada and the United States—at the Flaherty Seminar, as mentioned, and for example at the Archive Film Society in New York, as part of a film program in January 1961.<sup>28</sup> All the speech was left untranslated, as if it were simply part of the sound environment; indeed, when the film was shown in Toronto in a 1992 tribute to Michel Brault, it was described

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<sup>28</sup> Howard Thompson, “Film Distributor Has Eye on Oscars,” *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1960.

in a newspaper report as a “wordless” film.<sup>29</sup> Wordless? Even the unilingual English viewer knows this is not the case. But non-translation implies that the actual words spoken do not matter to the message of the film. This is ironic given the historical significance of the sync-sound recording of the mayor’s speech. Furthermore, non-translation denies the individuality of the speakers and turns them into representatives of social types. This may be one reason behind the perception among some anglophone viewers that the filmmakers—themselves urban, bourgeois young men—were actually mocking the working-class traditions they were portraying (Loiselle 2007, 48). As Gary Evans puts it, “*Les raquetteurs* seems to travel a fine line between innocent self-deprecation and a trenchant mockery of Québec communal attitudes and working-class people. English Canadians may be forgiven if, as outsiders, they interpret this [...] as bourgeois French-Canadians ridiculing working-class French-Canadians” (1991, 74).

Nonetheless, screening a French film to English audiences without translation was not typical at the NFB; English versions were indeed produced for many French-language films. For example, the French program *Temps présent* ran in English in August and September of both 1962 and 1963; among the films broadcast were *September Five at Saint-Henri* (Hubert Aquin) and *Day After Day* (Clément Perron) in the first season, and *Manouane River Lumberjacks* (Arthur Lamothe) and *Thirty Minutes, Mister Plummer* (Anne-Claire Poirier) in the second season. While the method for making versions generally followed the traditional procedure of substituting a translated rendering of the narration for the original voice, differences can be observed between French original and English version. I shall focus on the English version of *La*

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<sup>29</sup> Christopher Harris, “A top-10 director receives a major retrospective tribute,” *The Globe and Mail*, June 19, 1992.

*lutte*, titled *Wrestling*, to show how the questioning of the role and necessity of narration that occurs in the French films does not always carry over into the English versions.

*La lutte*, as mentioned, is characterized by the absence of voice-over narration and the use of play-by-play commentary during the main wrestling bout as a kind of voice-off stand-in for narration. In *Wrestling*, which was broadcast on the CBC in August 1961, Michel Normandin's commentary has been removed and replaced by English commentary that was obtained in the same manner: Montréal press agent and gossip columnist Norman Olson was hired to go to the NFB studios and record the commentary while watching the fight sequence.<sup>30</sup> But the English version has an additional voice: several passages of narration, spoken like that of so many other films of this period by Stanley Jackson. As the film opens over images of wrestlers training, he comments, "Tony Lanza's school in Montréal. In the daytime, the pupils have ordinary jobs. At night, they pursue dreams of glory..." In the French original, only direct recording is used: we hear Lanza explaining techniques to his apprentice wrestlers in English, French and Italian. The French original emphasizes direct speech; the English version, by identifying Lanza, pulls the scene out of the realm of observation into that of exposition. As we watch a well-muscled wrestler dive into a pool as part of a rigorous training session, the English version introduces him through narration. By contrast, the French original simply adds an onscreen title—"Édouard Carpentier, champion du monde"—thus avoiding breaking into the filmic world with words from outside. Over shots of audience members settling in for the evening's action, Stanley Jackson comments, "Why do they come? A lady who is perhaps too squeamish to pluck a chicken certainly hasn't come to enjoy a display of naked brutality. She has come to see a hero in action."

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<sup>30</sup> NFB Production file, *La lutte/Wrestling*.

And as Carpentier enters the ring to excited cheering, the narrator continues to describe the scene in overblown prose: “[T]he crowd [will] know fear and anguish, joy and terror, rapture and suffering, as the fortunes of battle change.”

What was the purpose of the added English narration? The theme of the original film—that the mainly French Canadian spectators experience a cathartic moment despite the “arranged” nature of the fight—needs no illumination; the blunt statements of the narration only reinforce the central idea while precluding a more fluid interpretation. Furthermore, whenever Jackson’s voice is heard, the volume of the ambient sound is lowered, de-emphasizing the fragments of speech recorded at the Forum. In particular, the narration drowns out interactions between spectators and with the wrestlers, such as when an older man asks Carpentier for a signature, saying “Je vous souhaite un heureux combat à l’honneur des Canadiens français.” This sentence cannot be heard in the English version; yet authentic speech as well as sync sound—“la parole *captée dans son surgissement même*”—is an essential characteristic of *cinéma direct*. The English version does not allow the event to simply unfold before the viewer’s eyes and ears, but mediates through voice-over, through a voice that stands outside the filmic world. David Clandfield points out that the French Unit films of this period focused on urban ritual, such as ritualized violence in contact sports, which includes the element of performance for an audience (Clandfield 1987, 44). He notes that these films often showed the watching—and here we must add “and listening”—public: “by endorsing watching as an essential constituent part of [the ritual’s] celebration, the films expressed their solidarity with the new Quebec” (45). However, by adding the voice of a narrator which cannot be heard by the public, the English version distances itself from the world of participants and audience. It offers the reassuring familiarity of the voice of Stanley Jackson, who was clearly associated with English production. Already, the film’s unconventional subject

matter—a popular ritual that many intellectuals would consider cliché and formulaic—and its open structure were challenging; an English version without narration might have seemed too experimental. Instead, the film was brought into line with the original English productions of the same time period through the use of a standard voice-over narration spoken by a familiar voice. This English version is still available on the NFB Web site today, but as of 2006, English viewers have had the option of watching *La lutte* on DVD with English subtitles, prepared by Robert Gray of Kinograph, as part of the Michel Brault box set. The subtitled version has no narration in either language and allows English viewers to appreciate the speech captured during the event itself.

A similar pattern—absence or minimal amount of narration in the French original versus its addition in the English version—can be found in films as diverse as *The Gold Seekers / La soif d'or* and *The Promised Land / Les Brûlés*; a simple comparison of their opening scenes is eloquent. *The Gold Seekers*, one of a series of six French films broadcast in English on CBC in August and September 1962, takes a look at the boom-and-bust cycle experienced by mining towns in northern Ontario and Quebec in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, using photographs and interviews with old-timers. The original, *La soif d'or*, was directed by Jacques Giraldeau, while the English version was directed by Robert Russell (the film has been re-edited and it contains different interviews). Whereas the French opening narration is only a sentence long and simply evokes a mood before letting the interviewees speak—“Lumière nouvelle dans la mine désertée entre le masque noir du silence et les voix du passé”—the English narration, spoken by Stanley Jackson, runs for many sentences over the same scene and sets out information in a traditional expository manner: “Along the roads of northern Ontario and Quebec, mine shafts loom, shafts that have

been deserted for many years. (...) How did this come about? It all started sixty years ago when this part of Ontario was largely wilderness...”

Another example can be found in *The Promised Land*, the four-episode English adaptation of *Les Brûlés*, an eight-part miniseries on the government-assisted settlement of the Abitibi region. It was broadcast on Radio-Canada starting in November 1957 as part of *Panaromique*. Like many films produced for television during this period, *Les Brûlés* was fiction, not documentary, and used actors, including folk singer Félix Leclerc in a key role. Both *The Promised Land* and *Les Brûlés* were later re-edited and released as feature films. Whereas the French original opens with only a date on the screen, the English version, produced by having the French Canadian actors dub their own voices in English, opens with expository narration that seems quite unnecessary in a story that will be told through dialogue: “The date: July 6, 1934. Behind them, the St. Lawrence lowlands, the idle factories, the soup kitchens, the Depression. Ahead lay the vast wilderness of Quebec’s northwest: the promised land.” At the start of the next scene, the narrator’s voice comes in again, offering information where none was deemed necessary in the French film.<sup>31</sup> But providing information was no doubt not the main purpose: in contrast to the accented voices of the actors, the voice and style of the narration were familiar to English television viewers and a reminder of the tried-and-true NFB tradition.

Even when translation goes in the other direction, from English to French, the same phenomenon can be observed: narration is present in English but notable for its absence in French.. The pattern occurs in *The Days Before Christmas* (1958) and *Bientôt Noël*, its French version—actually, its two French versions, as one was done in 1958 and a “revised” version was

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<sup>31</sup> At the 44-minute mark, there is a short passage of narration in both the French and English films. There may have been more narration in the original television episodes, but I was unable to view them.

completed in 1959. Scenes on a similar subject, such as a choir rehearsing its holiday performance, children telling the department store Santa Claus what they want for Christmas, and a short interview with a taxi driver, were shot in each language and edited separately in the two films. They share the same basic structure and explore the theme of the commercialization of the holiday season, which has been transformed over the years from a joyous religious event into a money-grab for retailers. Yet the absence of narration in *Bientôt Noël*, along with changes in the choice and order of scenes, gives the film a different overall meaning.

*The Days Before Christmas* was conceived by Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig of Unit B as a way to experiment with a new style of filming, and its success convinced the CBC to run a whole series following the *Candid Eye* philosophy (Evans 1991, 72). It was shot in December 1957 as a “collective creation” by directors Terence Macartney-Filgate, Wolf Koenig and Stanley Jackson along with their camera and sound crew: “Everyone involved tossed ideas into the hat. (...) Everyone had their own particular optique of the season and so we fanned out across Montreal and got to work” (Wolf Koenig, quoted in Feldman 2003, 39). The English film was edited on and off throughout 1958, completed in November and broadcast on December 7, 1958—the first film shot but the last in the *Candid Eye* series to be broadcast (Feldman 2003, 46n3). With cameraman Michel Brault and Georges Dufaux from *l'équipe française* participating from the start, some scenes were shot in French in anticipation of the version. The first French version, with subtitles prepared by Jacques Godbout under the supervision of Jacques Bobet, was completed on December 5, 1958. It was broadcast on *Temps présent* shortly thereafter and screened during the summer at the Flaherty Seminar in Santa Barbara (Zéau 2006, 290); however, this version is considered lost (Bouchard 2012, 93n54). The following winter, in November 1959, additional scenes were shot and the film was re-edited and re-released under the

title *Bientôt Noël* (révision), with Georges Dufaux now credited as a director alongside Macartney-Filgate, Koenig and Jackson. This revised French version was broadcast on Radio-Canada on December 22, 1959, and is the version now available on the NFB Web site (Bouchard 2012, 93-94).

*The Days Before Christmas* was analyzed by Bruce Elder in his 1989 book *Images and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture* and by Seth Feldman in an article in the 2003 publication *Candid Eyes: Essays on Canadian Documentaries*. Both writers point to the significance of the narration in shaping viewers' perception of the film, but they take contrasting positions. In total, *The Days Before Christmas* contains just over a minute of narration, confined to the opening and closing scenes. Elder (1989, 130-133) argues that the narration is juxtaposed to the images in such a way that they become illustrations of the stated ideas rather than being allowed to function as evidence, as a means to discover truth. The narration plays up the underlying tension between "the illusion that Christmas is a festive season of comradely love and the reality that it is a cheap commercial ploy which inflicts pain and suffering on the many and provides profits for the few" (131). This contradiction is illustrated early in the film, when the sound of a church choir singing "Ding Dong Merrily on High" continues over images of weary shoppers in the streets; a bell rings out, but it turns out to be the bell of a Salvation Army volunteer, collecting donations for the needy in his kettle. The narration that accompanies this scene, read—once again—by Stanley Jackson, reinforces the sense of contrast: "For most people, Christmas will mean a joyous celebration of the birth of the Saviour, a promise fulfilled. And for all people it will mean a celebration of another promise, the promise that in the due cycle of nature, the season's warmth and brightness will return out of the winter's cold. And for some people it will mean sore feet, frayed nerves and an upset stomach." Seth Feldman, however,

commenting on the same scene, argues that the narration does not control the viewer's understanding but instead opens up several possible interpretations: "That narration is not a vestige of earlier, voice-over documentary. There is no attempt to focus the images on a single meaning." Instead, he claims, "We are invited to find both the sacred and the profane" (2003, 43). Feldman's position on this segment of narration fits with his thesis that the film, like others in *Candid Eye*, has an "existential bent" and refuses to be pinned down in meaning: "There is no ultimate direction here, no single metaphor for what the camera has found and the editor has assembled" (44).

When one compares the experience of viewing *The Days Before Christmas* to that of *Bientôt Noël*, however, it is hard not to disagree with Feldman: the narration reinforces the meaning proposed by the images in the English film, whereas its absence in the French version makes various interpretations possible. The opening scene of *Bientôt Noël* shows a different choir, rehearsing not "Ding Dong Merrily on High" but "Il est né le divin enfant." Instead of cutting away to Montréal's bustling downtown streets and the Salvation Army bell, the French version cuts to a traditional nativity scene being set up outdoors. The next scene, lasting over three minutes, was shot in November 1959 and is thus entirely absent from the English original: a helicopter with Père Noël aboard lands on the esplanade of St. Joseph's Oratory in Montréal (Bouchard 2012, 95). A crowd of onlookers takes in the spectacle of his arrival, which is followed by a parade with a marching band. Rather than creating tension through the juxtaposition of narration that claims Christmas means many things to many people with images of enthusiastic shoppers that show only its commercial side, the scene in *Bientôt Noël*, accompanied only by music and ambient sound, suggests *continuity* between the carol singing and the celebration of the costumed man's arrival—between the sacred and the profane. The

parade shots recall those of *Les raquetteurs*, which was filmed and released in the interval between the original and the revised French version: in both of these scenes—among the earliest ones shot with hand-held camera—the cameraman moves about among the spectators, witnessing both the parade itself and those watching it. The parade theme would return several times over the next few years, in films such as Jutra and Brault's *Québec-U.S.A. ou l'invasion pacifique* (1962), where hand-held camerawork would again give viewers the sense of observing an event while being part of it. Furthermore, both *Bientôt Noël* and *Québec-U.S.A.* create a *mise en abyme* effect through shots of spectators themselves holding cameras and filming the parade.

The theme of performance as a key element of ritual, which would later be explored in *Wrestling*, is already present in the French film—but not in the English. Instead, *The Days Before Christmas* emphasizes the notion of Christmas as a time of separation, through a sequence showing bags of airmail destined for Rome, London, Stockholm and Paris; a lonely young man calling his mother at home in Scotland—a scene that Bruce Elder calls “most deeply offensive” for its lack of sensitivity to the man's discomfort (1989, 131)—and passengers coming and going at the train station. In *Bientôt Noël*, these scenes are replaced by images of a class of schoolchildren making Christmas crafts—a traditional activity undertaken collectively. Whereas the English version favours shooting in public places like streets corners, department store and train station, the French version adds a scene in a family home: a father untangles strands of Christmas lights to trim the tree with the help of his four children. The mobile camerawork from the children's height translates their sense of wonder. At the end of *The Days Before Christmas*, wistful images of a Christmas party are seen through a window, contrasting in mood with the soundtrack: uplifting choral singing and a passage of narration in which Jackson recites a verse of an old carol, “The Praise of Christmas,” extolling the season as a time of cheer. But the French

version instead concludes with shots of taxi drivers gathering around the mobile studio of “Le Bon Dieu en taxi” to hear a radio-transmitted mass. Again, whereas in *The Days Before Christmas*, “narration is used, sometimes alone, sometimes in conjunction with images, to establish the conceptual tensions that structure the film” (Elder 1989, 133), the narrationless *Bientôt Noël* takes a more open-ended approach to its themes. The critique of commercialism is de-emphasized in favour of simple notions of family, community and solidarity.

Neither *La lutte* nor *Bientôt Noël* have any narration—but this does not make them “wordless” films: they are films in which all the words are generated from within, by onscreen speakers. They open the possibility of a “prise de parole”—a seizing of the opportunity to speak out. A new cinematic order came into being that was consistent with the emerging Quebec collective identity: it celebrated the popular speech of the films’ participants and rejected the all-powerful narrator, who speaks from some undefined located outside the geographical story space. By contrast, the addition of narration in the English version of *La lutte* and other films is an attempt to rein in that new order, to make the changing world more familiar, to appropriate it for the benefit of English viewers.

### **3.4 *The Moontrap: Voice-over as performance***

*Pour la suite du monde*, co-directed by Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault and released in 1963, is the first in a trilogy of feature-length documentaries revolving around Île-aux-Coudres, a small fishing island in the St. Lawrence River. It records what happens when the inhabitants revive the centuries-old practice of trapping beluga whales (referred to as porpoises) by planting a row of sapling poles in the water at low tide. It also documents community rituals like the Mid-

Lent Carnival, the auction for departed souls and the collecting of Easter water as well as children's games and the traditional song and dance practised by the islanders. *Pour la suite du monde* has become one of the most celebrated films in Canadian history and, from the time of its release to the present day, has garnered considerable critical and scholarly attention. It premiered at Cannes in May 1963—the first Canadian film to be selected for official competition—where it was shown with French subtitles for the benefit of audiences unfamiliar with the *parlure* of the islanders. It received a warm response, with critic Georges Sadoul describing it in *Les Lettres françaises* as “Un film important et neuf, l’un des meilleurs présentés à Cannes.”<sup>32</sup> On August 4 of the same year, it was simultaneously broadcast on Radio-Canada and shown at the Montreal International Film Festival; subsequently, it screened commercially in theatres throughout Quebec—part of an attempt by the NFB administration to develop the theatrical market for feature-length films. Over the years, it picked up numerous awards and honours, winning prizes at festivals in Spain, France, the United States and Australia and receiving Film of the Year and a Special Award “in recognition of its visual qualities, perceptions, and artistry” at the 1964 Canadian Film Awards.<sup>33</sup> In 1984, it was selected to the Toronto Film Festival's list of the all-time top ten Canadian films, and in 2005, Médiaplan, the press agency responsible for film ratings in Quebec, gave it a “Chef-d’oeuvre (1)” designation—making it the first Quebec film to earn such a rating.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Georges Sadoul, “Canada: *Pour la suite du monde*,” *Les Lettres françaises*, 23-29 May 1963. Reprinted in *La Trilogie de l'Île-aux-Coudres : Textes et témoignages / The Île-aux-Coudres Trilogy: Articles and Commentaries*. Montréal: National Film Board of Canada, 2007, 36.

<sup>33</sup> *La Trilogie de l'Île-aux-Coudres : Textes et témoignages / The Île-aux-Coudres Trilogy: Articles and Commentaries*. Montréal: National Film Board of Canada, 2007, 98.

<sup>34</sup> In 2012, two more Quebec films received the prestigious rating: *Mon oncle Antoine* (Claude Jutra, 1971) and *Les ordres* (Michel Brault, 1974). Médiaplan.ca, “Dix nouveaux chefs-d’oeuvre,” news release, May 2, 2012.

Not only has *Pour la suite du monde* received many awards, it has also been the subject of a great many critical studies, mainly in French—as indeed have all the films of Perrault and to a lesser extent Brault. Work on Perrault includes several book-length essays on his activities as a filmmaker and poet, such as those by Paul Warren, Jean-Daniel Lafond and Michel Brûlé; numerous master’s and doctoral theses, written from the 1970s right up to the present; countless journal articles and international press stories; interviews in print and on film; and conferences such as the one organized in 2009 by the Association internationale des études québécoises (AIEQ) marking the tenth anniversary of Perrault’s death. It should be mentioned that Perrault was an accomplished poet and playwright who published numerous volumes of poetry, stories, essays, and annotated film transcripts and whose writings were honoured with three Governor General’s Awards. Work on Brault ranges from Gilles Marsolais’s 1972 profile in *Cinéastes du Québec* published by the Conseil québécois pour la diffusion du cinéma to the full-length study by André Loiselle in 2005. Both Perrault and Brault are among the select group of filmmakers whose work was re-released by the NFB in the Collection mémoire—multi-DVD box sets with full English subtitles, bonus materials and informative booklets. English-language critical attention is less extensive, but includes a major publication by David Clandfield (2004) containing analyses of all Perrault’s films as well as translations of excerpts from interviews with Perrault and some of his writing on cinema. Jerry White has written about Perrault on several occasions, including in 2009 in *The Radio Eye*, which looks at Perrault’s lesser-known radio documentaries. In 2007, André Loiselle wrote an English version of his book on Michel Brault whose launch coincided with a retrospective of Brault’s work curated by Loiselle and shown at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Given that people have been writing about *Pour la suite du monde* for decades, one has to wonder what more can be said about it. Yet for all the critical attention the original has received, almost nothing has been said about its English version—or versions, as we shall see. The French-language criticism refers to the original film, as might be expected, so does the English-language criticism, with only passing reference to the versions. This section, therefore, focuses squarely on *The Moontrap*, the first English version, placing particular emphasis on the voice-over narration that characterizes it and considering how that narration fits with existing traditions at the NFB. I shall draw on research into early cinema by Germain Lacasse, which argues that film language borrowed from oral traditions prior to adopting a literary model and that certain “oral practices in cinema” persisted throughout the twentieth century in parallel to the development of institutional cinema. These practices encompass not only film screenings featuring live verbal commentary but also the modes of exhibition that allowed discourse to be adapted to local conditions through an emphasis on context (Lacasse 2012, 490). I suggest that we may consider the translating voice-over of *The Moontrap* as reminiscent of the performance of the *bonimenteur* or film lecturer, and I discuss the implications of such a concept for the distribution and reception of the English version.

After the commercial release of *Pour la suite du monde* in the fall of 1963, there was sufficient interest to warrant the production of an English version. The task was entrusted to NFB director and writer Bill Davies—who had been responsible for the English version of *La lutte*—and editor David Mayerovitch. They decided to use voice-over rather than subtitles to translate the extensive French onscreen speech. The version was given the name *The Moontrap*, in reference to the islanders’ belief in the power of the moon, and abridged—by re-editing and deleting scenes—to 84 minutes from the original 105-minute length. It was primarily aimed at

television broadcast, premiering on CBC in 1964 with a re-broadcast on April 6, 1969. Although it had a few commercial screenings at the New York Gallery of Art and an unsuccessful theatrical run in San Francisco, *The Moontrap* was not released theatrically in Canada. It had the occasional screening, for example at Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in February 1971. The abridged voice-over English version remained in circulation until 1999, when the NFB re-released Perrault's early films in a VHS box set and included the full 105-minute film, with English subtitles by Kathleen Fleming, under the title *Of Whales, the Moon and Men*. Co-director Michel Brault was unhappy with the title, and when the VHS box set was updated to DVD, it was renamed *Pour la suite du monde—English version*.<sup>35</sup> All the films on the 2007 DVD box set of the Île-aux-Coudres trilogy have optional English subtitles, and the accompanying booklet is bilingual.

Once the subtitled version became available, the abridged voice-over version was withdrawn from circulation. A note on the film listing at the Cinémathèque québécoise suggests that this was done at Brault's request: "La version anglaise *The Moontrap* a été retirée du catalogue de l'ONF à la demande de Michel Brault. Elle avait été faite sans le consentement des réalisateurs et constituait une réduction inacceptable. (Michel Brault, 2006-04-19)"<sup>36</sup> *The Moontrap* was no more appreciated by film scholars: Peter Harcourt, writing in 2003, refers to "the execrably mutilated *Moontrap*,"<sup>37</sup> and David Clandfield, in *Canadian Film* (1987, 48),

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<sup>35</sup> E-mail correspondence, Albert O'Hayon, March 24, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> *Pour la suite du monde* (Canada : Québec, 1963). Boîte numérisée 25, Cinémathèque québécoise. [http://collections.cinematheque.qc.ca/filmo\\_repertoire.asp?id=2857](http://collections.cinematheque.qc.ca/filmo_repertoire.asp?id=2857).

<sup>37</sup> Peter Harcourt, "Images and Information: The Dialogic Structure of *Bûcherons de la Manouane* by Arthur Lamothe," in *Candid Eyes: Essays on Canadian Documentaries*. Note 22 (p. 70) reads in part: "An entire essay could be written about the imperial implications of the 'Englishing' of Québécois films at the NFB, from the execrably mutilated *Moontrap* (1964, 84 minutes)—the abbreviated version of Pierre Perrault's *Pour la suite du*

writes, “Of fourteen features, only five are available in English versions—four using the regrettable method of superimposing English commentaries over dimly heard French—and two lost more than thirty minutes in the transfer.” The CBC itself was not happy with the voice-over version, but considered it preferable to subtitles in the end:

After long consideration, it was agreed that the voice-over method was best for TV where sub-titles are either hard to read, or (in an effort to avoid that) are made so large that they obliterate much of the picture area. In this film there are unusually long passages of chatter...which would necessitate long heavily-titled stretches. I know that the CBC people, including Bob Allen, consider that our version misses the charm and authenticity of the original...but we consider that our version is a quite sensitive compromise and that a lot of what some people thinks is missing has, in fact, been preserved... (Memo written by Grant McLean, director of English production, September 9, 1965).<sup>38</sup>

Let us take a closer look at why this abridged voice-over version aroused such negative reactions.

Read as usual by veteran Stanley Jackson, the English voice track moves back and forth between describing the action in the present tense, as a narration would, and quoting the characters in a summarized translation, in a manner similar to the voice-over of audiovisual translation. It differs from contemporary audiovisual voice-over, however, in that instead of having different actors perform the voices of various participants, the narrator handles all the voices. In addition, Jackson acknowledges that he is speaking on their behalf by identifying the person who is speaking and changing his voice slightly when he is quoting them. This is a form of reported speech: just as fictional narrators can speak in the first person or the third person (i.e. as characters within the fiction or not), documentary narrators can either use “I” when translating the original speaker or they can report what the speaker says in the third person. Among the consequences of reported voice-over, according to Franco, Matamala and Orero (2010, 42), are

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*monde* (1963, 105 minutes)—to the much more successfully voiced *Un Pays sans bon sens* (1970). To save a bit of money and in the hope of television sales, the Board has been reluctant to use subtitles (...).”

