

The Pedagogy of Translation: Learning from Innu activist Elizabeth Penashue's Diaries

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Collaborating

In every communicative act there is a gap -- between teller and listener, between writer and reader, between signifier and signified. However, this gap can be a creative space in which new forms of agency and of voice may arise... A diversity of forms of affiliation is possible and indeed necessary to recognize the struggle of writing and of telling a more just story of Indigenous presence in North America, through the mode of cross-cultural collaboration. (Sophie McCall, 2011, p. 213)

You don't have to write exactly what I said because my English is not that good. You can use other words but it have to mean exactly what I said. (Elizabeth Penashue)

I first met Elizabeth Penashue when I interviewed her for a CBC Ideas radio documentary on the theme of walking. I was in St. John's and she

was in Goose Bay. It was the first interview she had ever given in English and she had brought her daughter to help her. As she described the annual weeks-long walk she leads on snowshoes across the Labrador wilderness, and its meaning in relation to her quest for environmental justice and cultural survival for the Innu, she wept ... and so did I. Somehow across our vast cultural and linguistic difference and through our tears, we connected. The next year I joined her on the walk, a walk across snow covered barrens, through forests and over frozen lakes, sleeping in a communal tent, hunting and fishing, and pulling our belongings behind us on toboggans.

After I returned home, Elizabeth sent me a large box containing the diaries she has been keeping since her early days of protesting with others against NATO low-level flying and weapons testing on Innu land during the mid-1980s: twenty notebooks and a pile of sheets of paper covered with flowing handwriting in Innu-aimun. Born into a nomadic family, Elizabeth spent most of her childhood on the land. She had very little schooling but a priest taught her a writing system for Innu-aimun during a period when she was ill and in North West River for medical care, and she has been writing ever since. The diaries describe daily life on the land, document Innu history and cosmology, and provide details of the anti-NATO campaigns, her subsequent imprisonment, and her growth as an environmental and cultural activist. They also include letters to various people: one to former Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams reminds him that the Queen has visited her tent and the least he could do is visit her as well to discuss the proposed hydro development on the Mista-shipu¹; another to a granddaughter on the day she was born laments the difficult world she has come into and the huge challenges facing the Innu.

Elizabeth is well known within and far beyond the Innu Nation. The recipient of a National Aboriginal Achievement Award and an honorary doctorate from Memorial University, she has been a subject of several

documentary films, books and articles. The importance of her diaries has long been recognized but it was difficult to get them translated because the few people who read and write Sheshatshui Innu-aimun are in constant demand as court interpreters, educators, and administrators. This is why she decided to seek the help of an outsider who could sit with her, discuss the material, and help her shape it into a book. Our collaboration might best be summed up by her observation that “You have your meshkanau² and I have mine. Your meshkanau is books and mine is the land.” We sit side by side and slowly, painstakingly, she explains what she has written.

We have now completed translations of the existing diaries (though she is still producing more), transcriptions of the original texts in Innu-aimun, and some audio and video recordings. Future work includes developing transmedia³ curriculum based on the diaries for future use in schools, standardization of the Innu-aimun texts⁴, editing the digitized material, and selecting images⁵. The images will enable elders who do not read written text to use the book and will also provide an additional layer of translation for non-Innu readers to help them understand the context and perhaps to build solidarity through aesthetic engagement. Translation and online dissemination will enable the stories and images, along with video and audio material, to reach much wider national and international audiences. As well, Elizabeth’s stories make a contribution to world literature, as they are both moving and eloquent, and document an extraordinary life.

This article is about the translation, editing and illustrating of these diaries. I discuss aesthetic decisions in preparing them for publication for various audiences including Indigenous elders, Innu school children in danger of losing their language, and non-Innu readers around the world. For the purpose of this article, I understand aesthetics in the sense of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s well known statement that aesthetics and ethics are one and his related idea that art can show us what truly matters in

life (Tilghman, 1991). Similarly, Gayatri Spivak (2009) argues for a certain kind of education in the humanities, a “training of the imagination” towards a more just future. A key aspect of this education might be the concept of “structures of feeling”, a term coined by Raymond Williams (1977) to refer to shared perceptions and values common to an era or cultural group and circulated through aesthetic forms and conventions. Edward Saïd (1993) applied the concept to postcolonial contexts, showing how such structures and the aesthetic forms that support them could uphold or counter imperialism. This article examines how the aesthetic qualities of certain kinds of texts might contribute to producing “structures of feeling” that could enable diverse readers to engage with an Innu woman writing in Innu-aimun about her own rich and fascinating but also very difficult life and times.