<sup>38</sup> NFB Production file, *The Moontrap*.

that “the translator as mediator becomes more visible and avoids taking too much responsibility for what the original speakers says.” A similar technique was used in *Winter Crossing at L’Île aux Coudres*, the English version of *La traverse d’hiver* (1960) in the *Au pays de Neufve-France* series that Perrault worked on in the late 1950s, which already featured an interview with Alexis Tremblay: the English narrator alternates between straightforward commentary and translation of Tremblay’s words as he explains the significance of the almost outdated practice of crossing the icy St. Lawrence in rowboats.<sup>39</sup> In *The Moontrap*, we sometimes hear the characters conversing amongst themselves in French, with no English translation; at other times, the volume of the French speech is lowered and the English voice-over provides a translation. Jackson is performing two roles: that of an omniscient narrator who stands outside the space of the story and explains what is happening; and that of an interpreter who translates the speech to help the viewer follow the conversation. Here is an excerpt of the post-production script that shows the various elements; the italics show the original French heard at full volume in between Jackson’s text:

The home of Alexis Tremblay. He’s a farmer, something of a politician, and though he’s retired now, he’s still the head of the family, and has a lot to say about what goes on. Leopold, his eldest son, wants his advice about a plan to revive the island’s porpoise hunt. For Leopold, this is something that must be done, even if only to hand on to their children a tradition from the island’s past.

*“..Il y a l’avantage de travailler pour garder les traces. Elle viendra à disparaître. Là, je suis pratiquement convaincu..”* “It could be done,” he says, “even by you lads who’ve never seen a porpoise hunt. You’ll have to get the help of old timers like..” *“..Abel Harvey, Pierre Bouchard, Georges Harvey, Thomas Tremblay, ainsi que de suite, vont aller trouver..”* “..they’ll be able to find the old trapping ground easily enough.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Although Perrault did not direct the films in the television series *Au pays du Neufve-France*, he produced the radio documentaries on which they were based and wrote the narration. The English narration was written by Judith Crawley; English versions of all 13 episodes in the series were produced by Crawley Films under the title *St. Lawrence North*.

<sup>40</sup> *The Moontrap*, Post-Production Script, April 1964, p. 3. NFB Production file.

By contrast, the original French film has no narration, only the voices of the characters themselves, either on camera or as asynchronous sound excerpts. In the above scene, Alexis Tremblay's full speech is as follows (10:57):

Il y a l'avantage de... de travailler pour garder les traces!!! Elle viendra à disparaître!!!

Là je suis pratiquement convaincu... qu'avec des... des bons hommes... Même elle peut se trouver par des gens qui y ont jamais été... qui savent éioùsqu'elle a existé par exemple...

Mais mieux encore, par exemple, prenons comme des hommes comme Abel Harvey... Pierre Bouchard... heu... Georges Harvey... Thomas Tremblay... ainsi que de suite... vont aller trouver la trace de la pêche très facilement.<sup>41</sup>

As he says the first sentence, he is identified in the original French film by an onscreen title—ALEXIS TREMBLAY (cultivateur)—reminiscent of the title identifying Edouard Carpentier in *La lutte*.

The addition of a narrator is not simply a way to overcome the language barrier; it is an extraneous element that alters the original film in a fundamental manner. Telling the story without narration was a key decision in the making of *Pour la suite du monde*. While working as a radio documentarian in the 1950s, Perrault had travelled around Quebec recording oral history and had spent time listening to the stories of the elderly Alexis Tremblay, who described the abandoned practice of trapping beluga whales. He was familiar with Île-aux-Coudres through his wife, Yolande Simard, whose father had a general store on the island. Perrault's original proposal, submitted to Radio-Canada then passed on to the NFB, was for a fictional story in which a character named Yolaine returns to Île-aux-Coudres after being away for ten years.<sup>42</sup>

Michel Brault came on board the project as director on his return from France, where he had

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<sup>41</sup> Punctuation and spelling following Perrault's transcription in *Pour la suite du monde : récit* (1992), 52.

<sup>42</sup> There are several accounts of the film's origins, some conflicting or incomplete. This brief summary, sufficient for our purposes, is based on Carrière (1999, 116-118) and Scheppler (2009, 226-233).

worked with ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch. The two were joined by sound recordist Marcel Carrière, who had previously worked on several *cinéma-direct* shoots and was known for his inventiveness and discretion. It was Brault who convinced Perrault that it was possible to make a feature film with neither formal interview nor narration (Marsolais 1997, 105). Although the proposal approved by the NFB and co-producer Radio-Canada in 1961 included narration, the final film is told through the distinctive speech of the Île-aux-Coudres community:

Toutes les voix et tous les niveaux de langage qui composent le film appartiennent à l'Île aux Coudres. Au niveau de la parole, aucun élément hétérogène – apporté par l'ONF – ne complète les images et les sons enregistrés sur l'île. La langue – le français tel qu'il est parlé à l'Île aux Coudres – est l'une des caractéristiques de ce film : les accents, les expressions, les tournures de phrase s'agencent différemment avec les gestes de chaque individu. (Bouchard 2012, 214)

Part of the filmmakers' skill, then, was in eliciting speech through what was at the time a novel method: allowing events to unfold before the camera and being present at the right moment to record them. But they did not simply wait for the moment to occur: they constructed the situations that would allow them to obtain the material—starting with the initial situation, the revival of the beluga trap itself. Although it was carried out at the filmmakers' instigation, it was not imposed on the islanders; they took it up as their own project. Because the islanders' actions were performed on their own initiative, the words followed naturally: “Tout en vivant la pêche, ils la racontent, mais sans se douter qu'ils se racontent eux-mêmes” (Marsolais 1997, 106). Perrault built on the experience he had acquired in radio to draw out the participants' speech. As he put it in a 1963 interview, “Je commençais à me rendre compte justement qu'en interrogeant une personne, j'obtenais une réponse. Mais en interrogeant ou en parlant plutôt à deux personnes, je n'obtenais pas deux réponses mais un dialogue. C'est ce dont nous avons besoin pour faire ce film” (Perrault 1963, 31).

Although synchronous sound recording had only been possible for a few years, the filmmakers already go beyond the standard method of constructing a soundtrack to incorporate sound in innovative ways. At numerous points in *Pour la suite du monde*, segments of speech are edited into the soundtrack asynchronously and heard when the speaker is not on screen. The annotated film transcript, which Perrault published in 1992, distinguishes between three kinds of speech: synchronous speech (LÉOPOLD TREMBLAY: C’que tu penses... toi... de ça. Si on en parlerait à papa...” [1992, 45]); voice-off, when the speaker is heard but not seen (VOIX DE JOACHIM HARVEY: L’Île aux Coudres est découverte depuis 1534... Y a jamais eu, pour dire, des accidents assez graves, là.” [40]); and “little poems,” also spoken off camera, which Perrault sets off typographically by italicizing the text and centring the lines on the page without capitalizing:

C’est l’hiver. La neige efface les clos, anéantit les champs, s’empare des chemins. Il ne reste que la neige. (...) Grand-Louis récite son petit poème *du monde à rien faire*:  
*ils sont soldés icitte sus l’île...*  
*ils attendent le printemps pour r’partir... (30)*

Most of the poems are spoken by Alexis Tremblay, the respected patriarch, and Grand Louis Harvey, the village storyteller; a few at the beginning are by Joachim Harvey, captain of the *Nord de l’Île*. Perrault had previously produced radio documentaries using a “sound collage” technique similar to what he employs here, with excerpts from interviews edited together to form a thread that replaces narration. He explored the use of quotation and found poetry in his literary works of the early 1960s, which incorporated excerpts from his radio scripts and the commentaries he wrote for the *Neufve-France* films, and in his later poetry, in which he included fragments of speech from various recordings he had made, passages quoted from Québécois poets, and phrases taken from Jacques Cartier’s accounts of his voyages (Clandfield 2004, 146-147). Music, too, is

presented through a complex combination of onscreen accordion performances that continue asynchronously over other images; guitar and flute melodies written especially for the film, reserved mainly for the “interludes” showing the children at play; and songs sung by a child and by Grand Louis.

The construction of the speech track through a combination of on-camera speech and sound collage can be seen not only as way to privilege spontaneous speech, but fundamentally as an expression of Perrault’s position with respect to authority. His work is characterized by a refusal to allow authority figures to speak on behalf of the “ordinary people” whom he films: “Progressivement (...) j’ai réalisé les puissances du ‘discours’ d’Alexis, l’importance de la parole humaine la plus humble, la plus susceptible de n’être pas entendue. Les grands de la terre sont en définitive moins mémorables qu’Alexis et Marie et le plus petit d’entre nous” (Perrault 1971, 19). Dissatisfied with the traditional narration he had written for the episodes of *Au pays de Neufve-France*, he handed the role of narrator over to the characters themselves, particularly Alexis Tremblay, who becomes a “homodiegetic narrator” expressing a subjective point of view (Bouchard 2012, 218).

In the English version, however, this form of personal narration is completely eliminated in favour of reported speech—a decision that has considerable impact on viewers’ understanding of the characters and that fails to respect the care taken in character development by the filmmakers through sound and picture editing. The differences in characterization become clear if we look at several sections of English narration that replace segments of asynchronous speech by Alexis Tremblay. In the film’s opening sequence, Alexis begins to speak over images of men bringing in the buoys for the winter: “Mes p’tits amis: après avoir li [*sic*] les grandes aventures de Jacques Cartier dans son voyage de 1535, j’ai trouvé un bout que je crois qu’il va vous

intéresser.” He goes on to read the passage in Jacques Cartier’s logbook that refers to the naming of Île-aux-Coudres. At this point, we have only seen a brief close-up of Alexis lighting a pipe: he is essentially an acousmatic presence, heard but not yet visualized (Chion 1999, 21), although his raspy tone and pause-filled phrasing immediately set his voice apart from that of a traditional narrator. Soon enough, we see him descend the stairs of his home, take a seat in his familiar rocking chair, and start conversing with his son Léopold; we then put a face to a voice. By this point, we have learned that not only is Alexis Tremblay the patriarch of the family and a respected member of the community, he is a link to the past and has plumbed the history of Île-aux-Coudres. But in the English version, all mention of Alexis—visual and aural—in this opening scene has been effaced: the shot of him lighting his pipe has been edited out and the passage from Cartier’s logbook, in English translation, is read by the narrator (“Writing in his log, Cartier said...”). It is not Alexis but the narrator who connects the island to the celebrated explorer.

A similar effacement occurs when the subject of Cartier comes up in a later scene. Forty-five minutes into the original film, Alexis explains how the beluga trap was built in the old days, sometimes speaking on camera, in a tight close-up, and sometimes off camera over present-day images of the men wading in thigh-high water and thrusting thin sapling poles into the seabed. In the English version, his role as repository of knowledge is simply eliminated in favour of the narration, which describes the process in a neutral manner as if it were information taken from a book rather than drawn from Alexis’s store of personal experience. Furthermore, the intercut shots of him speaking on camera have been edited out. Later, while the blacksmith forges harpoons for the hunt, Alexis and Léopold have an animated debate over whether the method was invented by “the savages” or the early French settlers. Alexis tries to settle the matter by referring

to the descriptions of beluga whales in Jacques Cartier's log book. In the English version, all reference to Cartier has been edited out of this abridged scene. Finally, when a beluga is spotted, we hear Alexis re-read the passage from Cartier, but again a translation of Cartier's words is read by the English narrator without any reference to Alexis. Viewers of the English film could well believe that the filmmakers' research had unearthed the early mention of belugas and the reference to Île-aux-Coudres, or even that the knowledge comes from the narrator, Stanley Jackson, when in fact it is Alexis's deep familiarity with Cartier's writings that allows him to pull out his well-worn copy at appropriate moments.

Not only the choice of voice-over instead of subtitles but the manner in which this voice-over was written had an impact on the meaning of the film, as we have seen through this comparative analysis. Even at the time of broadcast, the voice-over of *The Moontrap* was not deemed successful by the CBC producers, and we have seen in detail the differences that no contributed to this impression. One might suspect that the decision to write the voice-over in this way was made solely by the producers of the English version, Bill Davies and David Mayerovitch: certainly the familiar voice of Stanley Jackson was a signal to English viewers that they would be guided through this unusual film from start to finish. Firmly positioned on the side of the target culture, he takes on the role of mediator, accompanying the film as it were, packaging it for television viewers. However, the situation is actually more complex, as the English narration may have been written by Pierre Perrault himself.<sup>43</sup> It is probable that he acted simply as a consultant and Stanley Jackson or Bill Davies did the actual writing; nonetheless, it

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<sup>43</sup> The NFB Production file for *The Moontrap* contains a contract with Perrault for the writing of the narration. However, although I searched the extensive Fonds Pierre Perrault at the Division des archives, Université Laval, seeking confirmation of this information, I was not able to find any further indication that he actually wrote it. See also Albert O'Hayon, "Pour la suite du monde: The Perrault Classic in English." NFB.ca Blog, April 7, 2011.

means we cannot draw a clear line between those involved in the production and those involved in the version, or claim that the English version was made entirely without input from the filmmakers. Writing in *The New York Times* on November 11, 1964, film critic Eugene Archer seems to have picked up on Perrault's contribution to the narration when he makes the following comment: "The English version complements the images with a subtle narration, translating the exuberant dialect of the inhabitants into a quietly ironic comment by the creators."<sup>44</sup>

### **Conclusion: A voice-over version in need of retranslation**

One way to understand the voice-over version not only of *Pour la suite du monde* but of all the *cinéma-direct* films we have examined in this chapter is to make a connection with the figure of the film lecturer or *bonimenteur*. Research in the 1990s and beyond by Germain Lacasse, André Gaudreault and others uncovered the existence of a phenomenon previously overlooked by early-film historians: the presence during silent film projections of a screen-side performer who provided simultaneous verbal commentary. The film lecturer has since been rediscovered in numerous national cinemas, and is known to have been particularly popular in Quebec. Translation was one of several roles played by this person (apparently always male) who, during the silent film era, first enticed spectators into the theatre in the manner of a fair barker, then commented on and described the film while standing just beside the screen at the front of the theatre. If the intertitles were written in a language other than that of the local audience, the film lecturer translated them orally as one of the many aspects of his performance, adding

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<sup>44</sup> Eugene Archer, "Porpoise hunt makes a documentary." *The New York Times*. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. November 11, 1964.

explanations and commentary as he saw fit (Lacasse 2000, 128). It is significant that the lecturer was not sent out by the film producers to accompany a film from city to city, but rather was a member of the local community, even sometimes the mainstay of a single theatre. Given his knowledge of the composition of the audience, he could adapt the translation according to the situation; it is in this sense that Lacasse speaks of a “performance”: “on la définit par sa singularité : il s’agit d’une représentation unique, un événement qui ne sera jamais répété” (130). The words spoken by the lecturer are never quite the same from one film screening to another, and the film itself, beams of light projected in a dark theatre before spectators who each experience it differently, is also a unique performance. While live commentary of moving images died out in most parts of the world in the 1920s with the generalization of “talking” cinema, lecturers survived in situations where they did double duty as translators, such as in the immigrant communities of New York (Nornes 2007, 120). In Quebec, the *bonimenteur* continued to ply his trade for several years after the arrival of the talkies, and “les pratiques bonimentées accompagnant le cinéma” exercised an influence in certain kinds of film screenings such as educational cinema with its emphasis on post-screening discussions, as well as in the emergence of other forms of cultural productions like comic books and in some aspects of films themselves, including voice-over. This is the premise of the special issue of *Cinémas* on “l’héritage des bonimenteurs” edited by Lacasse, Bouchard and Scheppeler (2009):

Nous pensons que ces nouvelles tactiques<sup>45</sup> liées à l’oralité répondaient à des nécessités plus ou moins similaires à celles auxquelles obéissait le bonimenteur : elles visaient à adapter le discours du film ou, de façon plus générale, le média cinématographique, à une

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<sup>45</sup> The authors use this term in the sense given it by Michel de Certeau in *L’invention du quotidien* to refer to local or even individual forms of adaptation to the situation at hand, in contrast to strategies, which emanate from organizational power structures.

culture et à un contexte spécifiques, par l'intermédiaire de la langue locale et de la culture vernaculaire. (10)

While the authors specifically mention dubbing as one possible legacy of the *bonimenteur* (14), I believe that the kind of voice-over found in *The Moontrap* and *Wrestling*, among other versions, has a more direct connection to the earlier practice. Traces of the translation function of the lecturer subsist in this kind of voice-over, as a form of audiovisual translation, more clearly than in dubbing: whereas in dubbing only the dialogue is translated, here we find the combination of translation, explanation and commentary characteristic of early film lecturing. Furthermore, rather than the indeterminate number of actors who participate in the dubbing of a film, here a single actor or narrator provides commentary from start to finish. The voice—with all its tonality, accent, expressiveness, and other qualities, but in contrast to that of the lecturer, without a body, disconnected from gesture—speaks the language of the spectator. In the same way that the film lecturer's words constitute a performance because they are adapted to the specific situation and audience of the film screening, the voice-over versions were produced for a specific context—in this case broadcast on a particular CBC program during a particular season. Lacasse recognizes that the function of the film lecturer or *bonimenteur* involved coming up with an interpretation of the film that was suitable for the audience at hand, but he ascribes a somewhat narrow meaning to the term of translation and prefers instead to consider this function to be that of a mediator:

Il s'agissait non pas d'un traducteur, mais d'un médiateur, avec toutes les connotations que suppose cette différence de terme. Le mot traducteur conviendrait à la condition de reconnaître que traduire est impossible et que le traducteur réécrit le texte ou le recompose dans sa propre langue. Son interprétation émerge, c'est elle qui actualise l'énonciation et achève la signification. (Lacasse 2000, 131)

Elaborating on the distinction between these terms, Alain Boillat points out that translation—particularly literary translation, but to an extent all translation—is already a process of

interpretation and recreation, and like the translator, the lecturer can mask certain bits of information and at the same time provide new information, either by integrating it naturally into the translation or by breaking into the text with explanatory comments (2007, 126). Stanley Jackson's voice-over, one could say, drew too heavily on this explanatory function of the lecturer, to the detriment of the film's diegetic world.

From this perspective, it is not surprising that *The Moontrap* has been withdrawn from circulation and new English versions of *Pour la suite du monde* produced; in fact, the only surprise is that *The Moontrap* remained in distribution until as late as 1999. It was aimed at a particular situation, television broadcast, and was arguably appropriate to that situation given that subtitles were deemed unacceptable to television viewers, especially back in 1965. By 1999, the mediation involved in adding a voice track was no longer acceptable, and subtitles were preferred. The voice-over version was put aside—unlike some retranslations in literature that draw on the existing translation to a greater or lesser extent—and the film was restored to its original length. Nonetheless, even in the 1999 subtitled version, voice-over has not entirely disappeared: for the two passages from Cartier's log book, the volume of Alexis's voice as he reads aloud is lowered and we hear the English translation read by Vlasta Vrana in voice-over. In the original film, the passages are subtitled to show the old French in which the book was written, thereby covering the bottom part of the screen where the English subtitles would normally go—which may explain why voice-over was chosen. But even this was a temporary solution: when the DVD was produced in 2007, more changes were made to the English version—a subtitle here and there was corrected—and the voice-over accompanying the Cartier passages was removed, replaced by a line of subtitles immediately under the French ones: there was room for English

subtitles after all. Perhaps this DVD version will be the final one, or perhaps, like a performance, the original film will eventually be reinterpreted in some other manner.

## **Chapter Four: New challenges of identity, new approaches to version making, 1967-1974**

The central narrative of the previous two chapters was the drive for autonomy of French production within an anglophone-dominated National Film Board. The story, which took us to the mid-1960s, had its ups and downs: from the hiring of the first francophone in 1942; to the achievement of a respectable level of original French production during the war; to a postwar slump during which French production almost became non-existent; to a gradual increase spurred by factors like the arrival of television, pressure from the media, and a changing political situation; to the culmination of the struggle with the establishment of a separate branch for French Production in 1964. Of course, Quebec cinema continued to evolve beyond that moment; but nonetheless, it can be pinpointed as a turning point when, corresponding to the change that was occurring in Quebec society at the same time, French-language production at the NFB moved from being French-Canadian to Québécois. And while the story of this drive for autonomy has been told previously, notably in Véronneau (1987), my retelling foregrounded an aspect whose significance had previously been overlooked: the role of versions. Constituting the majority of French-language film output during the NFB's first quarter century, versions played a role in the emergence of modern Quebec cinema by preparing both crews and audiences for the original productions that would gradually take centre stage. Not only was the level of version production high, but the approach taken, which I have characterized as interventionist, showed an awareness of the specificity of Quebec audiences and created a space for the development of themes that would later come to the forefront.

The situation changed as the number of original French-language productions increased and took on greater importance with respect to French versions. The increase was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of films versioned from French into English. Here was a new phenomenon, one that was the central focus of the previous chapter. My examination of French-to-English versions produced during the late 1950s and 1960s allowed me to uncover an approach to version-making that was different from the interventionist approach used when translating in the opposite direction. We saw first of all an attempt to mould the French-language films, which were increasingly questioning documentary conventions and exploring new aesthetics, into the more traditional aesthetics of English production. This resulted, starting in the early 1960s, in a new concept of version production that is dependent on a mediating narrator's voice and can be characterized, following David Clandfield's use of the term (1984, 112), as picturesque—the outsider's view, in which the version did not hide the provenance of the original but allowed it to be identified as emanating from Quebec culture. Audiences remained aware they were watching versions, which served as a window onto an emergent culture that was, at the time, arousing curiosity and a hint of anxiety in English Canada.

As we move into the mid-60s, the start of the period that is the focus of this chapter, we see a different dynamic emerging. The French-English tug-of-war did not disappear, of course—tensions between the two linguistic communities in Canada have remained a central feature of the Canadian public sphere for decades—but the forces at play shifted and identity politics moved from the periphery towards the centre of public life. As television took on a larger role in the lives of individuals across the country, it came to be seen as a tool for nation building, a role once played primarily by the NFB. With the CBC and Radio-Canada taking care of general information and entertainment, the NFB could focus instead on narrow subjects that appealed to

targeted audiences. At the same time, government policies changed to reflect the emergence of public interest groups and a new emphasis on the role of the state in diminishing poverty. Capitalizing on both these changes, the NFB submitted a proposal to the government to make a series of films on poverty whose audience was not only the “general public,” but also “people working in the poverty field” and “the poor” (Longfellow 2010, 158). From this proposal would emerge the innovative, ambitious film program called Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle (CFC/SN), which aimed to bring about social change through documentary by engaging citizens in a participatory filmmaking process and empowering marginalized groups. In addition to shaking up received ideas about how documentaries should be produced, the program took a new approach to distribution, using techniques like audience research, discussion groups, and the involvement of distribution agents in the production stage. Paradoxically, the increased attention paid to distribution and reception along with heightened awareness of just who would be watching the CFC/SN films resulted in far fewer of them being versioned, whether from French to English or vice-versa. The lack of versions is most evident in the English corpus: of the 128 films and videos originally produced in English, only 7 were translated into French. Of the 57 films and videos originally produced in French, 17 were versioned into English, but that figure includes 10 films in a single series, *Urba 2000*.<sup>46</sup> This is a much lower percentage of versioned films than found in previous and subsequent periods and indeed, amongst the other NFB films produced during the time CFC/SN was in existence.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> These figures are taken from the annotated filmography established by Waugh, Baker and Winton in *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada*.

<sup>47</sup> Although my focus is on CFC/SN films, the NFB continued during this period to produce many other documentaries that did not subscribe to the same goals and principles. It also produced hundreds of hours of television programs, dramas, and animated films.

#### 4.1 A movement away from version production

This chapter, then, is as much about non-translation as it is about translation under any of the approaches described in previous chapters. In the years following the 1956 move of the NFB's head office from Ottawa to Montréal, Grierson's idea that film should reflect a homogenous, pan-Canadian reality was thrown into doubt, while the notion that film could portray a specific local context gained ground. Once the francophone creative staff moved from Ottawa back to Montréal where they felt connected to the people around them and the city's artistic life, they began, arguably, to make "regional" films characterized by a strong connection to place: "They did not interpret Canada to Quebec, but Quebec to Quebecers, and to anyone else who cared to watch" (Dick 1986, 109). On the English side, by contrast, as filmmakers gained skill and professionalism, their concerns became somewhat abstract and removed from their everyday lives and the places they lived; in the opinion of veteran filmmaker Colin Low, they were neglecting the principle that documentary should speak to ordinary people to give them a new perspective on their problems. Low was a Westerner with a strong regional identity; his 1954 film *Corral* shows a cowboy breaking in a wild horse at the Cochrane Ranch in Alberta, where his father was a foreman. He felt that local situations were no longer being well described; at the same time, he had seen how television could foster a "flexible, loose, casual, intimate" style and was aware of the possibilities of the new portable shooting equipment (Dick 1986, 110-111). Putting these considerations together, he developed the ideas behind two major programs at the NFB: regionalization and Challenge for Change.

Regionalization meant that rather than centralizing all production at the NFB's head office in Montréal, small production centres would be opened across Canada to allow local

filmmakers access to the NFB's expertise while exploring local subject matter. The program got underway in 1965 when producer Peter Jones was appointed to a newly created position, Regional Production Representative for Vancouver, followed by the opening of offices in Halifax, Toronto and Winnipeg—offices that only lasted a couple of years before they were closed due to “austerity programs.” Jones kept the concept alive and several years later, became head of the Pacific Coast Studio. Although his budget was small, he managed to provide support for a few projects like Robert Fresco and Kris Paterson's *Mudflats Living* (1972), about a squatter community's battle with municipal authorities in North Vancouver. Other production centres followed in the mid-1970s: the Atlantic Regional Studio, the Prairie Regional Studio in Winnipeg, and the Ontario Regional Studio. Eventually the French Production Branch took part in the program and opened studios in Moncton, Toronto and Winnipeg for French-speaking minorities outside Quebec. Colin Low sums up his belief in the regional programs rather than centralized production: “I think the roots of the documentary movement must be rediscovered in the regions—on a smaller scale so that the quieter voices of the country can be given a channel of expression” (Dick 1986, 124).