It is not possible for most people to visit a northern place like Nitassinan⁶, where Elizabeth lives, but through translation, writing and trans-media representations they can learn a great deal about a very different world. Thinking explicitly about the translation process (which also involves aesthetic decisions and is rarely included in school curricula) might also open up new ways of thinking about the dilemmas of representing the lives of others as an ethical practice. As part of this discussion, I hope to introduce some of the insights from the rich body of literature on translation to readers interested in aesthetics, cultural criticism, and curriculum.

Collaboration and translation across this kind of social and cultural difference are not simple. Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2004) uses the term culturalism to describe attitudes and practices that homogenize Indigenous and western cultures and construct indigenous cultures as deficient. Culturalism underpins colonization, land theft and genocide. Vanessa Andreotti, Cash Ahenakew and Garrick Cooper (2011) show how difficult it can be to avoid, and stress that,

scholars and educators working with indigenous ways of knowing are called to translate these into the dominant language, logic and technologies in ways that are intelligible and coherent (and, very often, acceptable or palatable) to readers and interpreters in the dominant culture (p. 44).

Elizabeth recognizes precisely this dilemma whenever she speaks publicly in English. For example, she often says the animals told her things and then follows these statements with “I know the animals don’t really talk but...” She does this because her children told her the Akenashau⁷ will think she is crazy if she says animals talk to her. She is translating not just words but worlds and our collaborative project attempts to do the same. The value that such a project might have, both for the Innu and for others, makes it seem worthwhile, despite the challenges outlined above.

Edith Grossman, the translator of writers ranging from Cervantes to the Chilean anti-poet Nicanor Parra, suggests that English speaking regions of the world are not exposed nearly enough to writers in other languages because of a cultural antipathy toward translated works. She argues that we lose not only the opportunity to read those works but the possibility of relationships beyond the English-speaking world:

Translation not only plays its important traditional role as the means that allows us access to literature originally written in one of the countless languages we cannot read, but it also represents a concrete literary presence with the crucial capacity to ease and make more meaningful our relationships to those with whom we may not have had a connection before. Translation always helps us to know, to see from a different angle, to attribute new value to what once may have been unfamiliar. As nations and as individuals, we have a critical need for that kind of

understanding and insight. The alternative is unthinkable.

(Grossman, 2010, pp. x-xi)

This article applies the argument above to curriculum studies. For curriculum, translations are valuable in two ways: First, a greater awareness of translation in indigenous contexts, and of aesthetic decisions (of style, word choice, illustration and so on) involved in such translations, could contribute to a better understanding of what it really means to live together in a diverse nation. Second, engagement with translated texts can make that relationship more meaningful.

Translating

No translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. (Walter Benjamin, 1923, Zohn, trans. 1968, p. 74)

The violence wreaked by translation is partly inevitable, inherent in the translation process, partly potential, emerging at any point in the production and reception of the translated text, varying with specific cultural and social formations at different historical moments. (Lawrence Venuti, 2008, p. 15)

Lawrence Venuti (2008) argues that translation is violent in that it imposes the values of the “target” culture and its language onto those of the source. Translators tend to “domesticate” the texts on which they work to make them more familiar and palatable to readers of the translated version. He suggests that instead they should “foreignize”, thus inviting readers to make an effort to understand something about the culture of origin. This approach may provide a partial answer to the problem Venuti describes, but the violence relates not only to our own

decisions regarding text and images but also to circumstances outside our control, such as the regulations of funding bodies and school boards.

The first form of violence we had to confront is the fact that to get funding we must write in English (or French, but not Innu-aimun). If the new policy of SSHRC is knowledge mobilization and Aboriginal research is a priority area, it seems strange that Indigenous knowledge holders cannot apply for funding if they are not affiliated with a university and that applications cannot be submitted in any Indigenous language. Other writers have had similar experiences. For example, Paul Apak Angilirq, of Igloodik Isuma Productions, discussed funding for the film *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)* in an interview with anthropologist Nancy Wachowich:

NW: So let me get this straight, it was written out on paper from tapes of the elders speaking in Inuktitut, then turned into an English story, and then turned into an Inuktitut script, and then turned into an English script?

PA: Yes, that is the system that we had to use in order to get money. Because... Canada Council and other places where we could apply for money, they don't read Inuktitut (cited in Nollette, 2012).

Nicole Nollette concludes that "both the process and the result of translation are telling manifestations of the power dynamics at play, dynamics that not only lead to language loss but also to a certain gain" (np). The loss seems clear. Although Inuktitut is widely spoken across the north, its speakers are forced to use this cumbersome process in dealing with government institutions. And the more dominant English is, the more likely the Indigenous language will be lost. The gain may be less obvious.