The initial goal of the Challenge for Change program, developed by the NFB in 1967 in collaboration with several government departments and agencies, was to use documentary not as an end in itself but as a catalyst for social action, particularly in the area of poverty. In 1965, a year after U.S. President Johnson launched the “war on poverty,” the Canadian government announced similar efforts and soon set up the Canada Assistance Plan, which funded welfare services and various social assistance programs through the provincial governments. Under the proposal drafted by NFB producer John Kemeny, film would help prepare the general public, social workers, and the poor themselves for increased government intervention in social problems

(Druick 2010, 342). Challenge for Change grew out of the observational aesthetic of *cinéma direct*, to which was added an ethical dimension (Marchessault 1995, 135). Its forerunner was a 1966 film directed by Tanya Ballantyne Tree called *The Things I Cannot Change*, which documents the harsh lives of an anglophone family in an impoverished neighbourhood of southwest Montréal, as the out-of-work father and long-suffering mother await the birth of their tenth child. It is not a neighbourhood film like those we will examine later in this chapter, as the connection to place is tenuous; the setting, deliberately ambiguous, is sometimes misidentified as Point St. Charles (for example, in MacKenzie 2004, 149), whereas the film was actually shot in Little Burgundy. This particular family is clearly meant to stand in for the poor everywhere: even today, the Web site description for the film reads “Although filmed in Montreal, it’s the anatomy of poverty as it occurs throughout North America.” Under the typology set out in Kemeny’s proposal, it was a Category I film, meaning that it was aimed at the general public and was primarily intended for television broadcast (Longfellow 2010, 158). Heavily promoted as “a sensational exposé of the dark and hitherto obscured realities of poverty in Canada,” it was broadcast nationally on the CBC in May 1967 in a prestigious arts series (154)—on the English network only, for no French version was produced. Although the initial press reviews were positive, some observers felt the film displayed questionable ethics and exploited the family’s vulnerabilities (Evans 1991, 159-160; Longfellow 2010, 151). The controversy following the broadcast led to the abandonment of the “general public” model for Challenge for Change films. Documentary filmmakers became more aware of the potential impact of their films on participants and, as Longfellow observes, “all subsequent films on poverty took a very different turn in terms of the language of documentary, target audiences, the process of production, and the inscribed relationship with documentary subjects” (2010, 165).

A similar questioning of filmmakers' accountability to their subjects was the spark for the Fogo Island Community Experiment, a series of films shot on a remote island off the coast of Newfoundland in partnership with the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Extension Service. Dorothy Hénaut, editor of the Challenge for Change newsletter, described the project as follows: "in 1966, within the Film Board, a small group of filmmakers was concerned with the *power* of the professional filmmaker (...). This group of filmmakers, led by Colin Low, decided to change the *ethics* of the filmmaker, by making him responsible to the people he is filming, and by engaging the people on the screen as partners in the filmmaking process" (quoted in Weisner, 2010, 77-78). On Fogo Island, Low found a community in decline: once, the fisheries had been prosperous, but they could not compete with the offshore factory ships. The islanders had continued to follow traditional methods, and by now 60% of them were on welfare. It was rumoured that the Newfoundland government wanted to relocate them to the mainland (Newhook 2009, 172). In response, islanders formed an improvement committee to halt the decline and modernize the fisheries; they would eventually establish the Fogo Island Co-operative Society, which is still in existence today. Working with field officer Fred Earle at the instigation of Donald Snowden, director of the MUN Extension Services (178), Low and the NFB crew spent weeks filming on the island. Rather than edit the material into one conventional documentary, Low made 27 short "vertical films," each representing a single interview or topic with no intercutting between speakers; for example, in *Billy Crane Moves Away*, one fisherman talks about his plans to move "to the mainland" in hopes of making a better living. After interviews were conducted or meetings filmed, the participants were shown rough cuts and the ensuing discussion was at times integrated into the final film in a "feedback loop" that was part of what came to be known as "the Fogo process." It was based on the following elements:

the collaboration between filmmaker and permanent community-development officer; the selection of an isolated community that lacked community organizations to deal with its economic problems; the state having the goals of stimulating grassroots problem-solving and improving government-community communications; filming techniques based on rapport between filmmaker and subjects; a certain involvement of the community in editing decisions; and much emphasis on the playback of materials as a stimulus to discussion and problem solving (Wiesner 2010, 87).

The Fogo process went on to be used in rural areas, in cities and with Aboriginal peoples, and it inspired projects in the United States and developing countries.

It is clear from NFB memos and other documents that there was no expectation the films would be extensively distributed; as Jerry White explains, “Nobody seemed to think that these films had any hope for wide distribution, any hope of being interesting to anyone not invested in these specific political situations” (White 2009a, 111). “The completed films will hopefully fill regional needs and will be released almost entirely for local distribution,” states a request for funds; “When the Fogo material was being made we did not envisage that it would be distributed beyond that community,” notes an internal memo (both quoted in White 2009a, 111). Low himself comments, “I had to admit that the film [*Billy Crane Moves Away*] wasn’t worth much outside the context of the situation—outside the mainland of Newfoundland. (...) It had some specialized value in Ottawa, but it did not say much to farmers in Alberta, except that centralization and central decisions of government are not always right” (quoted in White 2009a, 112). Not only was the content aimed at local audiences, but “in many cases, the viewer also needs an ear for some of the stronger Newfoundland accents and speech patterns” (Newhook 2009, 186). And comprehension is no small matter, for with the exception of the narrator in *Introduction to Fogo Island*, who introduces the project as a whole, the voices heard most often are those of local people.

Given these limitations of audience and language, was it any surprise that none of these films was versioned into French? Yet versions could have been constructed through voice-over, subtitling or a combination of both. Would francophones in Quebec and across Canada not have felt a connection to the plainspoken, proud Newfoundland fishermen with their deep sense of tradition, ambiguous relation to central government, and determination to have a say in their futures in the face of profound change? It is evident that *Pour la suite du monde* (1963) and the two other films in Perrault's Île-aux-Coudres trilogy bear certain resemblances to the Fogo films; the threads linking the two undertakings are explored extensively by Jerry White in *The Radio Eye: Cinema in the North Atlantic* (2009b) and by Pierre Pageau in "Colin Low, un anglophone au Québec" (2006). In both cases, the filmmakers did not simply arrive, shoot, and leave, but spent time in the communities they filmed. Each had an insider to help them get a foot in the door: for Low, it was community worker Fred Earle; for Perrault, it was his wife Yolande Simard, whose father had a general store on Île-aux-Coudres. Both are concerned with the fate of fishermen, who mull the possibility of building new, larger boats that would enable them to survive (Pageau 2006, 263). Both contain similar scenes: boats being dry-docked for the winter, children sailing rickety hand-made toy boats; men and women at parties dancing a traditional jig to the accompaniment of the accordion and performing an intricate foot clogging or *frapper du pied*. And both stand as testimonies to "the way in which cinema can be a force for the promotion of a spoken language and, specifically, the spoken languages of smaller national communities" (White 2009b, 34). Yet the paths of the end products diverged: *Pour la suite du monde* became a 105-minute feature film that was screened internationally in theatres and at festivals, whereas the Fogo films had limited distribution. The former was broadcast on national television, whereas the latter were not broadcast, although they did influence numerous community television projects

(White 2009a, 120). And the former was versioned into English, whereas the latter were not versioned at all.

On the French side, similar ideas about film as a tool for social empowerment were being tossed around by a group of francophones: directors Fernand Dansereau, Michel Régnier and Maurice Bulbulian; producer Robert Forget; and distribution coordinator Hortense Roy. The presence of a distribution specialist in the early stages of production and during editing as well as on the film's release was characteristic of the group's "social animation" approach (Bégin 1969, 18). Under the name Groupe de recherches sociales (GRS), they worked together on five films starting in 1967 before disbanding to become part of Société nouvelle, the francophone pendant of Challenge for Change. When Fernand Dansereau began working on an anti-poverty project, documenting the impact of plant closings, unemployment and technological change on the town of Saint-Jérôme north of Montréal, he pledged to give the participants the right to cut out any material they no longer liked: he wanted them to think about how they were represented on screen and let the screenings act as a kind of "collective therapy" (Dansereau 2010, 35-36). With a background as a labour-relations journalist, Dansereau was interested less in bringing power to disenfranchised groups than in forging bonds between individuals to create community and solidarity (Froger 2009, 44). The vehicle through which this transformation would occur was speech: both the full-length documentary and its 27 "satellite films"—unedited footage on a single subject that allowed viewers to interpret the material unfiltered through the filmmaker's perception—revolve around interviews, discussions and speeches at meetings. The words of the participants are complemented by Dansereau's personal narration, through which he describes the situation ("Je veux te présenter Saint-Jérôme...") and reflects on the issues confronting the town. Dansereau felt that the films succeeded in reaching an audience:

Most of the time all you see is people talking. At first we wondered if such a product would have any significance for people other than the citizens of Saint-Jérôme. Our experience in distributing the film seems to indicate that it awakens echoes in all kinds of other Quebec communities. People seem to recognize themselves in it. I am not sure if it would be the same outside of Quebec, but here the sort of liberation in language and reflection that the film provokes seems to have come at the right moment. (Dansereau 2010, 36)

Although *Saint-Jérôme* was broadcast on Radio-Canada and, according to Dansereau, had been seen by over 400,000 people a year after its release (Lever 1991, 420), distribution was confined to French-speaking audiences: no English version of the film was produced. Whether it was the Fogo films of Challenge for Change or *Saint-Jérôme* and its satellite films produced by the Groupe des recherches sociales, these documentaries explored parallel paths without intersecting through the intermediary of versions.

A similar situation prevailed for numerous other films produced under the aegis of Challenge for Change and Société nouvelle. A series of five films on Saul Alinsky, a Chicago community organizer and radical activist whose ideas on reforming urban development had filtered into Canada, exists only in English—despite his strong influence on the emerging community movement in francophone Quebec. Issues related to urban development and housing were covered extensively—but separately—on the English and French side through films like *Halifax Neighbourhood Center Project* (1967) and *Co-op Housing: The Best Move We Ever Made* (1975), as well as Michel Régnier's Urbanose series of French-language films on urban problems facing Montréal. The lack of translation of many of Régnier's films—with the exception of the series *Urba 2000*, filmed in cities like Bologna, Düsseldorf, and Grenoble, which was versioned into English—is considered by Liz Czach to be a factor in his marginal status among Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle filmmakers (Czach 2010, 242). Similarly, Thomas Waugh attributes Maurice Bulbulian's limited recognition in English Canada to the absence of

English versions for most of his work (Waugh 2010, 201). The marginalization of certain filmmakers in English Canadian film studies is certainly one consequence of the lack of versions, but more important is the missed opportunity to draw connections between the work being done on both sides, especially given the similar subject matter. Along with the fragmentation of audiences—from the general public to specific geographically and socially limited groups—came the breakdown of existing patterns of version-making. Challenge for Change and Société nouvelle were so closely connected that they were sometimes considered a single program—the closing credits of films produced in either language referred to the program in both languages<sup>48</sup>—yet that connection was forged through production, not through versioning.

#### **4.2 Bilingual neighbourhoods, bilingual films**

Let us now turn our attention to those films made for Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle for which versions were in fact produced. As indicated earlier, 7 out of 128 English films were versioned into French and 17 out of 57 French films were versioned into English. Of this group, I would like to focus on a subset made up of the following films:

English originals (Challenge for Change) with French translations:  
*Citizens' Medicine / La clinique des citoyens* (dir. Bonnie Sherr Klein, 1970, 30 min.)  
*The Point: Community Legal Clinic / Citoyen nouveau: Services juridiques communautaires* (dir. Grant Kennedy, 1972, 28 min.)

French originals (Société nouvelle) with English translations:  
*Opération boule de neige / VTR St-Jacques* (dir. Bonnie Sherr Klein, 1969, 26 min.)

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<sup>48</sup> The closing credits of English films read as follows: “Produced by / The National Film Board of Canada / for the program / Challenge for Change / Société nouvelle / in cooperation with departments and agencies of the Government of Canada.” The credits of French films: “Une production de / L’Office national du film / du Canada / pour le programme / Société nouvelle / Challenge for Change / en collaboration avec / des ministères et des agences / du gouvernement du Canada.”

*La p'tite Bourgogne / Little Burgundy* (dir. Maurice Bulbulian, 1968, 43 min.<sup>49</sup>)

What these films have in common is that they are set in bilingual working-class neighbourhoods in Montréal and feature participants speaking both English and French. Although bilingualism is not the subject of any of these films, it is integral to the way they express information. And because some of the participants speak in one language, some the other, and still others both, the bilingualism of the original films remains present in the versions, which are constructed through a combination of original speech, subtitling and voice-over. For example, in *Citizens' Medicine*, a medical student speaks in French when he converses with his patients and in English when interviewed on screen. In the original English film, the French passages are presented in translation, either through subtitles or voice-over, whereas in the French version, the English passages are translated through the same methods. These films gave rise to a unique method of version production that reflected their particular circumstances and the language interactions that prevailed in the neighbourhoods from which they emerged. In fact, the films in this subset are doubly distinctive: first because it was so rare for CFC/SN films to be versioned at all, and second because the presence of English and French in both original and version blurs the line between them, arguably creating two original films. The bilingualism of the participants is a feature that has for the most part gone unremarked in the literature I consulted on these films—yet bilingualism was not only central to these documentaries, it was a key issue in public discourse in Canada during the period in which they were produced—1968 to 1975. In response to calls by French Canadians for greater protection of their language and culture and wider participation in politics and decision-making, the Pearson government had set up a Royal

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<sup>49</sup> This film was actually produced by the Groupe des recherches sociales, the precursor of Société nouvelle.

Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which submitted its report in 1969. Some of its recommendations were implemented in the Official Languages Act of 1969, a key piece of legislation that gave English and French equal status in the government and required that federal government services be provided in both languages (Fraser 2009, 2-4). Two years later, the government announced its multiculturalism policy, affirming the priority of English and French as the two official languages while acknowledging the contributions of ethnic groups to Canadian society.

Ever since the establishment of the NFB, and especially since the move of its head office to Montréal in 1956, the city has been the setting for more than its share of documentaries in both French and English. The richness of the image of Montréal in NFB films is amply demonstrated by Luc Bourdon's *La mémoire des anges* (*The Memories of Angels*) (2008), a collage portrait that assembles footage from over 120 films shot in Montréal between the late 1940s and the early 1970s. Filmmakers seem to have been particularly drawn to the city's working-class neighbourhoods, such as the central manufacturing districts surrounding Old Montréal like Saint-Jacques, the setting of a pair of films mentioned above, *Citizens' Medicine* and *Opération boule de neige*; and the neighbourhoods of southwest Montréal that straddle the Lachine Canal: Saint-Henri, Little Burgundy, Griffintown and Point St. Charles. Among the many films that take place in this part of town are two *cinéma-direct* short films set in Saint-Henri, already made famous by Gabrielle Roy in the novel *Bonheur d'occasion*. The first is the boxing film *Golden Gloves* (1961), which shows a young black anglophone, Ronald Jones, training with his brother in the rail yards; Jones speaks in English at home and in street French with his neighbourhood friends. The second is the collectively shot *À Saint-Henri le cinq septembre* (1964); recently, Shannon Walsh revisited the neighbourhood and made *À St-Henri, le 26 août* (2011), following the same

filmmaking principles. Point St. Charles is portrayed in *The Point: Community Legal Clinic* (1972), *The Point* (1978), and a feature drama made in 2006, also called *The Point*. Nearby Griffintown is the focus of a film in Michel Régnier's Urbanose series on urban planning in Montréal; and Little Burgundy is the setting of *The Things I Cannot Change*—the precursor of Challenge for Change—and *La p'tite Bourgogne*, also mentioned above.

Saint-Jacques, a working-class neighbourhood whose fortunes declined with the exodus of manufacturing from the city centre, forms part of the Centre-sud and has been home, since 1959, to Les Habitations Jeanne-Mance, the first low-income housing project in Canada and one of the largest.<sup>50</sup> On March 11, 1968, a few dozen residents, along with others from the neighbourhood, met to decide how to deal with their pressing need for better access to health care (Quebec's universal health insurance plan would only come into existence in 1970). When their demand that the city set up a clinic was refused, the citizens took matters into their own hands. Within a few months, they had fixed up an old apartment, recruited volunteer doctors, nurses, and medical students, and begun offering free medical and dental services as well as free medication (Boivin 1988, 11; 32-35). In the 17 years that the clinic existed before being integrated into the CLSC Plateau-Mont-Royal in 1986, it was not only a successful experiment in self-management and direct democratic participation, but also a spearhead of the profound social change brought about by the community movement in Quebec. The period between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies was a time of transformation, as citizens' committees and community organizations proliferated while the traditional church-based model of charity for the poor lost prominence. The model of social work known as *animation sociale*, pioneered in Saint-Henri by Michel Blondin,

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<sup>50</sup> Profiled in another NFB film, *Les Habitations Jeanne-Mance*, dir. Eugene Boyko, 1964.

took a radical approach to community development by combining confrontational tactics with a search for consensus in order to improve citizens' lives at the community level (Turner 2005, 77). Social animators—university-trained professionals who sought to help people realize they had the power to act and bring about changes to their situation—encouraged citizens within a specific geographical area (often the parish) to form “comités des citoyens,” defined as “des groupes de pression locaux qui travaillent en milieu urbain, à l'échelon du quartier, dans les zones dites défavorisées, et qui ont pour objectif principal l'amélioration des équipements collectifs et la non-détérioration de leur milieu de vie” (Godbout and Collin 1977, 23). By 1968, there were over 20 such committees in Montréal, with others in Québec and Hull; post-1968, some would reorient themselves towards political action and organize around class rather than community issues (Boivin 1988, 20; Godbout and Collin 1977, 254, 257).

Shortly after the foundation of the Comité des citoyens de Saint-Jacques, NFB staff members Bonnie Sherr Klein, who had just completed the English version of *La p'tite bourgogne*, and Dorothy Todd Hénaut, a social activist and editor of the Challenge for Change newsletter, approached the citizens' committee with the idea of using videotape to document the efforts of local residents to improve their lives and gain control over their situations. Sony had just introduced the Portapak, a portable video system consisting of a large black and white camera and a separate reel-to-reel tape recording unit (Shapiro 2006, n.p.). Although cumbersome to use, the new video equipment could be operated by non-professionals, making it possible for NFB filmmakers to act as “facilitators” rather than traditional filmmakers and to put into practice the idea of giving citizens access to the means of production. Hénaut and Klein started a film group composed of themselves and six people from the neighbourhood; the group usually worked in teams of two, one person trained to operate the video camera and the other

person using the microphone and conducting interviews. When the committee decided to organize a week of information and recruiting activities in January 1969 under the name *Opération boule de neige*, the VTR group offered to prepare a program to screen each evening at the public meetings (Hénaut and Klein 2010, 25-27). The producer of *Challenge for Change*, American media activist George Stoney, was, according to Klein, “suspicious of video” (Goldsmith 2003, 69) and agreed to the group’s experiment only if they would allow an experienced NFB crew to film the process on 16mm film. That led to the production of *Opération boule de neige / VTR St-Jacques* (1969) and *Citizens’ Medicine / La clinique des citoyens* (1970), relatively conventional documents of a more radical process: the use of videotape in community organizing.

Although the activist backgrounds of Klein and Hénaut made them logical choices for this project, “[t]he involvement of two Anglophone women with a Francophone community and film crew was unique at that time.”<sup>51</sup> Klein and her husband had come to Canada from the United States as war resisters, choosing Dorval Airport because they had heard the Quebec immigration officers were sympathetic. She spent her first summer in French immersion.<sup>52</sup> Hénaut had a strong connection to francophone culture and went on to make films about Quebec feminist personalities; as she explained, “I always dreamed of being a bridge between English and French Canada. I had one foot in each culture” (Hénaut quoted in Vanstone 2007, 165). To her and Klein, it was obvious that versions would be produced for both films since they were directed by anglophones but intended for use by the francophone community. The women made a deliberate

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<sup>51</sup> “Celebrating Women’s Achievements: Bonnie Sherr Klein,” Reference and Genealogy Division, Library and Archives Canada, Government of Canada, 2010.

<sup>52</sup> Klein, Bonnie Sherr. “ ‘Fierce Canadian’ Fears for Her Country: The renowned filmmaker on receiving the Order of Canada in perilous times,” *The Tyee*. May 27, 2013.

decision in producing *VTR St-Jacques*, the English version of *Opération boule de neige*, to use accented voices for both narration and voice-over.<sup>53</sup> At various points in the film, the image freezes and an off-camera voice is heard over the still image, reflecting on the group's experiences using videotape as a tool for community organizing. In the original French film, these are actual voices of members of the citizens' committee. In the English version, a translation of the actual words is performed by francophones—including filmmaker Maurice Bulbulian—speaking English.

The decision, in 1969, to use accented voices was an unusual one.<sup>54</sup> In traditional practice, voice-over was delivered using standard pronunciation as part of a general tendency to neutralize idiomatic expressions and markers of speech. Franco (2000, 273) notes that voice-over tends to follow a “standardization norm” whereby “Voices sound similar. Individual voices are not a priority.” It was not until the mid-1990s that some filmmakers started to shift from using standard language to accented voices in voice-over, reflecting “the drive to foreground the sense of authenticity” (Díaz Cintas and Orero 2010, 441). The effect of Klein and Hénaut's decision was indeed a heightened sense of authenticity: viewers of the English version are constantly reminded that the action takes place in a francophone environment. Although everyone speaks with an accent of some sort, accent is also a marker of group identity: thus the filmmakers' gesture was one of solidarity. At that same time, the unexpected accent in *VTR St-Jacques*, combined with the surprise of the freeze frame, redirects attention away from the visual and towards the acoustic. It

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<sup>53</sup> Personal communication, Dorothy Hénaut, August 15, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> One earlier film that used an accented voice, though in the original film only, is *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman* (see p. 78).

gives the voices a musicality and expressivity, destabilizing viewers and obliging them to listen closely to the speakers as individuals.<sup>55</sup>

If language interactions were such important considerations in the production of these two films, it is because they reflect the reality in front of the camera. For although the residents of Centre-sud are overwhelmingly francophone, many of the volunteer doctors and nurses at the clinic were anglophone. In 1968, inspired by the “Free Clinic” movement in the United States, a group of progressive young doctors and medical students from McGill University contacted the citizens’ committee to volunteer their services (Boivin 1988, 33). They were mostly Jewish leftists and American draft dodgers, including Bonnie Klein’s husband Michael, and they believed in community action while questioning the medical system’s emphasis on specific diseases rather than on treating the whole person. In his history of the Clinique des citoyens de Saint-Jacques, Robert Boivin (1988, 33) notes that anglophones were also behind the establishment of community clinics in Point St. Charles, Saint-Henri, and Milton Park:

Un préjugé répandu donnait de la communauté anglophone l’image d’un bloc de glace, formé d’individus farouchement conservateurs et francophobes. La réalité était beaucoup plus nuancée. Parmi les anglophones, il se développait une gauche active, stimulée par l’opposition à la guerre au Viêt-nam et par les idées de la ‘nouvelle gauche’ américaine. Certains s’intéressaient à l’action communautaire dans les quartiers défavorisés. (Boivin 1988, 33)

The two films do not claim to tell the whole story of the founding of the citizens’ committee and the activities of the community clinic, so it is perhaps not surprising that no mention is made of the role of anglophones in the project. The films served mainly as documents of community

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<sup>55</sup> Hamid Naficy (2001) proposes the term “accented cinema” for a range of cinematic forms and practices that deviate from the dominant cinema, “considered universal and without accent” (4). “Accented cinema” does not refer to a homogenous movement in film production, but to a set of common characteristics that can be identified in criticism: the broad corpus he analyses includes such categories as exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial ethnic and identity films.

involvement and the use of video as a tool of communications. Now that technology has evolved so greatly that access to media tools has become commonplace, they have acquired historical value by showing what was then an innovative aspect of the Challenge for Change projects. But it should not be overlooked that they also function as meaningful documents of a particular moment in the city's history and a particular engagement with its spaces that reflect the relations between the anglophone and francophone communities in Montréal.

#### **4.3 “Extreme” versions**

The neighbourhoods of southwest Montréal, considered to be “Canada’s original industrial heartland” (DeVerteuil 2004, 76), developed in the 1850s following the enlargement of the Lachine Canal. The arrival of manufacturers like the Redpath Sugar Refinery, Montreal Marine Works, Ogilvie Flour Mills and Montreal Rolling Mills created a burst of industrial growth that transformed the fabric of the city. Worker housing was built to accommodate the rapidly increasing population, with living conditions characterized by extreme poverty and overcrowding. Although the older Canal and Griffintown districts experienced disinvestment by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, neighbourhoods slightly farther west like Saint-Henri continued to grow rapidly (Lewis 2000). Employment peaked in the late 1940s when southwest Montréal had over 30,000 manufacturing jobs, the largest concentration in Canada. However, after the St. Lawrence Seaway was completed in 1959, the Lachine Canal was gradually abandoned as a shipping route and industries moved away. The area fell into decline, a trend that was exacerbated by the housing demolition required for the construction of expressways. Montreal under Mayor Drapeau was modernizing, preparing to host Expo 67, and city planners deemed that whole enclaves, like

Goose Village near the Victoria Bridge, were insalubrious and had to be eradicated. By the mid-1960s, when southwest Montréal caught the attention of NFB filmmakers, it was afflicted by chronic poverty and unemployment. At the same time, it was undergoing redevelopment and was home to numerous community groups working on the kind of citizen-generated projects that appealed to the principles of Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle. Given that CFC/SN was initiated to further the government's goal of eliminating poverty and to explore ways of deepening public understanding of poverty problems, it was only fitting that one of its major themes was the urban environment and issues like housing that affect poor inner-city communities (Druick 2010, 343). On the French side, with the Société nouvelle films that grew out of the concerns of the Groupe de recherches sociales, the focus on the urban environment was even stronger and connected with a broader shift in Quebec documentary filmmaking from rural to urban subject matter (Czach 2010, 243).

Southwest Montréal is notable for its culturally and linguistically mixed population, with residents of French, Irish, Scottish, Ukrainian, Polish and British descent (DeVerteuil 2004, 78). With some particularities—thousands of Irish immigrants fleeing the potato famine arrived in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and settled mainly in Griffintown, while Little Burgundy attracted a large Caribbean black community, many of whom worked as railway porters—these working-class neighbourhoods were characterized by the intermingling of English- and French-speaking residents. The 1901 census, for example, showed that the population of Saint-Gabriel (now part of Point St. Charles) was split roughly 50-50 between English and French speakers (Lewis 2000, 113); figures for all of Point St. Charles in 1961 also showed that the population was evenly divided between English and French (Kruzynski 2004, 152). While traditionally, Montréal is seen as a divided city made up of two separate cultures, anglophone in the west and francophone in the

east—expressed memorably by Hugh McLennan in the phrase “two solitudes”—the working-class neighbourhoods of “the city below the hill” (Lewis 2000, 113) belied such neat categorization. The two cultures lived side by side, intermingling not only on the residential streets but on the shop floor. Workplaces like the Grand Trunk Railway shops in Point St. Charles employed men of both groups, and jobs were split by sector: anglophones dominated the skilled metal-working trades and worked as blacksmiths, boilermakers and machinists, while francophones formed the majority of carpenters and painters (Hoskins 1986, 67). Thus although it is true, as Sherry Simon observes, that “Montréal’s history has been dominated by the spectre of separateness, and defined by efforts to respect or transgress the boundary between anglophone West and francophone East,” to the point that “the voyage across languages was a fraught venture” (Simon 2006, 4), the neighbourhoods of Southwest Montréal represented not so much separateness as a place of contact between languages and cultures.

When filmmakers Grant Kennedy and Maurice Bulbulian set about filming Point St. Charles and Little Burgundy, respectively, to show how citizens were working together to improve the situation in their own communities, the mix of languages became an understated yet recurring theme. Scenes with French-speaking residents are shown alongside scenes with English speakers, and members of both linguistic groups interact as neighbours and participants at the same meetings and community events. A chance encounter with a community worker led Bulbulian, who had entered the NFB in the early 60s as an educational filmmaker, to record the actions of a citizens’ committee in Little Burgundy as it attempted to make its voice heard all the way to city hall (Bulbulian 2006). In May 1967, 300 families housed in the Îlots Saint-Martin in the north-east part of the neighbourhood received expropriation notices from the City of Montréal: their apartments would be demolished and low-income housing built in their place as

part of the city's "urban renewal" plan. The residents formed a committee to ensure they had a say in the conditions under which they would return to the new housing. Working from the principle that the participants should take part in the filmmaking process—not necessarily on the technical side but in terms of content—and the filmmaker should not simply observe but could influence the course of events, Bulbulian set up a meeting between the committee and representatives of the provincial and municipal governments to discuss the role of citizens in the formulation of a housing policy. In an unusual move for the NFB at the time, he named the film's main participants in the closing credits (Waugh 2010, 203). Among those named are two families, one francophone and one anglophone, who are shown singing and playing together, children and elderly folks alike: the family of Noel Daudelin, a benevolent, portly long-time resident who knows every neighbour and who, as spokesperson of the citizens' committee, was given the honour of breaking ground for the housing project, and that of Roy Croxen, a black anglophone who cheerfully recounts a life of hardship while family members pack up their well-worn possessions. Although most of the film's encounters take place in French, the importance of English to the community is signalled by two songs, a spirited rendition of "My Blue Heaven" by Croxen, and his daughter's melodious performance of the folk song "Five Hundred Miles," shown on camera then continuing in audio only over images of children playing in the debris of half-demolished homes.

The English version of *La P'tite Bourgogne* was made on the initiative of CFC executive producer George Stoney, who had just arrived from New York: "When I first got here I was invited to a film the French unit had made about a community in the French part of Montreal called Little Burgundy (...) and my first thought was, 'Gee, what a wonderful film. We should make an English version of that.' And they [people on the French side] were opposed, but I

asked, ‘Why not? Challenge for Change can get a film on the cheap’” (Stoney 2006). Bonnie Sherr Klein, who had been a student of Stoney’s, directed the version. She had previously written the narration for several Challenge for Change films and directed a series on radical community organizer Saul Alinsky. The rare decision to credit her as co-director, not translator, is no doubt due to the extensive changes she made in adapting the film: not only is the English version re-edited and abridged from 45 to 30 minutes, but the soundtrack is constructed from a combination of the original interviews in French and English and new audio interviews specially recorded for the English version. The mix of techniques is evident in an early scene featuring Noel Daudelin: first, he reads aloud the expropriation notice from the city<sup>56</sup> and the narrator provides an English translation in voice-over; then Daudelin speaks briefly on camera in French about his struggle to find a new place to live; he continues off camera in English, in an excerpt from the new audio recordings, over images of the boarded-up houses. Later, Jeanne Leblanc, a single mother of three and president of the citizen’s committee, speaks in French on camera and in English off camera, providing a kind of translation of her own words. This English adaptation perfectly captures the easy back-and-forth of languages in Little Burgundy, maintaining the audible presence of French while showing that the participants were comfortable speaking in English.

Grant Kennedy’s pair of films on Point St. Charles, *The Point: Community Legal Clinic* and *Citoyen nouveau : Services juridiques communautaires* (1972), goes even further in taking advantage of the participants’ bilingualism. The film documents efforts to run a community legal aid clinic in Point St. Charles staffed by salaried lawyers, local volunteers, and progressive law

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<sup>56</sup> This device of reading a document aloud as part of the narration was fairly common in French production films but unusual in English except in versions; it is found, as previously noted, in Gilles Groulx’s *Golden Gloves*, which opens with a reading of the waiver form boxers must sign before competing (see p. 99), and in Perrault’s *Pour la suite du monde*, when Alexis Tremblay reads an excerpt of Jacques Cartier’s journal (see p. 124-5).

students from McGill University and Université de Montréal. Established in 1970,<sup>57</sup> the clinic reflected the spirit of mutual aid and sense of neighbourhood pride that had always characterized the Point. It was one of a vast network of community-run organizations that included a food bank, popular education centre, dental clinic, medical clinic, housing committee and women's centre. Going beyond its community service mandate, the legal clinic functioned as an experiment in new forms of citizenship in which—mirroring the social upheavals and idealism of the early 1970s—local participation, social responsibility and activism were valued. When residents came to the clinic for legal assistance, they paid a dollar to become members of the non-profit association, then could attend general assemblies and run for the board of directors; seven out of eleven positions on the board were reserved for citizens. Not only did the clinic help with acute problems like housing, debt, and bailiff seizures, but it had “a global vision of justice” that included “‘animation,’ popular education and community development” (Kruzynski 2004, 201). This two-pronged mission, combining service and action, “doing *with* and doing *for*,” was a hallmark of community groups in the 70s—though achieving a balance between the two often created tensions (219). Interviewed in the film, the lawyers, students and residents reflect on the principles under which the clinic was run, the advantages it offered and the hurdles that had to be overcome. The film privileges the voices of participants, favouring personal experience over information by providing no narration and by not identifying the participants either on screen or during the closing credits.

What is striking about this pair of films is that neither original nor version contains any translation: there is no subtitling and no voice-over. Instead, the film crew shot two sets of

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<sup>57</sup> The clinic, called Les Services juridiques communautaires de Pointe-Saint-Charles et Petite-Bourgogne, is still active today ([www.servicesjuridiques.org](http://www.servicesjuridiques.org)).

interviews with the participants in which roughly the same subjects were covered in English and in French. Some of the participants have accents when speaking in one language or the other, but most are entirely comfortable in either. The films were then edited separately, with a few shared scenes—brief interactions between clients and clinic staff, a general assembly, a meeting between the lawyers and students—presented in a different order. The remaining scenes are composed of different excerpts from the interviews. Unlike *Little Burgundy*, which is clearly positioned as a version, starting with the opening title which is followed by the words “an adaptation from the french film la p’tite bourgogne [*sic*],” there is nothing in either Point St. Charles film to indicate that one is a version of the other. The budget came from English Production and the director and producer, Grant Kennedy and Roger Hart, worked on the English side, but the crew was mixed, with three francophone cameramen, including Pierre Mignot. In both films, the two languages are audible, one as the main language, the other in the occasional background conversation, but language is not mentioned at any time as an issue or a point of contention. This is a highly uncommon form of version production, entirely dependent on the bilingualism of the participants and more broadly, of the neighbourhood in which the filming took place.

While both films unfold along roughly the same lines in the first few scenes, they begin to diverge in the second half. The English version places more emphasis on the experiences of the lawyers who left private practice to dedicate themselves to the ideal of a more just society. It shows more internal meetings and interaction between those running the clinic, such as a scene in which the lawyers reproach the law students for neglecting to properly file clients’ documents after consultations. By contrast, the French version stresses the collective decision-making processes under which the clinic operates, with several scenes of voting, meetings, and question-and-answer sessions between residents and the board of directors.

The differences between these English and French versions find a parallel in the contrast between the organizational cultures of English and French community groups in Point St. Charles in the 1960s and 1970s. Anna Kruzynski summarizes the differences, as described by local activists: “The English, trained in Alinsky-style ‘in your face’ organising, were more pragmatic in their approach, while the French, had a more ideological approach, which tended to take the issues to their root, but which also made it such that they weren’t out there in the streets the same way as the English” (254). Although the films do not foreground the issue of language, suggesting that harmonious relations prevailed between the linguistic groups, tensions were simmering in the background. Most residents felt a strong sense of belonging—indeed, one of the lawyers in the film notes that people had lived there for generations and that they “have a real feeling that they’re Pointers, not Montrealers, they’re Pointers.” Yet there were always cracks in the facade, signalled by the fistfights between English and French kids from either side of the railway tracks that cross the Point.<sup>58</sup> Still, at the start of the 1970s, conflict between the English and French was minimal. But as the Parti Québécois gained support and the issue of sovereignty began to stir passions all over Quebec, the tensions escalated into turbulence. Organizations that had once functioned smoothly in English and French splintered as the English activists were pushed aside by radical nationalists, especially professional organizers from outside the community who little understood its realities (Kruzynski 2004, 248). Members of the English groups were sometimes identified as part of the elite rather than being seen as allies in the struggle against poverty (251-252). As francophones gained awareness of the historical power

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<sup>58</sup> Described colourfully by resident Roméo Perron in Robert Duncan’s 1978 NFB film *The Point*: “In 1938 we made a move, our family, from the French side of the tracks to the English side (...). There was sort of a training period or a training camp, because you had to fight the English to be able to survive (...). You fought them for the playground, you fought ’em for a place to play, you fought ’em going to school...”

imbalance between the linguistic groups and sought to shake off English dominance, a few anglophones reacted with fear and anger, others took up the cause, and still others retreated from action altogether (412-413).

The city as a whole was becoming increasingly polarized, as anglophones and francophones battled over everything from the language of public school instruction to the *francisation* of businesses to the change in Montréal's status from a bilingual to an officially French city (Levine 1990, 87-109). Thousands of students and nationalists demonstrated in March 1969 to demand that McGill University become a French institution; the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), a militant nationalist group, carried out bombings and two abductions that led to the October 1970 crisis; the provincial government passed a series of language laws that only exacerbated conflict over which schools parents could send their children to and what rights the anglophone minority should have. Against this tense backdrop, the versions of these four Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films "fail" in the sense proposed by Sherry Simon: they fail to clearly distinguish between original and translation, to keep the languages separate from one another, "as a result, not of distance, but of excessive contact and interpenetration. This is a positive form of failure, a breakdown that indicates an evolution toward new forms of expression. (...) [W]hen two languages mingle relentlessly, as they do increasingly in certain areas of Montreal, translation is put to the test" (Simon 2006, 9). Positive failures these films might be, but with their mingling of languages and bilingual participants they would remain the exception in the NFB's history, a testimony to the uniqueness of the neighbourhoods they portrayed.

#### 4.4 From voicelessness to voice in Aboriginal films

Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle was initiated at the request of the federal government as a means of raising awareness of poverty, but it quickly branched out to address the concerns of other marginalized communities in Canada. Within its mandate to make films that could be seen as “extensions of state social services to poor, ‘at risk’ communities” (Stewart 2007, 51), the program produced a number of films that dealt with what were then called “Indian issues” and sought to create dialogue between Aboriginal communities and broader Canadian society. These films—including *Indian Dialogue* (1967), *Powwow at Duck Lake* (1967) and *Indian Relocation: Elliot Lake* (1967)—were aimed at “expressing an Indian point of view to mainstream Canada and to the departments of the Canadian government directly involved with Indian life” (Stewart 2007, 51). They were part of the major shift in the self-perception of Native peoples in relation to the Canadian state that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, they can be seen as part of the reconceptualization of “voice” that is the focus of the present research, as they exemplify the move from “speaking for” to “speaking with” to “speaking by” that was a concern not only among Aboriginal communities but also in the social sciences (particularly anthropology) during this period. This section will focus on non-translation in NFB films, not in terms of whether or not English or French versions were produced, as in the previous section, but in relation to the languages and voices of Aboriginal peoples and the translatability of those voices in NFB productions.

While representation of Aboriginal peoples in NFB films was problematized through the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films starting in the late 1960s and became a major focal point in the 1970s and beyond, the issue is almost as old as the institution itself. During World

War II, although much of the NFB's energy was directed towards producing propaganda films on military subjects to sustain the war effort, it continued to produce material on a range of other subjects, mostly related to "cultural identity and social security" (Druick 2007, 57). Among these were a number of ethnographic films that showed the "peoples" of Canada (to use the term favoured by Grierson) (McMillan 1991, 68), such as those made between 1941 and 1944 by American Laura Boulton. She spent those years "in the field" recording the rituals of daily life, with a particular emphasis on music, among such groups as Inuit, the Haida and Tsimshian peoples of the B.C. coast, the Ukrainian community of Winnipeg, and the *habitants* of Quebec.

Boulton studied anthropology at the University of Chicago, but did not obtain a degree; when she was hired by Grierson to come to Canada and direct films, she was a travel writer who had been to Ethiopia, Kenya and other countries in Africa to record indigenous music. She is characterized by Robert McMillan as "a mystery" who was "neither a respected film maker nor an ethnomusicologist, but simply someone with a genuine interest in people, a collector, collecting Canada for the future" (1991, 68, 77). She made a total of 15 films, ranging in length from 10 to 20 minutes and including three "silent lecture films" that are no longer in distribution. The value of her work derives less from its aesthetic qualities than from its status as a record of certain practices and rituals: the twelve dishes of a traditional Ukrainian Christmas Eve dinner, for example, or the construction of a kayak using sealskin that Inuit women have chewed into pliability. While the images are often fascinating and even lyrical—Judith Crawley's cinematography in *New Scotland* (1943) is striking—the films tend to lack structure. McMillan makes this observation repeatedly: "several of the Film Board films seem rushed or carelessly assembled" (67); *New Scotland* (1943) "consists of a rather shapeless and pointless narrative" (72); the sociology of *Land of Quebec* (1944) "seems hastily conceived and based in platitudes"

(79). The narration, which should tie the disparate scenes together, often consists of banalities and condescending remarks that do little to convey an overall theme. The content is not rigorously presented; for example, in two films about Aboriginal peoples of the West Coast, the Haida and Tsimshian cultures—which have distinct languages and social systems—are confused and subsumed under the label “Indians.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, one scene in *Totems* (1944) has “voice-over narration relating a Haida myth while Tsimshian images fill the screen” (McMillan 1991, 76).

Boulton’s careless attitude towards her subject matter may stem from her limited anthropological training and lack of experience in professional fieldwork. Her films would not be considered ethnographic under the criteria proposed by Jay Ruby: “that the term *ethnographic* be confined to those works in which the maker had formal training in ethnography, intended to produce an ethnography, employed ethnographic field practices, and sought validation among those competent to judge the work as an ethnography” (Ruby 2000, 6). The description in her autobiography of her first encounter with “Eskimos” in 1942 is that of a travel writer: “I liked them on sight. It is impossible not to like an Eskimo. I loved the strange primitive clatter of their consonants, that awkward pigeon-toed gait, the shy women giggling together in clusters, and the cheerful, staring children—sturdy little roly-poly bundles in their parkas of skin. If they all smelled just a little of seal, it was at least a friendly, homey smell” (Boulton 1969, 347). Her lack of rigour may also come from the fact that her primary interest lay not in anthropology but in music: as a youth she trained to become an opera singer and when she was given an opportunity to go on an expedition to Africa, she began collecting and recording indigenous music (4-5). Over the course of 35 years of travelling, she made 30,000 recordings of folk and liturgical music

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<sup>59</sup> In her autobiography, however, Boulton clearly distinguishes between the Haida, the Tsimshian and other tribes of the Northwest Coast. (see Chapter 25, “The Queen Charlotte Islands and the Northwest Coast Indians.”)

in many parts of the world (xii-xiv). In her autobiography, she sets out a firm belief “that music is the most spontaneous and demonstrative form of expression the human family possesses, that truly it is the one language that needs no translation” (5).

Music features prominently in the soundtracks of her films, in the form of recordings that are not synchronized to the image. In *Eskimo Arts and Crafts (L'artisanat esquimau)* (1943), singing and chanting are heard off camera throughout most of the film, starting during the opening credits. We see Inuit of Southampton Island and Baffin Land making kayaks, drying and decorating sealskins for clothing, carving bones for shuttles and spears, and singing and dancing. There is no synchronized sound: a narrator describes the practices, but does not explain what the singing is about and for the most part does not make reference to it. At one point, we hear the singers talking amongst themselves, but we are not told what they are saying. Would it not have been possible to translate their words and the lyrics of their songs? Boulton does not seem to have attempted to learn Inuktitut, as an anthropologist doing field work might have; instead, she relied on interpreters.<sup>60</sup> To translate the conversation as well as the singing and chanting would be to posit that the words were relevant to the scene at hand and of interest to viewers; yet given that the sound is not synchronized, we don't even know whether the phrases have any bearing on what we are witnessing on screen or whether they were excerpted from another situation entirely. In any case, Boulton did not consider the words to be meaningful: “Among the Eskimos of the eastern Arctic many songs—for example, play songs, lullabies, and story songs—have no accompaniment at all. The melodies are extremely primitive, the text meager in the extreme, and

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<sup>60</sup> This is implied in her autobiography by comments like the following: “One of these charm songs for hunters was translated for me as: How shall I do it? / The animals were not influenced / By my song when I sang it” (377); “So complex, so tightly condensed is the language of these people that only a loose translation is even possible. ‘*Kooyannah ayornamut*’ was explained to me as: ‘It doesn’t matter’ or ‘It cannot be helped.’” (378-379).

nonsense syllables such as *aayaa*, *yaayaa*, and *yaiyaa* recur again and again, especially in the refrain” (Boulton 1969, 374). A similar structure—in which singing and conversation on the soundtrack has little connection to the images and is left untranslated—is found in many of Boulton’s films. While the sound recordings are authentic, they are opaque; Boulton assimilates words into sound and treats speech as music—a language, as she proclaims, that needs no translation.

Boulton may have been extreme in favouring the musicality of language over the meaning of the words, but she was far from alone in leaving indigenous voices untranslated. In fact, this was common practice in ethnographic films right up until the early 1970s, when subtitles came into use. The significance of that development is noted by David MacDougall, who is both an ethnographic filmmaker and a writer on documentary film:

Before that [the 1970s], almost all ethnographic films had been constructed around a voice-over commentary which spoke about the people concerned but rarely allowed them to speak themselves. If their voices were heard at all, what they said was either ignored (suggesting it was not really worth understanding) or was translated by another voice that covered their own words and, in a sense, spoke *for* them. Now, as ethnographic films adopted subtitles, the people in them began to achieve some of the immediacy, individuality, and complexity of people in fiction films. (MacDougall 1998, 165)

MacDougall describes how filmmakers Timothy Asch and John Marshall, while editing a film made among the Ju/’hoansi that “was essentially a verbal encounter that cried out for translation” (166), realized that subtitles would best convey the subtleties of the participants’ speech. In MacDougall’s own filmmaking, subtitles were incorporated starting in 1968 and indeed became central to his filmmaking approach, as he recognized they would be part of the original film in English, not “an afterthought for foreign audiences” (167).

The shift from voice-over to subtitles occurred much later in ethnographic film than it did in fiction. Subtitling in fiction dates back to the end of the 1920s, when the advent of “talkies”

meant that films could no longer be distributed internationally without some form of translation. Within a few years, the now-familiar techniques of dubbing and subtitling had been invented and subtitled films were being screened in France, the Scandinavian countries and elsewhere (Ivarsson and Carroll 1998, 10-11). At the NFB, subtitles were first used when a fiction film, *L'homme aux oiseaux* (1952), adapted from the short story by Roger Lemelin, was versioned into English as *The Bird Fancier* (1955). By the early 1960s, they started being used in documentary films, too, particularly in scenes where several on-camera participants speak at once. For example, the final scene of *La lutte*, which shows the losing team of wrestlers in their dressing room, railing against the referees in broken English, is subtitled in French. *Paul Anka*, the French version of the *Candid Eye* film *Lonely Boy* about the Canadian teen idol, is constructed through a mix of voice-over translation and subtitles: a few scenes have French subtitles, such as when Anka presents the owner of the upscale Copacabana club with a gift at the end of his two-week gig. The late adoption of subtitles in documentary and ethnographic films may be due to the lack of sync sound in 16mm film and the heavy reliance on narrators, as discussed in the previous chapter—yet it also reflects a belief that all the nuances of a film's message could be conveyed fully through a scripted narration rather than through the speech of the participants.

In the case of NFB films on Aboriginal peoples, not only were the indigenous voices not translated through subtitles, there was little recognition that what they said contributed in any way to the content. Instead, the films simply showed their actions. Even films that, following Jay Ruby's criteria, fall into the category of ethnographic films favoured the visual over speech as a means of conveying information. In the 1960s, the NFB participated in the Netsilik Film Series, a total of 10 ½ hours of ethnographic film material on the Netsilik Inuit. Working with field ethnographer Asen Balikci, the crew made four expeditions to Pelly Bay, now known as

Kugaaruk in Nunavut, to obtain the footage. The films were a central part of an innovative method of teaching social science to Grade 5 children in the United States, developed by Education Development Center (EDC, still active today). Under this method, textbooks would be eliminated and the children given access to ethnographic materials that would allow them to observe another culture in order to learn about concepts like adaptation and cooperation while coming to a deeper understanding of their own culture and shared humanity. The interdisciplinary curriculum, which included films, instructional booklets, games and interactive projects, was called *Man: A Course of Study* or MACOS. The remarkable films at its core show the traditional subsistence practices of Inuit in the remote Arctic, from building tents for summer living and igloos for the winter, to hunting caribou and seals with spears, to sewing boots and coats out of sealskin. Although MACOS was initially well received, opposition grew from parents and politicians who felt the images were too violent and the values went against American morality. One congressman claimed in 1976 that the problem stemmed from the lack of narration, because the viewer was not given a point of view from which to interpret the visual material (Balicki 2009, 389-390). The decision to have no narration and no subtitles was made at the outset, as curriculum developer Peter Dow explains: “The conventional educational film was sort of 30 minutes long with an authoritative commentary, so that you knew you were being told all the time what you were seeing and the significance of what you were seeing. The idea of taking that prop away and getting the viewer to figure it out for themselves was entirely new.”<sup>61</sup>

Yet although the films are referred to as “silent,” there are quite a few words, spoken in Inuktitut by the participants. For example, in *Stalking Seal on the Spring Ice: Part 1* (1967), a

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted from an interview with Peter Dow in *Through these Eyes*, dir. Charles Laird, prod. NFB, 2004, 55 min.

hunter harpoons a seal, then he and his wife cut it up and skin it, helped by their young child. The three converse among themselves and are heard in what seems like sync sound, but no translation is provided. What are they talking about? In fact, the words may have been spoken in a different time and place or may not even be their own: because the shooting conditions in the Arctic made recording sync sound extremely difficult, the EDC film crew turned to the NFB for help with the sound. Producer David Bairstow and his team spent nearly three years editing the material and constructing the sound track in studio.<sup>62</sup> As the NFB Annual Report explains, they “found much of the required sound effects, even to appropriate Eskimo dialogue, all of which was carefully edited into the films with highly authentic results.”<sup>63</sup> In exchange for its assistance on the post-production, the NFB was given the right to make a series of children’s films from the footage. The 13-film series, which includes *Tuktu and His Eskimo Dogs* (1966) and *Tuktu and the Trials of Strength* (1967), centres on a six-year-old Netsilik boy and uses music and narration rather than sync sound. The narration, performed by NFB veteran Tommy Tweed, is written in the first-person as if Tuktu, now a gravelly voiced old man, were looking back on his childhood. Although the Inuit occasionally seem to speak among themselves, we do not hear their voices—this time, not only is their speech untranslated, it is unheard. As for the original Netsilik films, so entrenched was the idea that speech played no role that for years, they were described in the NFB catalogue as “films without words.” When the NFB re-released a number of films from its vast archives to celebrate the newly formed territory of Nunavut in 1999 in a DVD box set and playlist called “Unikkausivut: Sharing Our Stories,” the description of the Netsilik films was

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<sup>62</sup> St-Pierre, Marc. “The NFB Inuit Film Collection.” *Unikkausivut: Sharing Our Stories*. National Film Board of Canada, 2012.