What gain might there be in translating back and forth, in endless explaining, in trying to live simultaneously in two worlds? Perhaps doing so can help to synthesize what really matters about the work, to

reconceptualize, to encounter each other in conversation about the texts, and to find spaces where, as Angilirq does in the example above, speakers of the dominant language are reminded that it is they who are deficient. After all, they are the ones who can't read Inuktitut, or Innu-aimun. I think Homi Bhabha's (1995) concept of splitting can help us understand where the gain might lie:

Splitting constitutes an intricate strategy of defense and differentiation in the colonial discourse. Two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the same place, one takes account of reality, the other is under the influence of instincts which detach the ego from reality. This results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief... Splitting is then a form of enunciatory, intellectual uncertainty and anxiety that stems from the fact that disavowal is... a strategy for articulating contradictory and coeval statements of belief.
(np).

Bhabha goes on to explain that this uncertainty "allows the native or the subaltern or the colonized the strategy of attempting to disarticulate the voice of authority at that point of splitting" (np) and that "the effort has to be made to live on the cusp, to deal with two contradictory things at the same time without either transcending or repressing that contradiction". The use of words like *nutshimit*⁸ and *Akenashau* without translations or italics (though definitions are suggested in the endnotes) is a gesture towards that kind of splitting. Perhaps the failure to translate certain words might remind us that they are not just words but part of a world that can never be perfectly translated. And perhaps when Elizabeth says she knows the animals don't talk (having just told us what they said to her), she is inviting the *Akenashau* to imagine two ways of thinking and to hold both in our minds at once.

Hito Steyerl (2006) asks whether translation can be “a way of opening up and examining difference rather than managing it” (np). As if in answer, Sophie McCall suggests that “one of [anthropologist, filmmaker and writer Hugh Brody’s] tactics is the failure of cultural translation, which draws attention to the provisionality of all acts of representation” (2011, p. 75). Brody uses various strategies – such as juxtapositions of differing versions of a story, indirect rather than direct (but still mediated) quotation, or the highlighting of inaccurate translations in land claims consultations – to remind us that representations are not transparent. McCall makes a similar point about Zacharias Kunuk’s use of partial translations in *Atanarjuat*. Parts of the dialogue are presented in Inuktitut but not explained in the sub-titles. Thus a non-Inuktitut speaking audience might realize they are excluded, and can only follow the story on certain levels. The use of partial translation and failed translation are also ways of reminding the dominant group that they are missing something, something they might want to know, might even *long* to know. (Of course, I am referring mainly to people who feel some degree of sympathy or solidarity, the Akenashau or Kallunaat⁹ who are likely to watch Isuma’s films or read Elizabeth’s books in the first place. Mainly, but not solely.) The non-translation of Innu words that are either difficult to translate or have special importance or emotional intensity for Innu (such as the use here of words like *nutshimit*, *Akenashau* and *Mista-shipu*) is an example of partial translation. In Venuti’s terms, this is a kind of “foreignization” (2008). McCall argues that this strategy enables “two parallel texts [to] interact and speak to each other in complex and imperfect ways” (p. 189) and address different audiences. In the case of *Atanarjuat*, both versions are simultaneously available, as voiced and subtitled versions of the film. In Elizabeth’s book and related trans-media material, how to present the languages is a question still to be decided.

Nolette (2012) notes that there are both partial translations and “supplementary explanatory measures” (np) in the form of added materials, which might lead the audience to seek further explanation of the incomprehensible -- for most non-Inuit -- but moving and beautiful world depicted in Atanarjuat. There are questions here about how to use both of these strategies effectively in the English and French versions of Elizabeth’s diaries and to do so in ways that might “challenge [non-Indigenous readers] to see with a native eye” (Krupat, 2009, p. 133). Nollette calls this kind of approach “countertranslation” and suggests that it might give readers a feeling of “not quite understanding everything on the terrain of the original” (np). As Camille Fouillard, editor of *It’s Like the Legend* and other Innu books in English, put it, “Let them do the research if they want to know more about the Innu” (personal communication). There is a risk of losing some readers, perhaps, but also the possibility that the failure to translate every word will signal that not everything can be translated and invite readers to try their best to understand what they can.