<sup>63</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 1967-1968, 12.

reworded in a more inclusive manner: “Presented with no commentary or music, these videos are in Inuktitut, with no subtitles.”

The tendency to leave Inuit speech untranslated marks a kind of “exoticizing” that was characteristic of visual anthropology of the 1940s and 1950s. Without speech, the Aboriginal participants are left without a subjective voice, transformed into a distant “Other.” The distancing created by the lack of translation finds a parallel in the tendency of ethnographic texts, both written and filmic, to remove the subject from historical time. Although during fieldwork, both ethnographer and subject inhabit the same historical time and space—which Johannes Fabian calls “coevalness” in his classic *Time and the Other* (1983)—that commonality is disavowed through the use of the historical present and other techniques of temporal distancing in ethnographic writing. The result is the “denial of coevalness,” which Fabian defines as “*a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse* (31, italics in original).

A clear case of such “allochronism”—placing the subject outside of shared time—occurs in *Angotee: The Story of an Eskimo Boy* (1953), by Douglas Wilkinson. Wilkinson was a filmmaker and federal northern service officer who devoted himself to documenting traditional life in the Arctic: he spent a year living with a family unit at an isolated Inuit camp and wrote a book on the experience, *Land of the Long Day* (1955). He was later part of the EDC crew who filmed the Netsilik Inuit. In 1951-1952, he spent 15 months at Chesterfield Inlet on the west coast of Hudson Bay with his wife and cameraman Jean Roy, where he observed “the demoralizing effect of close contact with the white man on the local Eskimo population” (Wilkinson 1955, 21). Yet *Angotee* only hints at such contact. The film follows the life of an Inuit boy from birth to childhood to early adulthood: we witness the birth of an Inuit baby in the midst of his mother’s

caribou furs that keep out the bitter cold; the sewing of his first clothes—a two-layer sealskin jumpsuit, one with the fur facing in for warmth and the other with the fur facing out—when he reaches the age of two; then his childhood play and learning of the skills he will need in the harsh environment; his marriage in a Catholic Church at a ceremony performed in (untranslated) Latin; and his departure from the family igloo with his young wife. The film’s chronology suggests that it was shot over a 20-year period, but in fact, the credits indicate that several Inuit children were used to play the role of Angotee at different ages (as a baby, a two-year-old, an eight-year-old, and a boy aged 18 to 20). The time frame is dependent on the very dehistoricizing that Fabian criticizes. If we are seeing Angotee as a 20-year-old man at the end of the film, and the film was released in 1953, then he must have been born in the early 1930s. And if Angotee changed over the years, surely the landscape around him and the social world he inhabited changed too. What happened to the Inuit over the 20-year span the film purports to cover? The conceit of the film is that only Angotee and his family change: his mother dies when he is 12 and his father takes a new wife. The family visits the Hudson Bay store and buys some Pablum, which Angotee’s mother spoonfeeds him to his grandmother’s disapproval. But in what year did Inuit mothers start feeding Pablum—a processed, easily digested cereal invented by pediatricians at Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children in 1930—to their children? The film seems to take place in a kind of compressed, continual present. While the film may be “a striking departure from the anthropological gawking evident in earlier films about the Inuit produced by the Film Board” (Low 2002, 78), the characters are not only without words, they exist out of time.

## Conclusion

My purpose here is not to criticize NFB films on Aboriginal people for reflecting what was at the time accepted filmmaking practice, but to trace a movement towards greater participation of the subject in the filmmaking process; this movement can be discerned by tracking the absence or presence of translated speech. The issue of point of view came to the forefront in the late 1960s with the establishment of Challenge for Change and the hiring of American documentarian and media activist George Stoney as its executive producer. As Stoney put it, “There was a strong feeling among the filmmakers at the NFB that the Board had been making too many films ‘about’ the Indian, all from the white man’s viewpoint. What would be the difference if Indians started making films themselves?”<sup>64</sup> The Indian Film Crew (IFC) was set up in 1968 and eight men from the Micmac, Mohawk, Haida and other Nations were hired. The first film produced by the IFC was the 13-minute *These Are My People* (1969), co-directed by Michael Mitchell, Willie Dunn, Barbara Wilson and Roy Daniels. Shot at Akwesasne near Cornwall, Ontario, it features two “spokesmen” who describe the customs, religion and government on the reserve. Michael Mitchell and other members of the Indian Film Crew took part in the 1969 Challenge for Change film *You Are on Indian Land (Vous êtes en terre indienne)*, which records the blockade by the Mohawks of Akwesasne of a bridge between Canada and the U.S. It is narrated by Glen Lazore, who as himself an Akwesasne Mohawk speaks in an inclusive “we,” and in one scene, Ernest Benedict speaks to the crowd of protesters in Kanien’kéha (Mohawk), which is subtitled in English (Honarpisheh 2006, 88). Several years

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<sup>64</sup> Letter from George Stoney, January 3, 1972. Quoted by Gil Cardinal, “The Aboriginal Voice: The National Film Board and Aboriginal Filmmaking Through the Years.” *Playlists*, National Film Board Web site.

later Willie Dunn would make *The Other Side of the Ledger: An Indian View of the Hudson's Bay Company (La face cachée des transactions)* (1972), in which the Aboriginal point of view is made explicit through the voice of George Manuel, president of the National Indian Brotherhood, who acted as narrator for the film. His voice is heard in the French version, too, as it is translated through subtitles. As well, in the 1970s, the French Animation program produced several animated films on Inuit legends in French and English. Sponsored by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the films, for the first time, relied on Inuit involvement in various aspects of the production, including performing the narration in Inuktitut and English.

When Alanis Obamsawin, of Abenaki descent, started her long career at the NFB in the 1970s, she began to use subtitles rather than leave the speech of Aboriginal participants untranslated or use voice-over to translate their words. At the same time, she became a participant in her own films by doing interviews on camera and reading her own voice-over narration: "In her hands documentary practice becomes a rhetorical intervention that places the enabling subject at the centre of discourse. The interview, used to shape point of view, becomes a valuable instrument to validate individual biography, make intelligible the ongoing struggles for Native self-definition, and contest Eurocentric narratives of First Nations history" (Pick 1999, 77). The NFB's commitment to Aboriginal filmmaking continued to evolve with the Indian Training Program in 1971, the establishment twenty years later of the exclusively Aboriginal production unit Studio One, and the creation of the Aboriginal Filmmakers Program, a special stream of the English Program, in 1996. The development of Aboriginal filmmaking at the NFB is part of the overall move in documentary and ethnographic film from "speaking for" the subjects to relinquishing control in response to the subjects' demands to represent themselves. This was part of a broader shift in the social sciences towards a questioning of the role of the author in the

production of knowledge (Druick 2007, 164). Although the focus in this section has not been English-to-French translation or vice-versa but the more general question of translation from indigenous languages, we have touched on a key issue, summarized by visual anthropologist Jay Ruby thus: “Questions of voice, authority, and authorship have become a serious concern for all cultural anthropologists. Who can represent someone else, with what intention, in what ‘language,’ and in what environment is a conundrum that characterizes the postmodern era” (2000, 196).

It is striking that the films we have examined to trace this movement have virtually all been drawn from English Production: for decades, French-Canadian audiences learned about Aboriginal peoples through French versions of the films of Laura Boulton and Douglas Wilkinson and the Netsilik films, among others. On the French side, other than the Inuit legends told through animated film, there was no project similar to that of the Indian Film Crew that brought Aboriginal people into the production process as directors, scriptwriters, crew members and on-camera participants. That would not occur until the 1990s and beyond, with the productions of René Sioui Labelle and the remarkable short films made by Aboriginal youth and produced by Manon Barbeau through her Wapikoni mobile studio. Nonetheless, starting in the 1970s, filmmakers like Arthur Lamothe, Maurice Bulbulian and Bernard Gosselin sought to integrate an Aboriginal point of view in productions made both at the NFB and in the private sector. For example, Lamothe, in his film series *Chronique des Indiens du Nord-Est du Québec*, produced in the private sector after he had left the NFB, worked with anthropologist Rémi Savard to observe the traditional culture and ongoing challenges facing the Innu (then known as Montagnais) and included extensive passages of speech: these were indeed translated through the technique of voice-over.

Translation through voice-over serves as one response to the question of how to represent voices other than that of the narrator in documentary. Another response appears in Pierre Perrault's *Le goût de la farine* (1977), which paints a bleak portrait of the lives of Innu on the reserve of La Romaine: Father Alexis Jouveau, a Catholic missionary who lived among the Innu for decades, serves as interpreter for the participants in the film and, indirectly, for viewers, as he switches back and forth between French and Innu-aimun. Eventually, subtitles came to be seen as the response that is most respectful of the original voices, and are now used for the majority of NFB documentaries.

These explorations of various ways to deal with different languages on the screen were in the end more productive than the initial response following the fragmentation of the audience into smaller groups based on region, language, and identity: that initial response was to not translate at all, as evidenced by the very small number of Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films that were versioned into French or vice versa. The bilingual films set in Montréal neighbourhoods and the Aboriginal films share an emphasis on the voice of the participants, social actors who perform their own roles on the screen, and they show us that translation can find ways to adapt to changing documentary practice.

## **Chapter Five: Women's voices in two languages, 1970-1974**

Around the same time as Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle was calling into question NFB production methods and seeking to confront poverty and other forms of marginalization through participatory media, another challenge to the status quo was coming from a different direction. Reflecting the emergence of the second wave feminist movement, women's organizations in Canada began to press the government to assess the circumstances of women's lives and work towards greater equality for women. In 1965, celebrations held to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of women's right to vote sparked the founding of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, whose demands included equal pay for work of equal value and the creation of government-run daycare centres (Clio Collective 1987, 336-337). On the federal level, the Pearson government responded to public pressure by setting up a Royal Commission on the Status of Women, chaired by journalist Florence Bird. In 1970, the commission submitted its report, calling for equality between men and women and making numerous recommendations in such areas as employment, education and law; soon after, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women was founded to monitor the implementation of these recommendations. In this context of high public awareness of women's issues, Kathleen Shannon, who had been working at the NFB since 1956, seized the moment to demand the establishment of a women's production unit. She argued that not only were women under-represented as the subject of NFB films, the staff itself was overwhelmingly masculine and the few female employees were confined to specific production roles like continuity and wardrobe as well as post-production tasks like editing and negative cutting. As Shannon wrote in an internal memo:

It has occurred to some of us that the NFB has not had a very good record in the past of fulfilling its mandate of “interpreting Canada to Canadians and the rest of the world, etc.,” when we consider that 53% [*sic*] of the population is female, and that point of view has hardly been expressed. Women have a different approach to society, and we must be our own spokeswomen (quoted in Anderson 1999, 42)

When the United Nations announced that 1975 would be designated International Women’s Year, the Canadian government committed itself to working towards the goals the UN had set out. This was Shannon’s opportunity: she submitted a formal proposal for a women’s studio to the NFB administration in early 1974, and by August, the NFB had agreed to create Studio D (Vanstone 2007, 44, 50).

Although it started out with a tiny budget and only three employees, Studio D had lofty goals: “to project women’s perspectives in its documentaries and to create filmmaking opportunities for Canadian women in a field traditionally dominated by men” (36). It went on to produce over 150 documentaries that tackled issues of national and international concern, sparking controversy and critical acclaim while winning numerous awards. Despite the cross-gender appeal of many of its films, Studio D did not conceive of its audience as being the entire Canadian population, as might be suggested by the broader NFB mandate to “interpret Canada to Canadians.” Instead, seeking to expose the NFB’s “gendered bias,” Kathleen Shannon argued that “as more than half the population of Canada, women must produce images about and for women if ‘in the national interest’ is to have any real meaning” (Anderson 1996, 103). Accordingly, Studio D defined its audience as “women as a nation, an all-encompassing global community unified by gender and a discourse of oppression and liberation”; it “understood women as an international nation configuring them as an imagined political entity, *imagined* although they might never know the majority of their numbers, as belonging to a common group” (Vanstone 2007, 80; italics in original). Yet Studio D was a unit within English Production,

producing films in English. Paradoxically, despite its claim that it was making films for and about “women everywhere” (80), the women in Studio D had little contact with their counterparts in French production, especially in the early years of its existence, as each linguistic group staked out different turf with regard to women’s film. None of the films made by Studio D in its first two years were versioned into French; subsequently, only a minority of its films were translated—following the pattern established in the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle program whereby increased awareness of audience led to fewer translations. Rather than striving to merge their visions as a stepping stone to the creation of a united global community, English and French women filmmakers walked side by side on parallel paths. The exception, as we shall see, was Anne Claire Poirier. It is the challenge of imagining women as a global community yet speaking from a clearly defined position both geographically and linguistically—and the role of versions in taking on that challenge—that will be explored in this chapter.

### **5.1 Women in English and French production**

In the NFB’s early years, women were involved in many aspects of documentary filmmaking. The reason was straightforward, according to feminist film critic Barbara Halpern Martineau: “If he [John Grierson] found talented women, he used them, and as it was wartime there was a distinct shortage of talented men available for training in film” (Halpern Martineau 1977, 61). Or, in the blunter words of Seth Feldman, “John Grierson began the practice of placing women in positions of responsibility at the Board, where he then overworked and underpaid them” (1984a, 149). Several women directors played key roles during the war years: Evelyn Cherry made films that documented the co-operative farm movement on the Canadian prairies

and was the first head of the agricultural film unit; Gudrun Parker became head of educational films after working as an editor, writer and director; and Jane Marsh Beveridge directed several war films, including the remarkable *Women Are Warriors* (1942), which looks at women's wartime contributions in Canada, Britain and the USSR.<sup>65</sup> Although it was not NFB policy to include production credits during its first decade, Halpern Martineau used various sources to draw up a list of fifteen films directed by women on subjects like agriculture, education, and arts and crafts; she also ascertained that women worked on many other films as camera operators, sound recordists, editors, negative cutters and researchers (Halpern Martineau, 1977, 62). However, she noted, "It is also indisputably clear that this extensive participation of women at key levels in NFB production and administration diminished rapidly after the war ended and Grierson left the board, and that the next twenty years of film board production were heavily male-dominated, with almost no participation by women except at menial levels" (62). The post-war decline in women's participation was not reversed until pressure from women like Kathleen Shannon changed the situation.

On the French side, by contrast, women were entirely absent during the period of wartime production; as has already been noted, during the whole first decade the number of francophone employees lagged far behind that of anglophones, and the few that were hired were all men. Even in terms of subject matter, Pierre Véronneau notes that only a handful of the 400 French-language newsreels produced for *Reportages* have women as a central theme; he wonders if this might be because NFB films rarely focused on domestic life, the sphere to which women were confined by traditional ideology, or because the few potential subjects had already been treated on the English

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<sup>65</sup> See pages 66-67.

side (Véronneau 1987, 85). It was not until the 1950s that the first French-speaking woman was hired to the NFB: the celebrated poet Anne Hébert wrote scripts for a brief period between January 1953 and the fall of 1954. For the rest of that decade, with the hiring of French Canadians all but inexistent, there would be no francophone women at the NFB. The situation finally changed in 1960 when Anne Claire Poirier, freshly graduated from law school, submitted her résumé (Prévost 1984, 13). She started her lengthy career working in the version department, then became an assistant editor. Producer Jacques Bobet gave her the chance to direct a film in 1963, and she made the short *30 minutes, Mister Plummer*, followed in 1964 by *La fin des étés*. In 1961, Monique Fortier edited her first film, Hubert Aquin's *Le temps des amours*; she went on to have a notable career as the editor of films by Pierre Perrault and Denys Arcand, among others. Fortier also directed two films: *À l'heure de la décolonisation* (1963), on the impact of decolonization on former French colonies in Africa, and *La beauté même* (1964), an experimental reflection on what constitutes beauty when it is not defined through the eyes of men (Lever 1991, 69-70, 98-99). Anne Claire Poirier went on to make *De mère en fille* (1967), which was not only her first feature-length film but the first ever made by a woman in Quebec (NFB Profiles). In the early 1970s, she became the producer of *En tant que femmes*, a series of feature-length films by women, two of which she directed herself. Throughout the 70s, women pressured the NFB administration to improve their working conditions and ensure they would not be confined to lower-status positions like production secretary and negative cutter while being underrepresented in creative positions like director and director of photography (Blais 1983).

## 5.2 Films that spoke to Everywoman... in English

Shannon's first films, grouped together under the title *Working Mothers*, were produced as part of Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle. *Working Mothers* was sparked by a request from the Department of Manpower and Immigration to make a film on a specific social issue: why were women not returning to the workforce after having children? Shannon carried out interviews with the idea of making a single film, but—according to Rina Fraticelli, who studied the films when she became executive producer of Studio D in March 1987—recognized they would work better as “individual vignettes” in which each woman would have space for her own story (Fraticelli 2010, 305). After test screenings in community settings across the country confirmed the effectiveness of the short film format, Shannon turned the material into eleven films ranging in length from five to fifteen minutes. The screenings led her to develop a philosophy of film production and distribution that would underlie Studio D's approach throughout its existence: she became convinced “that the films were incomplete in themselves and could be completed only by viewers in discussion with each other” (306); accordingly, she emphasized “the primacy of the audience's needs, the role of women's media as a means rather than an end, and the value of test screenings” (307). Fraticelli describes the films as encapsulating the idea of “the universality of women's experience” (310): “Tapping into the primal duality of power/fear inherent in women's biology, the *Working Mothers* films spoke to Everywoman. The duality was a great leveller, uniting women of every class, race, and region, from puberty to menopause and beyond” (304-305).

The Working Mothers films drew on social realism<sup>66</sup> in that their intent was not to call into question the codes of representation through formal experimentation, but instead to document unfolding events in a straightforward manner for activist ends—in this case, to show the real lives of women and to create space for women to talk about their own experiences: “These films [social realist documentaries] privilege content over form, and their main representational strategies include voice-over narration, talking heads in dialogue or monologue, direct address to the camera, and scenes depicting subjects and protagonists in ‘real life’ situations” (Anderson 1999, 48). More specifically, the Working Mother films and early Studio D documentaries can be called “validative” under the typology proposed by film critic B. Ruby Rich. Writing in 1978, Rich argued that the range of feminist filmmaking practices, encompassing fiction, documentary and experimental works, was broad enough to warrant a new glossary (1985, 351). Among the names she suggested is “validative,” which describes films that “function as a validation and legitimation of women’s culture and individual lives” and “may be ethnographic, documenting the evolution of women’s lives and issues (...) or archeological, uncovering women’s hidden past” (352).

What is striking about these films is the contrast between the inclusive language employed to describe them—documenting women’s lives, uniting women of every class, race and region—and the fact that no French versions were made. How could they speak to “Everywoman” when they were not even accessible to the millions of women across Canada who spoke only French? Producing versions would have been a fairly straightforward matter. The

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<sup>66</sup>Social realism was a broad international art movement of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in which painters, photographers and filmmakers sought to depict the everyday lives of the poor and working classes while criticizing the dominant social structures.

Working Mothers films are constructed around interviews with a single subject, who speaks both on camera and in voice-over; on occasion, the voice of the interviewer (Shannon herself) is heard off camera. This means that the traditional method of replacing the original narration with a translated one would not have been adequate; instead, the spontaneous speech of each interviewee would have had to be translated and presented through subtitles or voice-over. However, both of these modes of version production were well established by the mid-1970s. Voice-over, in particular, would have been appropriate for this series given that each film had a single participant, and one actor could have done the entire soundtrack.

In seeking to understand why no versions of the Working Mothers films were made, we must look not in the direction of form, but towards audience. For while the Working Mothers films differed from other Challenge for Change films in that the issue of placing the actual means of production into the hands of participants was not explored, they nonetheless shared the program's concern with community empowerment by tailoring films to the needs of particular audiences. As Rina Fraticelli puts it, "The notion of working with and through communities, as opposed to individuals, lay at the heart of the entire CFC/SN program" (2010, 310). Kathleen Shannon developed an interactive approach to filmmaking that started during production and continued throughout the distribution stage: she consulted with participants as the films were being shot, setting up screenings and listening to the women's comments (Vanstone 2007, 135). But even more than during the production process, her concern with community was apparent after the film was completed. Rather than broadcast the films on television, she preferred to organize screenings to small groups and follow them with facilitated discussions. She felt the event itself was important for filmmaker and audience, so that "together, surrounded in darkness and undisturbed, they would experience the film with undivided attention" (Evans 1991, 211).

Shannon used a variety of techniques to encourage viewers to express their feelings after the screenings, having seen one reality on the screen and filtering it through their own experiences and emotions. She describes one such technique:

Now I start by asking everyone to write their initial emotion—in a word or a phrase—on paper I supply. The paper is small, to encourage brevity. Then we arrange the chairs in two circles, an inner one for those who will be speaking and an outer one for those who will be listening. Assuring everyone that we will trade places before long, I invite the women to sit in the inner circle first [men sit in the outer circle]. We collect all the papers and jumble them. As we go around the circle, each woman takes a paper out of the hat and reads aloud the reaction of some other woman. (Shannon 1989, n.p.)

If audience was so important, would it not have been crucial to show versions of the films to other linguistic groups? Similar techniques to encourage audience members to articulate their reactions to the films could have been carried out on francophone audiences. Surely if one is conceiving of women globally, such a move would have been the first step towards increasing the audience of one's films. The *Working Mothers* films, and eventually Studio D itself, were administratively part of English production, but Shannon believed her audience to be Canadian women as a whole, as she makes clear: "At Studio D, we don't consider ourselves as filmmakers belonging primarily to a filmmaking community, as many of our colleagues do. We consider ourselves first as women, Canadian women, working at this time in history. We share an enormous amount with other Canadian women, and what we share with all other women is far greater than our differences" (1989, n.p.) Perhaps Shannon felt that if versions were to be produced in French, she and other workshop facilitators would not be able to accompany the films and the screenings would lack something essential. Furthermore, in their form as well as distribution methods, the films connect strongly with the feminist documentaries being produced during the 1970s in the United States by such filmmakers as the San Francisco Newsreel collective. Julia Lesage lists the characteristics of these documentaries as "[b]iography,

simplicity, trust between woman filmmaker and woman subject, a linear narrative structure, little self-consciousness about the flexibility of the film medium” (Lesage 1978, 223). Indeed, the resemblances between Shannon’s films and American feminist documentaries of the 1970s were greater than those between Shannon’s films and French-language women’s documentaries at the NFB. Before becoming a director, Shannon had worked for years as a sound recordist and editor. A number of the films she worked on were originally in French, including Hubert Aquin’s *Le sport et les hommes* (1959), which was written by Roland Barthes, and *Caroline* (1964), a short fiction by Clément Perron and Georges Dufaux. But I was not able to find evidence of any further collaboration between Shannon and French production. Had she watched *Mother-to-be*, the English version of Poirier’s 1968 feature film? Was she influenced by Poirier’s early films or those of Monique Fortier? It was not until 1976, when Studio D had been in existence for several years, that one of its films—*Maud Lewis: A World Without Shadows* by Diane Beaudry (1976)—was finally versioned into French. Of the first 26 films made at Studio D from its creation in 1974 to 1980, French versions were produced for only eight. Furthermore, it was the films made by francophone women—Diane Beaudry, who started with Studio D before moving to French production, and Luce Guilbeault and Nicole Brossard, co-directors along with Margaret Westcott of *Some American Feminists / Quelques féministes américaines* (1978)—that were versioned, for the most part.

### **5.3 A different approach on the French side**

On the French side, the approach to both the production and distribution of women’s films contrasted with that taken on the English side—leading to a different attitude towards

versions. A series called *En tant que femmes* was produced between 1972 and 1975—around the same time as the Working Mothers films—as part of Société nouvelle, the French-language counterpart to Challenge for Change. But while English feminist production was exclusively concerned with documentary, the French films included not only documentary but also fiction and docudrama. Whereas the eleven Working Mothers films were mostly around ten minutes long, the *En tant que femmes* films were feature length. After the Royal Commission on the Status of Women tabled its report in 1970, Anne Claire Poirier and Jeanne Morazain submitted a report to the NFB administration arguing for the creation of a film series by women about issues of concern to women in order to break their isolation and increase their participation in a changing society (Poirier and Morazain-Boucher 1971). Once they had a small budget in place, the women who were to direct films in the series set up research groups to consult with women from a wide range of social classes and situations, from young mothers and students to professional women and seniors; the seven groups met weekly for six months (Fortin 2010, 121-122). The subjects of the *En tant que femmes* films were determined based on the concerns expressed by women in the research groups, combined with the personal experiences of each film’s director. Thus “for a single woman such as Mireille Dansereau, the relationships between marriage and love became more important to redefine, while Suzanne Gibbard and her co-directors focused on questions related to children” (Louise Carrière, quoted in Fortin 2010, 123). The result was that the films reflected specific concerns identified during the pre-production research, yet were highly subjective and personal (Fortin 2010, 124).

The reliance on discussion groups was not confined to the pre-production stage: most of the films had a carefully planned distribution strategy that included statistical evaluation. The

cornerstone was television broadcast, which was supplemented by non-theatrical screenings and discussion groups. Marion Froger describes the strategy:

Cette stratégie consistait à : 1. former des animatrices choisies pour leur compétence en matière d'animation de groupe, leur intérêt pour la matière et leur appartenance au milieu visé; 2. former des petits groupes de discussion à partir de groupes structurés intéressés par la thématique, de groupes informels, professionnels, religieux ou ministériels; 3. favoriser la projection privée en famille ou entre amis, en fournissant la documentation nécessaire à la poursuite d'un débat «entre soi»; 4. utiliser les télévisions communautaires et le réseau Ciné-participation de l'ONF. (2009, 126)

According to distribution coordinator Rachelle Lussier, sparking discussion and gathering reactions to the screenings were considered just as important as reaching a large number of people (Lussier 1976, 36). After the screenings, women were encouraged to keep meeting so that “the screening space was thus redefined as a vital environment where assemblies of women left the virtual isolation of their households for an interactive discussion about women’s condition, politics, and art” (Fortin 2010, 133-4). While this strategy may recall Shannon’s discussion groups, it goes further in its use of supplementary material and its intent to gather feedback on the screenings. It was not enough to simply stimulate discussion; distribution would involve studying and measuring the impact of the films on the community. Hortense Roy, distribution coordinator for Société nouvelle, along with Lussier, who had also worked with its forerunner, the Groupe de recherches sociales, published a report that showed how interested they were in getting feedback on the impact of the film screenings on mentalities in Quebec. Resembling a social science inquiry, distribution included the following steps: “identification des groupes intéressés par tel ou tel sujet ; collecte des données par questionnaires et comptes rendus systématiques des réunions ; analyse des contenus” (Froger 2009, 127). By gathering reactions to the film screenings and broadcasts and publishing them, the distributors and program agents created a conversation between audience and film:

La conversation n'est plus limitée au temps et au lieu d'une expérience ponctuelle de réception. Elle se reprend, se poursuit, d'un espace et d'un temps à l'autre, grâce au travail de collecte et de synthèse des agents du programme. Le maintien du lien entre le film et le public est ce qui importe : on imagine des « agents multiplicateurs » capables d'organiser des réunions hors de la période de promotion des films, sur la base des réactions à sa diffusion antérieure. (128)

Furthermore, a particular effort was made to ensure that distribution went beyond urban areas and into the francophone regions across Canada. As Lussier concludes, “le « projet fou » de quelques femmes sensibles et conscientes aura donné à la francophonie canadienne non seulement des documents cinématographiques de qualité, mais surtout le cadeau magnifique d'un « vrai » moyen d'expression et de réflexion” (Lussier 1976, 37).

The philosophy behind this distribution strategy was that it would encourage viewers to identify with the subject on the screen not as representing a certain type (“citizens face typical problems and their lives stand in by implication for those of many others” as Druick puts it [2007, 102]), but as a potential friend, sister, daughter or mother (Froger 2009, 131). Rather than attempting to appeal broadly to “Everywoman,” the French films conceived of their audiences as being geographically and linguistically limited to “l'ensemble du public canadien francophone” (126). Whereas the Working Mothers films were not broadcast—a deliberate choice, which “did not bother her [Shannon] because she doubted that television could change minds as they might be changed by seeing films in a live audience” (Evans 1991, 174)—television was seen as a crucial medium that would allow the French films to reach women in their homes. The first four films in the series—*J'me marie, j'me marie pas*, *Souris, tu m'inquiètes*, *À qui appartient ce gage?* and *Les filles du Roy*—were shown on Radio-Canada on January 9, January 16, February 27, and March 13, 1974, respectively. In order to get feedback from the audience, Société nouvelle, working with Sandy Burnett of the Audience Needs and Reactions unit at the NFB,

prepared a questionnaire that was published in major newspapers and invited viewers to mail in their responses (Thorne 1974, 66). It also set up a telephone hotline so that viewers could call in; the number of phone calls exceeded expectations and the telephone circuits were overloaded. The NFB received 1000 phone calls, 3000 responses to the questionnaire and 500 letters, a selection of which was published by Société nouvelle / Challenge for Change under the title *Vos lettres reçues à l'Office national du film à l'occasion de la télédiffusion des quatre films de la série En tant que femmes présentés en 1974*. While some viewers—men and women—objected to the perceived attack on institutions and closely held values, many others reported being transformed by the experience of seeing subjects like marriage and motherhood discussed so candidly; several letter-writers reported that they no longer felt alone (*Vos lettres* 1974). Anne Claire Poirier felt the broadcasts were worthwhile in allowing women to learn more about each other: “C’est grâce à vos appels, à vos lettres et à votre amour que nous commençons à mieux nous connaître les unes les autres. (...) Ce que vos lettres disent c’est que nous avons enfin appris à nous parler entre nous et que plus rien désormais nous empêche de tout nous dire” (*Vos lettres* 1974, 72). The broadcasts, combined with the distribution strategy of encouraging feedback, opened up the possibility for women to be heard and understood. Through Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle, the NFB provided access to the communicative resources that allowed the filmmakers to produce feature-length films; through its Wednesday evening broadcast slot, Radio-Canada provided access to contextual spaces.

One of the reasons for gathering feedback to the broadcasts of the *En tant que femmes* films is that it could then serve as justification for a women’s studio. According to Sandy Burnett of Audience Needs and Reactions,

The feedback from the *En tant que femmes* telecasts will be useful to the people who are planning the community release of the Working Mothers series. They in turn are interested in getting feedback on the effect of what they do. You take both and out of that may well come sufficient evidence to justify an extension of films made specifically by and for women—either in the film board or more generally. (quoted in Thorne 1974, 66)

But unlike Shannon, who at this time was pushing for a women's studio, Poirier was not convinced it was necessary to create a separate film unit within French Production. She felt such a move would limit the possibilities for women filmmakers by confining them to the short-film format and reducing the available budget. She also believed in the power of television broadcasts rather than non-theatrical distribution or community release as a way to ensure extensive circulation. Poirier continued to produce feature-length films that were funded through the general budget for French Production. It was not until 1985 that the French Program set up a women's studio, *Regards de femmes*, under the direction of Josée Beaudet.

In addition to these differences in length and distribution method, the Working Mothers films and those of *En tant que femmes* differed in another crucial way: rather than rely on social realism as an aesthetic style, the latter films, and more particularly those directed by Anne Claire Poirier, fit with the second type of film work identified by Teresa de Lauretis:

[There was] a dichotomy between the two concerns of the women's movement and two types of film work that seem to be at odds with each other; one called for immediate documentation for purposes of political activism, consciousness-raising, self-expression, or the search for "positive images" of women; the other insisted on rigorous, formal work on the medium—or, better, the cinematic apparatus, understood as a social technology—in order to analyze and disengage the ideological codes embedded in representation. (De Lauretis 1990, 288-289)

Stylistically, Poirier espoused a formalism that reflexively revealed its own process of production and incorporated her subjectivity. As described by film critic Joan Nicks, "Poirier made an aesthetic of formalizing questions that address not only who controls and constructs gendered voices, but also how these voices effect, shift, and reassert narrative control and ideological

positions” (Nicks 1999, 226). The formalism of Poirier’s films is part of a larger trend within Quebec feminist filmmaking. Brenda Longfellow notes that one of the characteristics that distinguishes Quebec feminist filmmaking from its counterpart in English Canada was “the concern, shared by a broad range of films, with investigating and expanding the formal possibilities of film language. This concern with form, moreover, is never isolated in the experimental genre, but occurs as part of the project of redefining documentary and fiction to feminist purposes” (Longfellow 1984, 150). Despite the physical proximity of English Canadian filmmakers like Shannon, working in the same building as her at the NFB’s Montréal headquarters, Poirier was drawn to “the traditions of politically engaged European art cinema” (MacKenzie 2010, 335) and to “women’s cinema in the francophone world” (White 2010, 274), particularly the work of Belgian experimental filmmaker Chantal Akerman. In disrupting the codes of realist cinema, Poirier, like Akerman, sought to increase the viewer’s awareness of its constructed nature. “What these filmmakers share,” notes White, “is their search for a new way of representing the lives of women, a way that both challenges and rewards an engaged viewer” (275).

#### **5.4 Les filles du Roy and other female martyrs**

*Les filles du Roy* (1974) is a retelling of the history of Quebec that examines how the role of women has evolved over the centuries. It is constructed around a first-person narration (a love letter, according to the English description on the NFB Web site) spoken by a woman to her husband, from whom she has grown apart. Moving seamlessly from one persona to another, the woman is, among other roles, a seventeenth-century *fille du roy*; a soldier’s wife waiting at home

with photos of her son; a woman in the workforce—nurse, barmaid, erotic dancer; and finally Valérie, an allusion to Denis Héroux’s 1969 soft-porn film of the same name. The script, written by Marthe Blackburn in collaboration with Poirier and Jeanne Morazain, was based on an idea by Blackburn to create a humorous film about the status of women that would be called *Nos saintes martyres canadiennes* (Blackburn 2005, 44). Like Poirier, who began her career at the NFB cobbling short films into half-hour television programs and writing texts to connect them together (Bonneville 1975, 5), Blackburn got her start adapting existing films, in her case at Radio-Canada: “Séries américaines à traduire, à adapter, moyens métrages en langue inconnue, où nous pouvions inventer un commentaire d’après la description des plans” (Blackburn 2005, 42). Although her name is not in the final credits of all the films in *En tant que femmes*, Blackburn was the series’ main driving force along with Anne Claire Poirier (“Marthe Blackburn” 2008). Subsequently, she continued to write scripts for Poirier and they cultivated “one of the most consistent and fruitful relationships between director and screenwriter in Quebec cinema” (Marshall 2001, 215). As for Jeanne Morazain, she was a regular contributor to the *Gazette des femmes* and had worked with Poirier on the report that led to the creation of the *En tant que femmes* program. According to the film proposal the three put together in September 1972, the aim was to challenge the tradition of servitude that had confined Quebec women to supporting roles for so long and instead recognize their importance to the survival of the Quebec people. The story would revolve around eight “martyres”—spelled in the feminine form—in a reference to “les huit martyrs canadiens,” Jesuit missionaries who were killed in the seventeenth century in the wars between the Iroquois and the Huron. These female martyrs were *l’indienne, la fille du roi, la secrétaire, la maîtresse, la Corriveau, la femme du soldat, l’épouse et mère, and la femme-objet*. While it celebrated women’s importance, the project also called into question whether or

not women had actually made progress, because despite the fact that more and more women were entering the labour force, they continued to be viewed as sex objects (Poirier, Blackburn and [Morazain] Boucher 1972, 2).

*Les filles du Roy* opens in winter, with a series of shots of Quebec landscapes in snow and ice set to measured, haunting music alternating with the howling wind. In voice-over, we hear a woman musing about the difficulties of eking out an existence in such a harsh environment. Images of snow-covered trees, the icy St. Lawrence River, and a wintry birch bush dissolve to a medium shot of an Indian woman whose footsteps we hear long before we see her face. The sequence is an example of what Jerry White calls the film's "ordered but open structure" (2010, 271): it is at once highly composed with a clear argument ("women were always present in this brutal landscape, and they bore the brunt of its brutality just as much as the storied voyageurs" [272]) and elliptical, creating meaning through association rather than directly. It harks back to the classic NFB documentary style in which images without synchronized sound are tied together by voice-over narration; however, unlike those conventional documentaries whose narration authoritatively interprets and explains the images on the screen, here the narration unfolds in the loose style of personal reflections. The narrator speaks in the first person singular form, but the voice is disembodied, not that of any particular woman on screen; she addresses a fluid husband-figure identified only as "tu" or "toi." Poirier has drawn on documentary tradition but subverted it by adopting the private tone of the inner monologue more often found in fiction voice-over. As film scholar Stella Bruzzi points out, in cases when "the personal, subjective potential of (...) voice-over is unexpectedly permitted to surface, a rupturing of convention (...) forces a reassessment of the text/narration relationship and how that relationship impinges on the effect a film has on the spectator" (Bruzzi 2006, 63).

Other scenes in *Les filles du Roy* have synchronized sound and use the *cinéma-direct* style of observational cinema—a style that had been innovative in the 1960s and was strongly associated with the francophone filmmakers at the NFB, but that had, by 1974, become something of a “house aesthetic,” as Jerry White calls it (2010, 274). A bartender chats with customers as she prepares their drinks; nurses care for a bed-bound girl; a secretary orders roses on behalf of her boss for his wife on their anniversary. White considers these scenes to be “mere elements in a larger montage” that Poirier puts to use for the purpose of furthering her argument while questioning the codes of documentary realism (274). These codes, he suggests, quoting Claire Johnston’s influential 1973 article “Women’s Cinema as Counter-cinema,” are not innocent but in fact reproduce the ostensible naturalism of the dominant ideology (274). By placing the *cinéma-direct* scenes alongside ones that are more obviously staged for the camera, Poirier shows them to be constructions of their own. She reinforces the gender critique of the subject matter through formal means that connect the film to the emerging feminist cinema of the 70s.

Though the narrator speaks in the first person, this is not strictly a personal film. As in her previous film, *De mère de fille*, about which Francine Prévost observes that “ce n’est plus seulement un « je » qui cherche à s’exprimer, mais c’est un « je féminin »” (Prévost 1984; 16), Poirier stresses the community of women of different generations and social backgrounds. The inclusive “je” of the narration is echoed through montage sequences that show women’s hands making timeless gestures: affectionately mussing a child’s hair, scrubbing clothes on a washboard, caressing the skin of a baby at the breast, mending socks, peeling potatoes. Yet this is not the Everywoman of Kathleen Shannon’s Working Mothers films; she is explicitly *la Québécoise*. In all her incarnations, starting with the young woman recruited to New France in

the 1660s and ending with the mummified Valérie being unwrapped by the filmmaker—this last character is described in the narration as “Une Valérie du pays, bien de chez nous”—she is quite specifically a woman of Quebec. When the narrator speaks of “un peuple,” she is referring to the *Québécois de souche*, descendants of the settlers in New France, who still form the majority of the population in present-day Quebec; furthermore, “le pays” is not Canada but Quebec, whose status as a province within Canada had begun to be challenged by the independence movement. Poirier is mining the intersection between issues of gender and nationalism; she is at once insisting on “returning humanity to the forgotten woman in Quebec’s Quiet Revolution” and “critiquing the maleness of Quebec nationalism in the 1970s” (Nicks 1999, 230).

The connection between gender equality and national liberation—and the order in which each goal should be pursued—was a central issue in the women’s movement in the years prior to the film’s production, especially after the Front de libération des femmes du Québec (FLF) was formed in late 1969. Although it existed for only two years, the FLF was highly visible in Montréal. At first, it was characterized by collaboration between francophone and anglophone women. Influenced by American feminist theory, anglophone women gravitating around McGill University had been meeting since October 1969 under the name Montreal Women’s Liberation Movement (MWLM). Aware that English was associated with domination in Quebec, they reached out to their francophone counterparts to join forces (Mills 2010, 126-127). In fall 1970, however, the francophone women decided to exclude anglophones, believing that access to American and British feminist writings gave the anglophones an American orientation that prevented the group from focusing on issues specific to women in Quebec, including independence (133-135). The FLF carved out a complex position, arguing that women needed to break away from male-dominated progressive groups in the labour and community movements

and work together for their own emancipation; the liberation of women could not remain implicit in Quebec's struggle for national liberation (130). At the same time, Quebec women sought to transform the exploitative structures of the capitalist system (133). Although the FLF disbanded soon after, its vision of the Quebec women's movement as a struggle to liberate women from the forces of both colonialism and capitalism had a lasting influence (137)—one that carried over into the language used by Poirier in *Les filles du Roy*.

### 5.5 Balancing nationalism and feminism

Anne Claire Poirier's body of work is exceptional in a number of ways, including one that I shall focus on here although it has not generally been remarked upon: unlike the Working Mothers films, the early Studio D films, and the vast majority of Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films, virtually all of Poirier's work has been versioned. This is true of *30 minutes, Mister Plummer* (*30 Minutes, Mister Plummer*), *De mère en fille* (*Mother-to-be*), *Le temps de l'avant* (*Before the Time Comes*), *Mourir à tue-tête* (*A Scream from Silence*), and her later films, in addition to *Les filles du Roy*. An English version, which the end credits indicate was done by Nora Scott-Moncrieff, Yvon Charette and Robert Verge, was produced under the title *They Called Us "Les Filles du Roy."* It had its world premiere on April 9, 1975, at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in Toronto, with Poirier on hand to answer questions. It also played at Toronto's Harbourfront on February 1, 1978, as part of a festival of Quebec films. Despite the explicit positioning of the film's speaker as *la Québécoise*, it had broad enough appeal to attract an English audience. Furthermore—unlike the English-to-French versions supervised by Jacques Bobet in the 1950s, which I have characterized as *interventionist* in that the voice of the version

producer altered that of the original film, and the French-to-English versions made in the 1960s, which I have called *picturesque* in that they open a window onto another community—this version maintains the strong subjective positioning of the original film even as it crosses the lines to reach new audiences.

Poirier was fluent in English and had considerable contact with English Canada, going back to at least 1962 when she collaborated on the English version of Clément Perron's *Jour après jour (Day After Day)* (1962). As well as editing the film, she performed the narration on both the French original and the English version. A few months later, she travelled to Calgary with Claude Fournier to shoot the Stampede for his film *Nomades de l'ouest*. That same year, Jacques Bobet, who had by then moved on from making versions to producing films for the French program, was looking to make three half-hour films on "le Canada anglais vu par des Canadiens-Français" (Prévost 1984, 14). Because of her long-standing interest in theatre, Poirier proposed to observe actors at work at the Stratford Festival, focusing on Christopher Plummer and Kate Reid. The result was *30 minutes, Mister Plummer* (1963) which, like *Jour après jour*, had a complex soundtrack designed by Maurice Blackburn (the husband of Marthe Blackburn, who would become Poirier's long-time scriptwriting collaborator) and an experimental narration composed of overlapping voices in English and French.

Poirier's feminist consciousness was honed during these years. With the birth of her children in 1964 and 1965 came the realization that many people expected her to give up her profession once she became a mother; the NFB administration pressured her to either go back to making film programs to fill television slots or to leave the workforce entirely (Prévost 1984, 16). Rather than yield to convention, she turned her personal experience into material for a film, *De mère en fille* (1968), with a script by Michèle Lalonde based on the diary Poirier kept during her

pregnancy. After its broadcast on Radio-Canada, the film was criticized as “a narcissistic outpouring” in a review in *La Presse* (17), yet Poirier’s intention was not to dwell on her own situation. She wanted instead to create a sense of community between women in similar circumstances: “La voix personnelle rejoint la voix des femmes, surtout de celles qui sont aux prises avec la difficulté d’allier profession et maternité” (16). That voice crossed linguistic lines in the film’s English translation, *Mother-to-be*, giving women in English Canada the opportunity to become aware of the filmmaker’s intimate, poetic vision. In the same year, Poirier was a jury member for the Canadian Film Awards—another sign of her connection to English Canada.

Around this time, a radical feminist movement emerged in the United States and subsequently spread to English Canada and Quebec. The bibles of the movement were quickly made available to French-speaking readers: both Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics*, published in 1969, and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, published in 1970, were translated into French in 1971; Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) was translated a year later (Clio Collective 1987, 358). Millett and Greer visited Montréal and met with local women (363). In a 1989 interview, Anne Claire Poirier acknowledged the influence of these American feminists: “[À] ce moment, Kate Millett et Germaine Greer nous arrivaient, et c’était le grand boom, le début de la grande prise de parole si l’on veut. Étant donné ce que je vivais depuis quelques années déjà, cela m’a évidemment énormément touchée et je m’y suis impliquée à fond” (Poirier 1989, 98-99). She travelled to New York in June 1971 to meet other feminists with the aim of sharing resources. As she noted in the appendix to her research report, “Ce voyage nous a rapporté trois choses: 1) ... la nécessité dans une première étape de regrouper les femmes entre elles; 2) la conviction qu’il était important d’avoir une idéologie sociale plutôt que féministe pour mener à bien le travail que nous désirions entreprendre; 3) la possibilité d’un échange régulier de

documents audio-visuels avec les groupes militants américains” (Prévost 1984, 20). The production of an English version of *Les filles du Roy* in 1974 and its distribution in English Canada in 1975 can be seen as a concrete manifestation of that desire to connect with other women’s groups.

While the English version may have expanded the audience of *Les filles du Roy*, it remained clearly positioned as a story about Quebec that originated in French. This positioning is achieved in several ways. First, the film’s English title, *They Called Us “Les Filles du Roy”* stakes out its ground through both the maintenance of the French words and the use of pronouns. The term *filles du roy* (also spelled *filles du roi*) has historically been used in both French and English texts to refer to the 800 young women sent at the expense of Louis XIV to New France between 1663 and 1673 to provide wives for the French settlers (Landry 2004, 221). While it is not surprising that the term is not translated in the English version, its prominent place in the film’s title serves as an emphatic reminder of who “us” is: French-speaking women of Quebec—as indeed the narrator later proclaims: “We are *les Québécoises*.” Furthermore, although the NFB print material spells the title using the English conventions for punctuation and capitalization, the title card of the film spells it like a French title, with no capitals and a colon instead of quotation marks: *They called us: les filles du Roy*. Poirier would later use a similar code-switching technique, this time starting in French and ending in English, in the title of her 1997 documentary *Tu as crié Let me go*, about the murder of her daughter Yanne, a drug addict and prostitute, at age 26.

Other French words are scattered throughout *They Called Us “Les Filles du Roy.”* Cultural references to the typical products of women’s work, food and textiles, are left in French and pronounced as French words by the bilingual narrator Kelly Ricard—aural reminders of

difference: “It was during those long hours that my fingers invented the image of our country: *l'étoffe du pays*, the striped catalogue, the quilts, *les tourtières*, *le ragoût de boulettes*, our red tuques, *les ceintures fléchées*.” French also remains audible in the *cinéma-direct* sequences, for while several of these are translated through voice-over, with the volume of the original speech lowered so as to be barely audible, others use subtitles and still others are not translated at all. The refusal to translate certain short scenes, like the clip from a television broadcast in which the host teasingly asks a spritely older woman to confess her age, means that viewers who do not speak French will have an incomplete understanding of the story Poirier is telling.

But viewers of the original French film who do not speak English will also miss out on some information, for one stretch of its narration is in English. One of the personas adopted by the narrator is that of Marie-Josephte Corriveau, known as La Corriveau. Long the subject of legend, La Corriveau was sentenced to death in 1763 for the murder of her second husband after two sensational trials. She was hanged in chains, her corpse suspended in an iron cage called a gibbet and exposed to passers-by at a crossroads in Pointe-Lévy, Quebec—a punishment that was previously unknown in New France but frequent in England throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Lacourcière 1968). For Poirier, what is significant about this tale is not only the vilification of a notorious female criminal, but also the fact that her trial, held less than four years after the Conquest, was conducted entirely in English, a language she did not understand. To signal the distress she must have felt, the narrator of the French version, actress Dyne Mousso, reads La Corriveau’s sentence in English, without translation. Poirier then links La Corriveau’s plight to the situation of francophones imprisoned at Kingston’s now-defunct Prison for Women: “Après 200 ans, les Corriveaux d’aujourd’hui sont condamnées à faire leur temps en anglais. Avec l’insulte de jamais s’entendre parler dans leur langue. Ça, je suis sûre que ça te révolte autant que

moi.” (The English narrator states: “And even 200 years later, the Corriveau women of today are still doing time in English. The added insult of not being spoken to in their own tongue. I’m sure you find this situation as intolerable as I do.”) Quebec men (“ça te révolte”) and women (“autant que moi”) here find common ground in their distress at the absence of French in the penitentiary. This critique finds echoes in the position of other commentators who felt that Prison for Women, the place of incarceration of women from across Canada, was too far from the inmates’ communities and families. In response, in 1973 some Quebec inmates were transferred closer to home, to the provincial facility Maison Tanguay (Correctional Service Canada 2000). While Poirier is “clearly refusing the pan-Canadian quality of the NFB’s overall project,” the reference to the federal women’s prison shows that it is not quite true to claim, as Jerry White does (2010, 272), that “Canada does not figure into the historical project of *Les filles du Roy* at all (...); it is simply absent.”

In the English version, La Corriveau’s sentence is read by a male voice that contrasts with the many female voices in the film—those of the narrator, voice-over actors, and on-camera speakers. This decision may serve as a partial response to the perennial problem facing literary translators in Canada of how to deal with English words or passages in the original French text so that they somehow remain visible in the translation. But while the English passage remains distinct from the rest of the narration, the power relations it implies have changed: the domination of the British military officers over the French-Canadian defendant and witnesses, signalled in the original film by the use of English, is now conveyed by the use of a man’s voice. Poirier’s gender critique is bolstered while attention is deflected away from her nationalist position.

At another point in the film, Poirier refers to language relations in Canada as a whole, again belying Jerry White’s claim that Canada is absent from her vision. This is in the section

concerning another “martyr”: the soldier’s wife. By the twentieth century, society had modernized, but still it was the men who set off on adventures while the women stayed home with the children, anxiously awaiting their return. Over archival images of troops boarding ships, waving as they set sail, then running ashore amidst exploding bombs, the narrator proclaims, changing her tone to indicate that she is quoting official discourse: “Allez! Embarquez-vous! All aboard! Join the Army!” The use of English in the French narration signals the domination of English in the Canadian military during World War II and the anti-conscription sentiment in Quebec. In the proposal for the film submitted by Poirier and her co-writers, the soldier’s wives are described as “des femmes flouées. La participation du Canada à ces guerres se faisant pour le compte de l’Angleterre, elles n’avaient même pas le privilège de se sacrifier pour leur patrie” (Poirier, Blackburn and [Morazain] Boucher 1972, 3). However, in the English version of *Les filles du Roy*, the reference disappears as the narration is entirely in English: “Hurry up! All aboard! Join the army!” Once again, Poirier’s critique of English Canada is softened, altering her carefully constructed balance between feminism and nationalism.

Another shift in the relation between these two aspects of Poirier’s argument occurs at the very beginning of the film. In the opening sequence, the narrator briefly acknowledges the usurpation of Aboriginal land by Europeans (02:17):

Mais on n’était pas tout seuls. On a fait tout comme... mais on n’était pas tout seuls... C’est rien que des sauvages, tu m’as dit. On avait le droit. T’étais déjà installé chez eux quand je suis arrivée...

Because the speaker’s husband, and by extension all the colonists of New France, had arrived before the *filles du roy*, Poirier appears to be casting sole responsibility for the violence of colonization on the men. The narrator goes on to claim a connection with First Nations women (03:01):

C'est dans notre ventre, l'Indienne puis moi, toutes les deux qu'on s'est retrouvées, puis qu'on a fait la parenté. Je suis fière quand je retrouve ses traits dans le visage de mes enfants, et ça me fait plaisir. Je la comprends mieux que jamais, depuis que je suis devenue la femme d'un conquis, d'un colonisé. 1760... Ça te dit quelque chose... tu comprends ça?