Another area where there are both gains and losses is in the standardization of the Innu-aimun. Labrador Innu schools have recently adopted a policy of using only standardized language resources. On the one hand, some experts believe that standardization of the spelling, grammar and vocabulary may make it easier for students to develop literacy in the language and for the Innu to communicate effectively across communities. On the other, what happens to the aesthetics of Elizabeth’s voice in this process? What happens to the nuance, cadence and rhythm, and perhaps also the passionate haste, the onward rush of words and thoughts as she jots things down in quiet moments in the tent, in her husband’s truck as she waits for him in Goose Bay, in the long hours in prison awaiting trial and the fearful moments on airplanes travelling to speaking engagements? The standardization of the Innu-aimun version will be another kind of translation and another kind of

violence. Something important - a sense of Elizabeth's writing voice and the dialect and history it comes from - will be lost but, in pragmatic terms, the book will not be used in schools unless it is standardized.

Another translation issue, with – as always – the potential for violence, is the question of how to render Elizabeth's voice in English. Before I began working with her, some of the diaries had been translated into French by Innu translator and poet Josephine Bacon. I retranslated them into English, after discussing the French translations with Elizabeth. In one of them someone is described as "élégante". The French word maps very closely onto the English one and I assume that Bacon chose a word that would also evoke what was written in Innu. But someone else saw the translation and said "Elizabeth wouldn't use a word like that." It is true that in English she would not, but in Innu-aimun she would. Yet Fouillard speaks of the power of Innu voices in what they write in English, even though – or precisely because – the English is pared down (personal communication). And I can often hear Elizabeth's voice in my mind, even long after I have corrected and standardized her written English, as she asked me to do. Her haunting lament, for example, when one of her children gets an administrative position: "It means you won't come on the land no more".

Finally, one more kind of potential violence is in decisions to foreignize or domesticate the text to be translated. Either strategy has potential pitfalls. Domestication may make it easier for readers to relate to Elizabeth, to feel they belong to the same world and therefore should support her work. However, this would mean that they may not recognize how very different her world is, or make a sustained effort to try to learn. Foreignization might be a way of inviting the reader to do what I think Emmanuel Lévinas (1961) was advocating, which is trying to learn from the other without possessing or even identifying, but simply accepting their alterity. On the whole, I prefer this approach but it

has a risk of creating an exotic effect that may objectify or distance the storyteller. How, for example, should we treat Elizabeth's lyrical description of waking up at dawn in her tent? In the following rough draft, we have:

The birds woke me up early this morning. I lay in bed and listened, thinking about how these were the same sounds I heard as a child. After a while I got up and made the fire, then lay down again, relaxing and imagining the birds were calling me. They sang for a while and then they moved on. I felt as though one of them had said "OK, Elizabeth's awake now." Then I thought about another kind of bird we used to hear, the *kautuásikunéstkuenést*, that Innu people used to say had a call: "Tante nipatshi nita tshi kusthikutshishin – how can I dive down and come back up"? I haven't heard that bird for a long time. I wonder where they've all gone. Then I got up in a nice warm tent.

This short passage raises many questions. The word "bed", for example, is a domestication. She was sleeping on a caribou skin laid over evergreen branches. To explain that might be to foreignize, to make non-Innu readers more aware of the difference. It might also lovingly evoke the scent of spruce and the softness of fur, the smells and textures of the tent. The *kautuásikunéstkuenést* is called that because it looks as though it is wearing an Innu baby bonnet and this leads us to think it is a white crowned sparrow in English. But we are not certain and perhaps a failure of translation is the best strategy here anyway. And the verb *kutshikutshishin* means to dive down and come back up many times but it is also an onomatopoeia that mimics the bird's call. Is an explanatory note called for? Or not? This is just one very brief example, given to illustrate the ethical stakes of the decisions we must make and the uncertain pedagogical and aesthetic effects each decision might have.

There are similar concerns with each selection of an image, which I turn to next.

Looking

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze.... (Roland Barthes, 1981, pp. 80-81)

It is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude. (Susan Sontag, 2003, p. 46)

This is a time when "otherness" and various forms of ethnic authenticity are being commodified for visual consumption at an unprecedented rate; when the global circulation of cultural stereotypes is becoming a major industry; when the relation of art to the state, to possible publics, to the market, and to political or ethical positioning seems more volatile and unpredictable than ever before. (Bhabha, 1995)

Following Edward Saïd's (1993) suggestion that narratives create "'structures of feeling' that support, elaborate and consolidate the practice of empire" or alternative structures of feeling and thus resistance (p. 14), Maria Tymoczko (2000) argues that engaged translation can contribute to geopolitical change through raising

awareness of and solidarity for oppressed peoples by translating their stories. Emily Apter (2006) has developed a similar argument about translation as a medium of subject re-formation and political change. And if translated narratives can do this, so can pictures. Choosing or making images for the book is also a kind of translation. For the Innu or other Indigenous elders who will read only the pictures, they will tell the whole story, or at least they will provide the whole framework. However, these readers will know much more of the cultural context than others and, perhaps, will be looking more to see their own lives and histories reflected on the printed page – a fairly unusual occurrence – than to learn something new. Like the delayed rays of a star or an umbilical cord, the images might link them more closely to what is most important to them already and confirm its value. For other readers, the pictures enhance the narrative and offer an alternative version.