In the fluid time frame of the narration, the speaker's husband—"un colonisé"—is at once an early settler and a present-day Quebecer. In the early 1960s, the term *colonisation* took on new signification in Quebec. Previously, it had referred first to the settlement of New France as a French colony, then to the process of populating the remote regions of the province in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, for example through the government program to transport working-class city dwellers affected by the Depression to the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region. The term then became part of the vocabulary that the Quebec intellectuals associated with the pro-independence journal *Parti pris* used to describe the cultural, economic and political domination of Quebec by the British and by extension, English Canada. Believing that the theories of decolonization put forth by francophone anticolonial thinkers like Frantz Fanon, Jacques Berque and Albert Memmi could be a useful framework for understanding Quebec's status, the *Parti pris* writers took the position that the Québécois were *colonisé* in the sense that they had internalized the dominant ideology: "the colonised subject is a construct, a figure whose identity is determined by the colonizer" (Dunnett 1997, 140). In 1967, Memmi gave a talk in Montréal under the title "Les Canadiens français sont-ils des colonisés?" later published in the Quebec edition of *Portrait du colonisé* (1972), in which he concluded that the form of domination under which Quebecers were living could indeed be likened to colonization, despite their relatively high standard of living compared to colonized peoples in Africa and Asia (Dunnett 1997, 141-142; Gauvin 2007, 436). Although Anne Claire Poirier maintained a distance from radical groups (Prévost 1984, 19), she was surely aware of this usage and familiar with the writings of *Parti pris*: in 1964, the journal

had published an explosive issue featuring articles by five of her colleagues, including Clément Perron, with whom she had collaborated on *Jour après jour*, which were highly critical of the NFB administration and the conventional, comfortable style of filmmaking into which they felt the NFB had fallen (Evans 1991, 99-101).<sup>67</sup> The editorial, written by Pierre Maheu, called on Québécois filmmakers to take part in the struggle for liberation and proclaimed, “Les textes du présent numéro, écrits par des cinéastes, nous semblent révéler ce qu’est l’Office National du Film: un instrument de la colonisation” (Maheu 1964, 2).

But the husband in the French narration of *Les filles du Roy* is not only a “un colonisé”; he also became “un conquis” when New France was conquered in the Battle of Quebec and became a British possession. Poirier claims solidarity with Quebec men in their desire to throw off the cloak of domination, yet insists on making visible the position of women as doubly oppressed—as women and as Quebecers. For the husband is more precisely “un conquis conquérant,” according to the film proposal, while the woman, in her role of wife and mother, is his “consolatrice” (Poirier, Blackburn and [Morazain] Boucher 1972, 4). This hierarchy of oppression, coupled with the proposal’s repeated references to women’s servitude, recalls the first text written by the Front de libération des femmes du Québec, published in summer 1970 under the title “Nous nous définissons comme esclaves des esclaves”: “Notre mouvement s’inscrit dans la lutte de libération du peuple québécois. (...) Nous considérons que les femmes ne pourront se libérer qu’à l’intérieur d’un processus de libération globale de toute la société” (O’Leary and Toupin 1982). The description of the husband as “un conquis conquérant” also

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<sup>67</sup> The very title of this issue of *Parti pris*—“L’ONF et le cinéma québécois”—reflects the journal’s nationalist ideology, as other journals like *Liberté*, *Objectif* and *Séquences* published around the same time refer only to “cinéma canadien” (Lever 1991, 673).

contains a sexual allusion, connecting the seventh martyr of the film proposal, *l'épouse et mère*, to the final one, *la femme-objet*, who is defined as an “objet de conquête” (Poirier, Blackburn and [Morazain] Boucher 1972, 4). The *femme-objet* is played by Danielle Ouimet, who reprises the role of Valérie from the 1969 film of the same name directed by Denis Héroux, in which a young woman raised by strict nuns moves to the city and discovers sexual freedom. In this and other Quebec sexploitation films that were released between 1969 and 1971, dubbed “maple syrup porn” by *Variety* magazine, women submit to sexual conquest: “La Québécoise est perçue comme désirant la conquête, désirée mais pas nécessairement désirante” (Carrière 1983, 68). In *Les filles du Roy*, Poirier subverts the promotional slogan of *Valérie*—“Déshabiller la p'tite Québécoise” (“*Valérie*,” 2008)—by unclothing *la Québécoise* herself as she circles around an unmoving Ouimet, removing the long bandage to fully expose her body.

How does this complex network of references to colonization and conquest play out in the English version? The narration corresponding to the passage quoted above shies away from referring to the husband as either *colonisé* or *conquis*:

It was through the womb that we came to know each other, the Indian woman and I. We fashioned new blood ties. I am proud when I discover her features in the faces of my children. It is a good and proper thing. I understand her even better now that I am a wife living in a conquered land, a colonized nation. 1760. Does this date mean anything to you?

Here, it is the land where the woman lives that is conquered, not her husband, and the nation that is colonized, not its inhabitants. The conquering force has become something external and diffuse, rather than intimate; it is no longer caught up in the husband's very identity. This deceptively simple change has a far-reaching effect: it shifts the emphasis away from French-English relations in Quebec's history and opens up the possibility that viewers of the English version understand the reference to the land and the nation as actually being that of the

Aboriginal peoples. The inhabitants of New France were of European descent and, prior to British rule, could only be seen as colonizers themselves; “[l]es véritables colonisés étaient alors les Amérindiens” (Gauvin 2007, 434). In this reading, perhaps the date 1760 does not refer to *la Conquête* and the capitulation of Montréal to the British army following the battle of the plains of Abraham, but instead to the treaties signed by the British forces with delegates of the Iroquois reserves of Oswegatchie and Kahnawake, and with the Hurons, who were considered allies and given guarantees of religious freedom and the possession of lands (Venne 2000, 129).<sup>68</sup>

As we have seen with regard to other scenes in the film—the sentencing of La Corriveau, the call to join the army—the implied criticism of English Canada is diluted and de-emphasized in the version. In the French original, as Jessica B. Langston observes, “Poirier is setting up a division between male and female in order to display the discrepancies and unequal power distribution; however, that division is also dissolved as men and women are united in a linguistically- and culturally-based oppression” (Langston 2004, 69). They are united, that is, as Quebecers against the power structure of the Canadian federation. In the English version, this secondary theme is not conveyed with the same force; the film speaks more about women and female identity than it does about Quebec nationalism and the place of Quebec within Canada. It was a subtle realignment of themes—yet it did not diminish the impact of the film in English Canada, and perhaps even helped Poirier build a broad-based audience for her work. Her next two films also had English versions and were shown internationally: both *Le temps de l’avant* (1975), released with subtitles under the title *Before the Time Comes*, and *Mourir à tue-tête* (*A*

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<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the term “double colonization” was used at the 1982 Women and Words conference to refer not to the oppression of women in Quebec, despite the extensive participation of Quebec women, but to that of First Nations women. (Dybikowski, Ann et al. (1985). *In the Feminine: Women and Words / Les femmes et les mots. Conference Proceedings 1983*. Edmonton: Longspoon Press.

*Scream from Silence* [1979]) were screened at Cannes, and the latter film was shown in international festivals and distributed commercially in French with English subtitles. If Poirier's films are characterized by multi-layeredness and complexity—"each work is like a mosaic where separate pieces of different tones harmonize to create contrasts of different intensity" (Prévost 1982, 29)—examining the English versions is essential in order to come to a full understanding of her body of work.

### **Conclusion: Opening up new pathways**

The English versions of Poirier's films serve as an example of her originality and nonconformity: as Francine Prévost observed as early as 1982, "Anne-Claire Poirier has always stood outside expectations and trends" (28). Her films were consistently versioned at a time when few others were, and the decision to make these versions cannot be explained as a matter of translatability. Translation scholars have long debated the extent to which meaning can be adequately conveyed in the transfer from one language to another, given that not only must the content of the source text be taken into account, but factors like communicative purpose and audience of the translation be considered. If, following Jakobson, we conclude that translation is always possible to a certain extent, despite differences in values and experience that cannot always be bridged (Munday and Hatim 2004, 15), the absence of translations, or versions, does not imply the absence of the possibility of translation. Instead, building on the basic fact of translatability, we can see that the social and ideological conditions must be in place for translation to be carried out. In other words, the act of translation depends not on the simple possibility of it occurring, but on the decision that it is important and necessary for it to occur at a

particular time and in a particular place. Translation involves recognizing an opportunity and seizing it, for when the conditions are right, translation can draw lines that open up new pathways between cultures.

In the case of Poirier's films, those new pathways established connections between anglophone and francophone women in Canada. She acknowledges that these were not the only lines of connection that could have been drawn, and indeed she felt pulled in different directions: "I remember that we had discussions that disturbed a lot of people when we said that very often we felt closer to a woman Anglophone than a man Francophone. This was regarded as a kind of *trahison* in relation to another aspect of our reality which was to the people of Québec [*sic*]. But I'm sure that none of us did betray anything or betray ourselves or our reality as Québécoises. It may sound exaggerated, but it's not" (quoted in Hartt 1974, 53). One achievement of Poirier's work in two languages, then, is that it demonstrated the feasibility of translation, the benefits of reaching a linguistically diverse audience at a time when feminist cultural productions in other fields had yet to cross those lines. For other translations would follow within a few years of the production of *Les filles du Roy* in 1974, as Quebec feminist writing in novels and plays began to be translated into English. For example, Nicole Brossard had published poetry since 1965 in several anthologies and in the avant-garde literary journal she co-founded, *La barre du jour*, but it was 1976 before the first translations of her work appeared. Similarly, one of the early pieces of feminist theatre in Quebec, *La nef des sorcières*, which premiered in March 1976, was translated into English in 1979 by Linda Gaboriau (incidentally, it was composed of six monologues, one of which was written by Marthe Blackburn, Poirier's scriptwriting partner on *Les filles du Roy*, and it was directed by Luce Guilbeault, who had acted in Poirier's *Le temps de l'avant* [1975]).

From this discussion of the work of Anne Claire Poirier and the Working Mother series, a paradox of women's filmmaking at the National Film Board becomes clear: whereas the films in the Working Mothers series aspired to speak to Everywoman, and Studio D employed inclusive language to suggest that its films were aimed at women imagined as a global community, they actually addressed a narrow cross-section of women, both through their form—social realism based on liberalist ideology—and due to the lack of versions, which prevented them from crossing linguistic borders. On the other hand, Anne Claire Poirier's films were squarely anchored in the reality of Quebec and made no bones about revolving around *la Québécoise*, yet they reached international audiences through their experimental, self-aware formal properties, which connected them to international currents in experimental filmmaking; furthermore, they succeeded in crossing linguistic borders through their English versions, which expanded the films' audiences without denying their roots.

## Chapter Six: An ongoing history

On January 21, 2009, just before the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, the National Film Board launched a consumer-oriented Web site known as the Screening Room at NFB.ca and ONF.ca. The online portal allows anyone with an Internet connection to stream films free of charge. At its inception, it contained 700 digitized audiovisual productions, selected by the English and French collection analysts Albert Ohayon and Marc St-Pierre, who aimed to balance the various topics and time periods in the collection. The move to open up its vast archives through digital access was an attempt to counteract changing consumer habits that had led to rapid declines in the NFB's traditional platforms: television broadcast, educational screenings and sales of DVD and VHS copies. New films have been added to the site regularly and as of March 31, 2013, the number of productions accessible in the Screening Room had surpassed 2,800, including 1,237 films in English, 1,140 films in French, and several hundred trailers and clips. Viewership had risen to levels that far exceeded expectations, with the most recent annual report (2012-2013) indicating 6.7 million global views.<sup>69</sup> Visitors have come mainly from Canada but also from the United States, Europe and elsewhere, to the Web site as well as the smart-phone and tablet applications.<sup>70</sup> The Screening Room is complemented by other streaming outlets like the NFB's YouTube channel and Google Play selections, and partnerships with Aéroports de Montréal and ViaRail to provide passengers with access to NFB programming.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 2012-2013. National Film Board of Canada Web site.

<sup>70</sup> National Film Board of Canada. *Evaluation of NFB's Online Screening Room NFB.ca*. September 2012. PwC LLP. National Film Board of Canada Web site, Institutional Publications.

<sup>71</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 2012-2013. National Film Board of Canada Web site.

While the primary purpose of the Screening Room is to improve public access to the vast collection of audiovisual works produced by the NFB over more than 70 years, it cannot be overlooked that the Web site also forms a picture of how the institution views its own past (Charles 2011, 1). The NFB is engaged in a commendable process of digitizing its archives to preserve the country's audiovisual heritage at a time of declining budgets for preservation initiatives and ongoing cuts affecting digitization, acquisitions and services at Library and Archives Canada. The NFB itself faced cuts of \$6.68 million in 2012 and decided to close its CinéRothèque in Montréal and Médiathèque in Toronto. Through the individual viewing stations at these facilities, the public had access to 10,000 films—some of which will never become available for online viewing due to copyright restrictions. Thus at the same time as the “digital shift” represents improved access to some films, thousands of others—including many versions—have been rendered inaccessible. The Screening Room is the public face of the NFB's efforts to reach audiences, but its layout and contents give rise to questions: Of the thousands of productions in the NFB's catalogue, which have been released online and which have fallen out of sight? What criteria influence the decision to include certain films? How can once-popular older formats like filmstrips be integrated into the standardized viewing tools? What textual material accompanies the films and how are they framed? How can viewers contribute to the site beyond the now-standard “share” and “thumbs-up” buttons and comment functions? While the answers to most of these questions are beyond the scope of this research, there is one question that is relevant: how are English and French versions presented on NFB.ca?

The answer, unfortunately, is scarcely at all. A comparison between the NFB's institutional Web site and the Screening Room is instructive. The institutional Web site, which conforms to the standard design and layout of federal government Web sites, contains not only

the film collection but also NFB publications, information on how to produce with the NFB, and press material. The film collection can be accessed through the search function or by browsing according to categories like subject, series, production personnel, and year of production. Each film has a separate Web page on which can be found, in a column centred on the screen, the following information: title; a still from the film; a short description followed by the name of the director, producer, and production agency; a section indicating “Other versions of this film” which gives the name of the film in the other language if it exists, as well as other available versions such as DVD compilations; and the credits. For example, starting from the “Our Collection” tab, if you browse “Series” and click on “Faces of Canada,” a television series from 1952 that portrayed typical Canadians in their working lives, you arrive at a list of 14 films starting with *The Calèche Driver* by Raymond Garceau. If you click on the title of the film, you learn that this humorous look at a day in the life of an elderly horse-drawn carriage driver is also available in French under the title *Le cocher*. You can click on the link to *Le cocher* and toggle to the corresponding page on the French Web site, and learn that its narration was written by Anne Hébert.

The design of NFB.ca and ONF.ca, in keeping with the consumer focus, features an attractive black background with white lettering, and the video player is placed prominently in the centre of the screen. The site encourages browsing through experts’ playlists and curated channels like “Outside the Box,” and “The Green Channel.” The search function returns only films available online; if you search for titles in “Faces of Canada” that have not been digitized, such as *The Charwoman / La femme de ménage*, you get no results. There is little textual information about each film—only a synopsis and, if it is part of a playlist, a short text written by an expert or collection analyst under the “Point of View” tab. Instead, the screen is filled with

thumbnails of similar films the visitor might enjoy and space for viewers to add comments. More particularly, there is nothing to indicate whether or not a film has an English or French version, and if it does, which is the original and which the version. After you watch *The Calèche Driver*, the Web site suggests similar films like Jean Palardy's *Carnival in Quebec* (1957); only if you happen to click on "Français" in the top corner do you realize that the film exists in French under the title *Le cocher*. Had you watched, say, Arthur Lamothe's *Bûcherons de la Manouane*, and clicked on "English," you would still see only the French film, with no indication that an English version, *Manouane River Lumberjacks*, was produced in 1962 but is not available online. The Web site does not tell you whether or not a version exists, but only whether or not it can be streamed online: that is not the whole story! Furthermore, all the film titles are in one language only, making it difficult for viewers to even recognize versions in cases where the titles differ considerably: would casual viewers realize that *The Devil's Toy* is the English version of Claude Jutra's classic film about skateboarding, *Rouli-Roulant* (1966)?

Although the Screening Room is seen as a way to "further develop a one-to-one connection with Canadians"<sup>72</sup> and it encourages viewers to respond to the films and blog posts by leaving comments, the level of interaction is minimal at this point, with most films garnering only a few comments. In the rare cases where both English and French film are available for streaming, Morgan Charles (2011, 11) points out because the English and French sites are separate, any viewers' comments on one film are not visible on the other. This lack of intersection impedes discussion that crosses linguistic lines—an issue, she notes, that "is never

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<sup>72</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 2011-2012, 15. National Film Board of Canada Web site.

strictly addressed but nonetheless undergirds any interaction with the Screening Room and the NFB as a whole” (11).

### **6.1 The voice-over version, then and now**

Does the lack of recognition of versions in the Screening Room correspond to a broader shift from a concept of the version as a specific entity towards simply “Films in French” and “Films in English”—as the annual reports now refer to them? For years, the reports contained a section called “Versions and adaptations” that detailed both language versions and abridged versions, but it was quietly dropped in 2008—the same year, ironically, that the NFB policy on versions came into effect, stipulating that all productions had to be made available in both official languages through either subtitles or voice-over translation. Voice-over is now mainly reserved for animated films, whereas for documentary, subtitles have overtaken voice-over as the preferred mode of audiovisual translation. But the two modes of audiovisual translation give very different results: subtitles, it has been noted, are a supplement to the original film—something is added but nothing is taken away, so viewers continue to hear and see the original sound and picture in addition to reading the subtitles. Consider the close relation between subtitled film and original—a DVD with optional subtitles, for example—in comparison to the decidedly different French version of *Tourist Go Home*, a 1959 short co-directed by Stanley Jackson and Ronald Weyman. It takes a tongue-in-cheek look at the tourism industry by purporting to show the Canadian Anti-Tourist League’s efforts to discourage Americans from vacationing in Canada<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>73</sup> See also the NFB.ca Blog post “Tourist Go Home: Vacationing in Canada circa 1959,” by Albert Ohayon, July 6, 2012.

Parts of the French version, entitled *Mort au touriste !*, were reshot with a cast of Quebec actors including Paul Berval. Where in the background of the original film we see posters of typical Canadian landscapes emblazoned with the word CANADA, *Mort au touriste !* has posters of Quebec with slogans like “Rien que nous autres !” and “Va-t’en chez vous !”—containing the words “nous” and “vous” which continue to have resonance in Quebec today. *Mort au touriste !* is a whole new film that sends out a subtly changed message. For other voice-over versions, the changes made to the original film are less pronounced, but nonetheless may include modifications to the verbal visual channel, such as reshooting of the opening and closing credits and of images containing text like newspapers or signs. These versions stand alone in a way that subtitled films do not.

The voice-over versions of the first few decades at the NFB employed a range of techniques—from reshooting the posters or other texts in the background of certain images to double shooting with a whole new set of actors, from translating the narration to revoicing the onscreen speakers—that altered the original film in ways that went far beyond the addition of a subtitle track. We have seen how the form of these versions responded to changes in film aesthetics and technologies as well as to social developments in Canada between the 1940s and the mid-1970s. But however they were produced, versions were a constant at the NFB, starting with the wartime newsreel series *Canada Carries On*—34 out of 54 episodes versioned into French between 1941 and 1945—and *The World in Action*—20 out of 37 episodes versioned between 1942 and 1945 (Véronneau 2008). In English and French, they entered the distribution system for release on the theatrical or non-theatrical markets or later, for television broadcast, and became one of the key ways in which the NFB succeeded in reaching audiences across Canada.

Yet until now, very little has been written about them, even by those involved in the process. The clearest position on the importance of versions was set out in a report prepared by Pierre Lafleur for Georges Mayrand of the Bureau des versions françaises; it was quoted at length in Jacques Bobet's 1968 report to the programming committee, *Examen des tendances du groupe français à l'ONF* (Bobet 1968). Lafleur's report examines the production of French versions between 1959 and 1967, noting that every year—with the exception of 1964-65 when an exceptionally high number of original French films was produced—French-language production included about twice as many versions as original films. This corresponds to my observation, while discussing the versioning efforts of Jacques Bobet in Chapter 2, that versions represented a significant part of total film output, and shows that the imbalance continued beyond the period that I focused on. With such a high percentage of versions, claims the author of the report, the Bureau des versions is essential to the French program and should have more say in decision-making, for example by having a representative on the programming committee (Bobet 1968, 46).

In the first section, the author suggests that versions form a link between English and French production: “S’il y a deux équipes à l’O.N.F., deux ensembles de production distincts par leur langues respective [*sic*], un bureau des versions devient une charnière vivante et réelle entre les deux” (38) But he reconsiders this statement and concludes that more accurately, “elles [les versions] font le pont entre la production anglaise et le public auxquels elles sont destinées, en principe le même public que celui de la production française” (45). In fact, the audience does not necessarily perceive them as versions, especially when the original narration has been replaced with one in French. For there are many ways to approach version production: “de la traduction pure et simple du commentaire jusqu’à envisager la possibilité d’une production parallèle,

différente et séparée” (40). It is here that the Bureau des versions lays claim to a particular expertise in composing and editing the voice track: “Le travail de composition du commentaire en fonction de l’image devient donc partie intégrante du travail de composition cinématographique” (39). Such an approach, whereby version-making becomes creative and acts as a kind of interpretation of the original work, is necessary in situations of unequal bilingualism like that of Canada: “à cause des facteurs extra-linguistiques tels que la population et l’économie, la situation du bilinguisme est une situation où il y a une langue ‘agressante’ et une langue ‘agressée’” (40) The Bureau, in the author’s view, must go beyond simply protecting or defending the language. In short, he concludes, “il convient d’élargir le concept qui recouvre le travail de version, le mot version ne signifiant pas pour nous traduction, mais interprétation, ie adaptation pris dans un sens large et créateur” (46).

Here we have something close to a “translation doctrine” set out by a translating institution, along the lines of the Translation Bureau’s doctrine in favour of idiomatic translation (Mossop 1990). However, whereas the Translation Bureau sought to determine a single approach for translation into English and into French, the position taken by the Bureau des versions françaises at the NFB is clearly articulated around translation in one direction only. Pierre Lafleur’s report makes no mention of any need for translation of French original films into English or any desire to connect the work of the Bureau des versions françaises to that of its counterpart on the English side. Furthermore, the recommended approach—which acknowledges that versioning involves interpretation of the original work and argues that the Bureau must therefore take on an expanded role and demonstrate creativity—is language specific, as it is intended to compensate for the weak status of French in Canada. It draws strength from the high volume of version production in comparison to originals that characterized French production in

the period referred to in the report, 1959 to 1967, and indeed, as we have noted, since the NFB was established. This “translation doctrine,” such as it is, does not represent the institution as a whole but only one of the two threads.

In practice, as we saw in Chapter 2, even before the approach favouring creative interpretation was articulated in the Bureau des versions françaises report, French versions at the NFB testified to the discursive presence of the translator, who intervened in the process of communication to modify key details of the text with the aim of shaping it to connect with local audiences. In the films we examined in Chapter 2, the modifications were often related to place: geographical details were rendered ambiguous or outright altered. At one end of the spectrum, ambiguity characterized the French version of *Letter from Aldershot* (1940), *Une lettre d’Aldershot*, in which the narration blurred the starting point of the journey of the First Canadian Division to its training camp in Aldershot, England. And at the other end, alteration characterized the French version of *Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman* (1954), *Paul Tomkowicz : nettoyeur d’aiguillages*, in which the narration brazenly claimed the film was taking place in Ottawa when it was irrefutably shot in Winnipeg. The French narration further altered a fundamental aspect of *Paul Tomkowicz* by changing the first-person narration based on the humble immigrant’s actual words to one in the third person that emphasizes the man’s mythical status by comparing him to Hercules and Diogenes. In between these two films, which bookend the period covered in this chapter, a close examination of French versions brings to light numerous other examples of changes to geographical details, as well as to proper names, quotes, text on screen, etc.

When I refer to “the translator,” I am alluding to a role in the production process rather than to a specific individual. Filmmaking is inevitably a collective activity and during the NFB’s

early years, the credits rarely singled out individuals, as all those involved in the film were considered to be civil servants and did not seek recognition. Versioning activity was at first handled by the French Unit, the small team headed by Vincent Paquette, the first French Canadian hired to the NFB, who arrived in December 1941. Once Jacques Bobet was hired in 1947, we can identify the person who filled the role of “translator,” for he quickly took on responsibility for “French versions, revisions, and adaptations” and produced hundreds of versions over the following years. But even Bobet, who had no training in translation, did not work alone and was part of a team of writers, editors, filmmakers and narrators, all of whom had overlapping responsibilities. With his defiant slogan—“the version is always better than the original”—Bobet put forward the idea that versions could be a way for French Canadians to have access to film production, at a time when original production represented only a small percentage of the total film output. The translator’s voice could speak for the collectivity as he shaped and worked with the raw material that was the original film.

Bobet’s position in favour of giving status to the version was not developed in isolation, but came in response to a frequently reiterated demand from the distribution arm of the NFB. As Gwenn Scheppler (2008, 71-72) discovered in his research on the distinctive aspects of the non-theatrical distribution circuits in Quebec, the monthly reports submitted by field representatives Jean-Théo Picard and Jean-François Biron contained a repeated request: give us more films in French, they implored; give us catalogues in French, film descriptions in French, articles in French to accompany the screenings. If a film was only available in English and was thus incomprehensible to the rural audience, the field representatives simply lowered the volume of the sound, turned on the projector microphone, and improvised their own narration. Scheppler quotes an excerpt from an interview with Picard:

Pis nous autres, étant donné qu'on avait aucune directive, t'sé moé je l'faisais parce que j'aimais ça, je l'avais fait dans les organisations d'jeunesse chez nous pis j'continuais tout simplement à dialoguer avec les gens pis à leur poser des questions. À tel point que des fois, j'fermais l'son parce que les gens comprenaient pas le commentaire, j'faisais mon propre commentaire ou bien j'leur disais « Remarquez à tel moment du film là on va vous donner une explication » comme La Vallée des Dynamos hein ! le développement de l'électricité aux États-Unis.<sup>74</sup>

In these cases, the field representative took on the role of film lecturer or *bonimenteur* by delivering a live commentary that served as both translation and explanation and more particularly, by adapting his comments to the language and culture of the local audience. Similarly, version production under Jacques Bobet drew on the tradition of oral cinema by making use of a translated narration that, albeit recorded in advance rather than performed live in person, acknowledged the concerns of the local audience.

At a time when French Canadian audiences had little choice but to watch versions—with English production dominating the NFB and limited private sector film production in Quebec—Bobet's interventionist approach can be seen as a pragmatic response. If the NFB administration felt that it didn't matter whether French-language production took the form of original films or versions, Bobet could seize the opportunity to shape the versions as he wished. In the process, the francophones who worked with him on version production in various capacities learned much about filmmaking and laid the groundwork for the development of a French voice at the NFB, which would eventually lead to a thriving Quebec film industry. The story of English-to-French versioning in the 1940s and 1950s at the NFB is an essential but heretofore overlooked part of the history of Quebec cinema.

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<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Scheppler 2008. Jean-Théo Picard, *Les Anciens Souvenirs*. The interview was carried out in 1981 as part of a series of interviews with francophone distribution representatives, for a documentary film to be directed by Gilles Blais that was never completed. The full interviews are archived at the National Film Board, and excerpts are available on the Web at <http://veloptimum.net/autres/ONF/AnciensSouvenirsTournage.htm>.

## 6.2 The translator as mediating voice

As the number of French original productions began to increase in the mid-1950s—after dropping to a low of only two films in 1950 during the difficult post-war period, when the viability of a state-sponsored film production and distribution institution was called into question—a relatively new phenomenon arose: the versioning of those French originals into English. Focusing in Chapter 3 on French-to-English versioning from 1956 to 1967, I was able to discern an approach that differed markedly from the interventionist one that characterized English-to-French versioning between 1939 and 1956. The approach lays bare the function of translation as a kind of mediation between source culture and target culture: the translated narration supplemented the voices of the original film and provided explanation for the benefit of the new audience. At a time when French production was exploring innovative documentary aesthetics, the English versions tended to bring the original films into conformity with more traditional models of documentary.

Social change was brewing in Quebec, with the death of Premier Maurice Duplessis and the election of the Liberal Party under Jean Lesage, coupled with the Radio-Canada producers' strike, which awakened the political consciousness of the French filmmakers and marked the entry into politics of then-journalist René Lévesque. Developments in camera and sound technology combined with a rejection of the traditional narration-based documentary aesthetic led to a revitalization of the documentary form, with *cinéma direct* taking part in an international movement of observational cinema occurring simultaneously in France and the United States as well as Canada. One aspect of this development that had a big impact on version production was

that it challenged the use of voice-over narration as a structuring element. Instead, the filmmakers created opportunities for participants in documentaries to speak directly—to generate their own language, as Michel Brault put it—taking advantage of the new possibilities of sync-sound recording. In my discussion of the inventive soundtracks of several *cinéma-direct* films made for *Temps présent* such as *La lutte* (1961), I pointed out that while narration was not completely absent, it was constructed in such a way that it seemed to come from within the film itself. During the scene showing the main wrestling bout at the Montréal Forum, play-by-play commentary by sportscaster Michel Normandin is heard as the men grapple in the ring: “Et Carpentier est à la merci de l’adversaire. Frottement de la bouche... élargissement du rictus... La victoire est en doute pour l’équipe Carpentier-DeNucci, après les gestes intempestifs, rudes, brutaux, de Costello!” The commentary gives the impression of having been recorded live—in fact, the film is generally described as having no narration, only ambient sound—but it was actually improvised by Normandin in the NFB studio while he watched the edited fight sequence. This was a new kind of narration that was bound to the same space as the images and ambient sound.

In the English version, *Wrestling*, the same technique was used over the cathartic final fight, with Montréal press agent and gossip columnist Norman Olson improvising over the scene in English, but there was also conventional narration. Spoken in the familiar voice of Stanley Jackson, it may have been intended to render the unconventional subject matter more palatable to an anglophone audience, but it had the unfortunate effect of covering the direct sound recorded at the Montréal Forum, including the interactions between spectators and wrestlers. Whereas *La lutte* and other *cinéma direct* films made for broadcast on *Temps présent* represented a “prise de parole” in that they contained examples of recorded spontaneous speech at a time when Quebec

identity was becoming closely linked to Quebecers' way of speaking, the English versions refused to allow these voices to speak without mediation, without adding the voice of the English program.

The phenomenon of mediation through narration occurs prominently in *The Moontrap*, the first English version of the now-classic *Pour la suite du monde* by Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault. The point of departure for my analysis of this version was the recognition that it aroused quite negative reactions: why was it so deeply unsatisfying? The English narration, once again read by Stanley Jackson, moves back and forth between two elements: a descriptive and explanatory text that introduces the characters and comments on the action, and reported speech that translates and summarizes the characters' words as they converse among themselves. The reported speech differs from conventional audiovisual voice-over, in which several voice actors perform the translated text that is heard simultaneously over the original speakers, in that it is spoken by a single narrator (Jackson) who performs all the roles. Already, this voice-over affects viewers' perception of the inhabitants of Île-aux-Coudres, whose memorable vocabulary and speech patterns have long been celebrated as evocative of a living oral culture. But what is even more problematic is the explanatory non-diegetic narration added to *The Moontrap* where there was none in the French original. The refusal of narration was fundamental to *Pour la suite du monde*: Brault and Perrault instead construct a complex soundtrack through a combination of on-camera speech, on- and off-camera musical performances, and voice-over excerpts of the participants' own words. In particular, Alexis Tremblay, patriarch and sage of the island—along with, to a lesser extent, Joachim Harvey and Grand Louis—takes on the role of first-person narrator as he recounts the traditional beluga fishing method and reads key passages from Jacques Cartier's logbook. But in the English version, his importance is diminished and his wisdom

unrecognized due to the replacement of his voice by narration. *The Moontrap* has now rightly been withdrawn from circulation and *Pour la suite du monde—English version* released on DVD with subtitles.

The addition of narration to *cinéma-direct* films and the prioritizing of narration over spontaneous speech that characterized the French-to-English versions of the late 1950s and 1960s was ultimately unsatisfying. But these versions contain a paradox. In contrast to the English-to-French versions examined in Chapter 2, they make no attempt to hide their status as translations. The English voice supplemented but did not replace those of the original film. As a result, these versions did contain extensive amounts of speech in French—surrounded, partially covered, but not entirely drowned out by the voice of the English narrator. The French speakers are heard for several sentences at a time before the narrator breaks in with a kind of summary translation that captures the main ideas. The recorded spontaneous speech made manifest the new possibilities offered by technological developments in sound and picture recording using synchronous sound systems and lightweight camera equipment. The films of the *équipe française* were greeted with enthusiasm by audiences in Quebec because they seemed to constitute an album of the people, holding up a kind of mirror reflecting who they were—and providing a microphone that recorded their authentic voices. Through the versions, despite the mediation of added narration, those voices were heard across Canada, too.

### **6.3 Fragmentation**

By the mid-60s, with sync-sound making it easy to record spontaneous speech and translating voice-over becoming established as the versioning method of choice, one would think

that translation into both English and French would flourish. But the National Film Board headed in a different direction. As television came to be seen as an effective medium for nation building, the NFB was freed to produce films for special purposes that appealed to small, targeted audiences. And as the government began to develop social policies that renewed discourse on citizenship, the NFB launched an innovative film program that would be part of efforts towards “the eradication of poverty.” Thus was born Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle (CFC/SN), which sought to empower citizens, particularly those of marginal communities like the poor and Aboriginal peoples, by exploring new forms of participation in the filmmaking process. The program, which ran from 1967 to 1980, led to greater collaboration between filmmakers and citizens of various communities, and it put distribution in the spotlight by investigating techniques like audience research and discussion groups. These techniques were built on the idea of “film utilization” of the previous decade: as an adult education handbook put it, “There are many ways to use a film effectively, but all of them involve the participation of the audience, and most of them involve discussion” (National Committee on Films 1958, 3). Audiences, suggested the 1965-66 Annual Report, “want films that challenge and stimulate rather than didactically inform; they are far more inclined to use films to provoke discussion and investigation than to passively accept informative film essays.”<sup>75</sup> However, the impact of all the thinking about audience and how films would be used was that the practice of translation diminished considerably. Of the 128 English-language Challenge for Change films and videos, only 7 were versioned into French, and of the 57 French films and videos, 17 were versioned into English.

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<sup>75</sup> National Film Board of Canada. Annual Report 1965-66.

It appears that the two impulses were incompatible: on the one hand, the Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films built a participatory process into the very production through such techniques as the “feedback loop” of Fogo Island Films, whereby community members would screen rough cuts and the ensuing discussion would be integrated into the re-edited film; collaboration and engagement were the buzzwords. On the other hand, translation had shown that it could forge connections between the two linguistic groups in Canada, first as a way to compensate for the lack of original production in French, when the direction of translation was from English to French, then as a means of opening up a window onto Quebec reality, albeit with the mediation of narration, when the direction was from French to English. As emphasis shifted from the national to the local, from the centre to the margins, translation to a large extent was pushed out of the picture. My discussion in Chapter 4, then, centred on the very few films that actually were versioned at a moment when non-translation was the norm.

These films shared an unusual characteristic: the originals contained both English and French, as they were set in the bilingual working-class neighbourhoods of Montréal’s southwest or featured bilingual participants who switched between the two languages. Both original film and version were constructed through a combination of speech, subtitling and voice-over, blurring the line between them. Translation was performed by the participants themselves during the making of the films; it was not something done to the finished product. The interplay between languages came at a time when bilingualism and linguistic duality were central to public discourse in Canada, with the report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism leading to the Official Languages Act of 1969. In Quebec, a shift was underway at the community level from the traditional parish-based model of charity for the poor to the new concept of *animation sociale*, which encouraged citizens to form committees and work together

towards social change. Among the committees portrayed in the bilingual NFB films were the Comité des citoyens de Saint-Jacques, which recruited volunteer doctors, nurses and medical students to set up a community health clinic; a group of residents of Little Burgundy who met with city hall to have a say in the demolition and rebuilding of their homes; and the Community Legal Clinic of Point St. Charles, still in existence today. While the intermingling of languages and cultures showed that documentary participants could share in the task of translation through voices that came from within the filmic world, the pockets of cross-cultural communication portrayed in these films remained an exception. As headlines in the 1970s came to be dominated by the October crisis, War Measures Act, and a series of controversial language laws, the climate in Montréal became increasingly polarized around issues of language and identity.

Other Challenge for Change films that went untranslated were the three “Indian dialogue films” of 1967, which were intended to provide an Aboriginal perspective on policy matters for the benefit of government and mainstream Canadian society. But non-translation of a different kind had been occurring since the very beginnings of the NFB, in the tendency to leave speech in Aboriginal languages untranslated. Laura Boulton spent time in the field between 1941 and 1943 with the Haida and Tsimshian peoples of the B.C. Coast and with Inuit of Baffin Land, where she recorded traditional arts and crafts like sewing sealskin, carving ivory, and singing and dancing. But she seems to have been concerned only with the musicality of speech, not the meaning of the words, as she filled her soundtracks with bits of untranslated, non-synchronized, decontextualized speech and song. Her project has similarities to the “salvage anthropology” projects of the early decades of the twentieth century that set out to record and anthologize Aboriginal oral traditions before the way of life disappeared altogether—but it decontextualized those traditions in the process, “construct[ing] the ‘Native voice’ as an isolated fragment or ethnographic object” that

was presented in “art museum style” (McCall 2011, 18). Starting in 1968 with the formation of the Indian Film Crew—not entirely successful because the government insisted that IFC trainees come from reserves across the country, which meant they had little in common with each other (Stewart 2007, 57-58)—the NFB sought ways to put into practice the concept of “letting speak,” such as by recording group discussions without interruption and maintaining the entire scene without editing; and later, through subtitles and self-translation.

The phenomenon of non-translation remained a central issue in Chapter 5, when I turned to the subject of women’s filmmaking at the NFB. Here we saw a different approach in French and English production while the question of distribution—in what contexts would the films be shown? who would see them? how could they most benefit women’s lives?—continued to generate debate. The rhetoric espoused by Studio D was one of inclusion, in which the audience was imagined as “an all-encompassing global community unified by gender” (Vanstone 2007, 80), but in reality, the English voices were silent in French Canada. Each of the 11 Working Mother films directed by Kathleen Shannon was built around an interview with a single participant, who speaks on and off camera; voice-over translation would have been a straightforward matter. But as with other Challenge for Change/Société nouvelle films, concern with community—here, Shannon’s preference for small screenings and facilitated discussions—seemed to preclude translation. Anne Claire Poirier, by contrast, embraced the possibilities of translation by releasing her films in French and English, showing that one could be both rooted in local culture and connected to international currents in film and feminism.

### **Concluding remarks**

In my retelling of the NFB’s history in its early decades from the perspective of version production, one of my objectives has been to reveal the continuities that once existed between

English and French production. Although voice-over versioning was harnessed to a specific purpose—compensating for the lack of original French production in the years when Jacques Bobet was churning out hundreds of English-to-French versions; accompanying the voices of an emerging Québécois culture in English Canada through a familiar narrative voice in the French-to-English versions—it nonetheless created opportunities for exchange. While I have focused on the filmic texts as sites of contact, there were also numerous moments when the individuals involved in production worked together—as crew members collaborating on shoots (cameramen Michel Brault and Georges Dufaux, sound recordist Marcel Carrière); as bilinguals who moved fluidly between English and French production (Bernard Devlin, Guy Glover, Léonard Forest); as filmmakers interested in what was going on in the other community (Dorothy Hénaut, Bonnie Sherr Klein). I have also paid attention to the silences that punctuate this history, the polarities and divisions that made speaking out difficult, the missed opportunities that arose when productions did not go beyond the immediate audience for whom they were initially conceived. Translation at the NFB is an ongoing process, and perhaps some of the spaces will one day be filled in through new versioning projects and retranslations. The NFB has reinvented itself numerous times over the past seventy-five years and continues to do so, such as with its online Screening Room that is reaching global audiences while changing the way versions are presented to the public. The study of its unique commitment to translation has much to contribute to our understanding of the way it is practiced in Canada and of the cultures that have been transformed by documentary production in two languages.

## Filmography

- 30 minutes, Mister Plummer (30 Minutes, Mister Plummer)*, dir. Anne Claire Poirier, 27 min., 1963
- À l'heure de la décolonisation (The Hour of Independence)*, dir. Monique Fortier, 27 min., 1963
- À qui appartient ce gage?* dir. Susan Huycke, Clorinda Warny, Francine Saïa, Jeanne Morazain, Marthe Blackburn, 56 min., 1973
- À Saint-Henri le cinq septembre (September Five at Saint-Henri)*, dir. Hubert Aquin, 41 min., 1962
- À St-Henri, le 26 août (St-Henri, the 26<sup>th</sup> of August)*, dir. Shannon Walsh, 85 min., 2011
- Alexis Tremblay, Habitant (Terre de nos aïeux)*, dir. Jane Marsh Beveridge, 37 min., 1943
- Angotee: Story of an Eskimo Boy (Angotee : l'engant esquimau)*, dir. Douglas Wilkinson, 31 min., 1953
- Atlantic Patrol (Patrouille sur l'Atlantique)*, dir. Stuart Legg, 10 min., 1940
- Au bout de ma rue*, dir. Louis-Georges Carrier, 13 min., 1958
- The Back-Breaking Leaf (La feuille qui brise les reins)*, dir. Terence Macartney-Filgate, 29 min., 1959
- La beauté même*, dir. Monique Fortier, 9 min., 1964
- Billy Crane Moves Away*, dir. Colin Low, *Newfoundland Project*, 17 min., 1967
- Break-through (L'assaut)*, dir. James Beveridge, 11 min., 1944
- Les brûlés (The Promised Land)*, dir. Bernard Devlin, 114 min., 1957
- Les bûcherons de la Manouance (Manouane River Lumberjacks)*, dir. Arthur Lamothe, 27 min., 1962
- Careers and Cradles (Carrières et berceaux)*, dir. Jack Olsen, 11 min., 1947
- Caroline (Caroline)*, dir. Clément Perron and Georges Dufaux, 28 min., 1964
- Carnaval de Québec (Carnival in Quebec)*, dir. Jean Palardy, 12 min., 1957
- The Charwoman (La femme de ménage)*, dir. Léonard Forest, 10 min., 1954

*Le chat dans le sac (The Cat in the Bag)*, dir. Gilles Groulx, 73 min., 1964

*Chronique des Indiens du Nord-Est du Québec*, dir. Arthur Lamothe, prod. Les Ateliers audiovisuels du Québec, series of 13 films, 1973-1983

*Chronique d'un été (Chronicle of a Summer)*, dir. Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch, prod. Argos Films, 85 min., 1961

*La cité de Notre-Dame*, dir. Vincent Paquette, 28 min., 1942

*Citizen's Medicine (La clinique des citoyens)*, dir. Bonnie Sherr Klein, 30 min., 1970

*City of Gold (Capitale de l'or)*, dir. Colin Low and Wolf Koenig, 21 min., 1957

*City Out of Time (Ville intemporelle)*, dir. Colin Low, 15 min., 1959

*Le cocher (The Calèche Driver)*, dir. Raymond Garceau, 8 min., 1953

*Co-op Housing: The Best Move We Ever Made*, dir. Laura Sky, 22 min., 1975

*Corral (Corral)*, dir. Colin Low, 11 min., 1954

*La culture du tabac à Joliette (Tobacco Raising in Quebec)*, dir. Vincent Paquette, 6 min., 1944

*The Danish Poet (Le poète danois)*, dir. Torill Kove, 14 min., 2006

*The Days Before Christmas*, dir. Terence Macartney-Filgate, Stanley Jackson, Wolf Koenig, 29 min., 1958 / *Bientôt Noël*, dir. Terence Macartney-Filgate, Stanley Jackson, Wolf Koenig, Georges Dufaux, 29 min., 1959

*De mère en fille (Mother-to-be)*, dir. Anne Claire Poirier, 75 min., 1967

*Eskimo Arts and Crafts (L'artisanat esquimau)*, dir. Laura Boulton, 18 min., 1943

*Étude en 21 points (Game in 21 Points)*, dir. Jacques Bobet, 11 min., 1968

*Farewell Oak Street (Adieu, rue des Chênes)*, dir. Grant McLean, 17 min., 1953

*Les filles du Roy (They Called Us "Les Filles du Roy")*, dir. Anne Claire Poirier, 56 min., 1974

*La fin des étés*, dir. Anne Claire Poirier, 28 min., 1964

*Golden Gloves (Golden Gloves)*, dir. Gilles Groulx, 27 min., 1961

*Le goût de la farine*, dir. Pierre Perrault, 108 min., 1977

*Halifax Neighbourhood Center Project*, dir. Rex Tasker, 33 min., 1967

*Heritage (Notre heritage)*, dir. J. Booth Scott, 17 min., 1939. Produced by the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau.

*L'homme aux oiseaux (1952) (The Bird Fancier [1955])*, dir. Bernard Devlin and Jean Palardy, 30 min.

*Indian Dialogue*, dir. David Hughes, 27 min., 1967

*Indian Relocation: Elliot Lake*, dir. D'Arcy Marsh and David Hughes, 29 min., 1967

*Introduction to Fogo Island*, dir. Colin Low, *Newfoundland Project*, 16 min., 1968

*Invitation à souper (A Friend for Supper)*, dir. Vincent Paquette, 10 min., 1944

*J'me marie, j'me marie pas*, dir. Mireille Dansereau, 81 min., 1973

*Jour après jour (Day After Day)*, dir. Clément Perron, 27 min., 1962

*Land of Quebec (Le pays de Québec)*, dir. Laura Boulton, 19 min., 1944

*Letter from Aldershot (Une lettre d'Aldershot)*, dir. John Taylor, 9 min., 1940

*Lonely Boy (Paul Anka)*, dir. Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig, 26 min., 1962

*La lutte (Wrestling)*, dir. Claude Fournier, Michel Brault, Claude Jutra, Marcel Carrière, 27 min., 1961

*La mémoire des anges (The Memories of Angels)*, dir. Luc Bourdon, 80 min., 2008

*Maud Lewis: A World Without Shadows (Maud Lewis – Sans ombre)*, dir. Diane Beaudry, 10 min., 1976

*Mourir à tue-tête (A Scream from Silence)*, dir. Anne Claire Poirier, 95 min., 1979

*Mudflats Living*, Robert Fresco and Kris Paterson, 28 min., 1972

*New Scotland*, dir. Laura Boulton, 10 min., 1943

*Nomades de l'ouest (Stampede)*, dir. Claude Fournier, 27 min., 1963

*Opération boule de neige (VTR St-Jacques)*, dir. Bonnie Sherr Klein, 26 min., 1969

*The Other Side of the Ledger: An Indian View of the Hudson's Bay Company (La face cachée des transactions)*, dir. Willie Dunn, Martin DeFalco, 42 min., 1972

*Our Northern Neighbour*, dir. Tom Daly, 21 min., 1944

*Paul Tomkowicz: Street-railway Switchman (Paul Tomkowicz: nettoyeur d'aiguillages)*, dir. Roman Kroitor, 9 min., 1953

*The Point: Community Legal Clinic (Citoyen nouveau: Services juridiques communautaires)*, dir. Grant Kennedy, 28 min., 1972

*The Point*, dir. Robert Duncan, 48 min., 1978

*The Point*, prod. Silo Productions Inc., National Film Board, 85 min., 2006

*Pour la suite du monde (The Moontrap, 85 min. / For the Ones to Come / Of Whales, the Moon and Men / Pour la suite du monde—English version)*, dir. Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault, prod. NFB, 105 min., 1963

*Powwow at Duck Lake*, dir. David Hughes, 14 min., 1967

*La p'tite Bourgogne (Little Burgundy)*, dir. Maurice Bulbulian, 43 min., 1968

*Quebec Path of Conquest (Québec, tremplin stratégique)*, dir. Radford Crawley, 16 min., 1942

*Québec-U.S.A. ou l'invasion pacifique (Visit to a Foreign Country)*, dir. Michel Brault and Claude Jutra, 27 min., 1962

*Les raquetteurs (Les raquetteurs)*, dir. Gilles Groulx, Michel Brault, 14 min., 1958

*Rouli-Roulant*, 1966, (*The Devil's Toy*, 1969), dir. Claude Jutra, 15 min.

*The Royal Visit (La visite royale)*, script Frank Badgley, J. Booth Scott and Robert Collyer, 90 min., 1939. Produced by the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau.

*Saint-Jérôme*, dir. Fernand Dansereau, 116 min., 1968

*La soif d'or*, dir. Jacques Giraldeau, 27 min., 1962 / *The Gold Seekers*, dir. Robert Russell, 27 min., 1962

*Some American Feminists (Quelques féministes américaines)*, dir. Luce Guilbeault, Nicole Brossard and Margaret Westcott, 55 min., 1978

*Souris, tu m'inquiètes*, dir. Aimée Danis, 53 min., 1973

*Le sport et les hommes (Of Sport and Men)*, dir. Hubert Aquin, script Roland Barthes, 58 min., 1959

*Stalking Seal on the Spring Ice: Part 1 (À l'affut du phoque sur la glace printanière, Ire partie)*, dir. Quentin Brown, prod. Education Development Centre, National Film Board, *The Netsilik Film Series*, 24 min., 1967

*Télesphore Légaré, garde-pêche*, dir. Claude Fournier, 29 min., 1959

*Le temps de l'avant (Before the Time Comes)*, dir. Anne Claire Poirier, 87 min., 1975

*Le temps des amours (Courtship)*, dir. Hubert Aquin, 58 min., 1961

*These Are My People*, dir. Michael Mitchell, Willie Dunn, Barbara Wilson, Roy Daniels, 13 min., 1969

*The Things I Cannot Change*, dir. Tanya Ballantyne Tree, 55 min., 1966

*Toronto Boom Town (Toronto : ville champignon)*, dir. Leslie McFarlane, 10 min., 1951

*Totems*, dir. Laura Boulton, 11 min., 1944

*Tourist Go Home (Mort au touriste!)*, dir. Stanley Jackson and Ronald Weyman, 24 min., 1959

*La traverse d'hiver (Winter Crossing at L'Isle-aux-Coudres)*, dir. René Bonnière, prod. Crawley Films, Société Radio-Canada, *Au pays de Neufve-France*, 29 min., 1960

*Tuktu and His Eskimo Dogs (Tuktu et les chiens eskimaux)*, dir. Laurence Hyde, 14 min., 1966

*Tuktu and the Trials of Strength (Tuktu et les épreuves de force)*, dir. Laurence Hyde, 14 min., 1967

“Underwater Round-up”/“Les homards du Nouveau Brunswick,” *Eye Witness/Coup d'oeil #15*. 11 min., 1949

*Un du 22e*, dir. Gérald Noxon, 11 min., 1940. Produced by Associated Screen News and distributed by France Film

*Valérie*, dir. Denis Héroux, prod. Cinépix, 97 min., 1969

*Women Are Warriors (Les femmes dans la mêlée)*, dir. Jane Marsh, 14 min., 1942

*You Are on Indian Land (Vous êtes en terre indienne)*, dir. Mort Ransen, 36 min., 1969

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