Elizabeth and I have looked at graphic novels and talked about the possibility of presenting some of the stories in that form. I hope we will be able to do that. This strategy has become popular – so much so we could perhaps talk about the engaged graphic novel. Some examples are Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Chester Brown's *Louis Riel* and Marguerite Aboutet and Clément Oubrière's *Aya*. Meanwhile, what we have so far is an archive of photographs. Elizabeth has been documenting her own life carefully for many years and also has older photos, more random but very relevant: a black and white snap of herself and her husband, Francis, outside the church after their wedding, strikingly good-looking and terribly young; media photographs of demonstrations in the 1980s, including one of her being arrested for occupying the NATO base in Goose Bay; an old blurred one of her mother in a wool hat and coat... There are also archival photos of Innu life in the 19th and early 20th centuries, life before settlement: landscapes, camps, canoes, and families at their daily work or posing unsmiling in stiff groups. Lastly, there are photographs by various

people who have accompanied Elizabeth and her family on canoe trips and walks, including several professional photographers. Many of these last focus on the beauty of the landscape and waterways, or on Elizabeth and her family and friends on snowshoes, paddling canoes or setting up camp. One photographer, Jerry Kobalenko, told me that he carefully frames his images to look pristine, editing out, for example, urine or garbage on the snow. This is partly a basic principle of composition but sometimes, especially if an image had advertising potential, he would also edit out evidence of modernity such as chainsaws or snowmobiles. As he put it, “Every photographer knows that an image of Inuit in caribou skins would sell better than one of them in snowmobile suits” (personal communication). The following two photographs, both by Jerry Kobalenko, illustrate his approach.



Elizabeth Penashue pulling her toboggan (credit: Jerry Kobalenko).



One of Elizabeth's grandchildren on the land (credit: Jerry Kobalenko).

The photos above are a striking contrast to Elizabeth's own, which often show all of the things Jerry frames out, as well as scenes of the butchering of animals, which may appear graphic or disturbing to viewers not from a hunting culture. As well, those viewers might be hard put to understand the enormous respect the Innu have for animals, the way their whole culture is built around a cosmology in which animals are at the centre of life and of spirituality. John Berger writes eloquently of the dual relationship of traditional small farmers and animals: the farmers love the animals and they kill and eat them (not "but" they kill them, "and" they kill them - that is the dualism). This is obviously also true of hunters or others who live closely with animals. And Berger concludes that the loss of this dualism in most of our lives today "to which zoos are a monument, is now irredeemable for the culture of capitalism" (1980, p. 26).



Francis and Elizabeth Penashue home from a caribou hunt (credit: from Elizabeth Penashue's collection).

For readers beyond the world of the Innu, or other northern hunting cultures, Jerry's photos have enormous appeal. The fact that his images appear regularly in national and international publications such as *Canadian Geographic* and *National Geographic Travel* suggests just how wide an appeal. He emphasizes that his goal, similar to Elizabeth's, is to protect the northern environments that he so loves (personal communication), and clearly he sees his beautiful photographs as playing a key role in this. In that sense he is an engaged "translator" of a world that few southerners see first-hand. Elizabeth is also a passionately engaged interpreter of her world, who seeks to persuade both Innu and outsiders to protect it, but her aesthetic is strikingly different from Jerry's. What sorts of "structures of feeling" might each inspire, and for whom? The answer to this question is far from simple but readers might refer again to my earlier discussion of the pros and cons of domestication or foreignization: the beauty and serenity of Jerry Kobalenko's photographs might inspire viewers to work to protect the places depicted, but Elizabeth Penashue's images might invite the same viewers (or perhaps different ones) to leave their comfort zone and learn from a world beyond their current understanding.

I'm thinking also of the film, *Rabbit Proof Fence*, directed by Phillip Noyce and based on the book, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1990) by Australian Aboriginal author, Doris Pilkington Garimara. Both book and film tell the story of three Aboriginal children (one of them Garimara's mother) who escaped from a residential school and walked across Australia to get home. According to the supplementary material with the DVD version, child actors were sought who were Aboriginal but whose looks were such that non-Aboriginal viewers would identify with them, in other words not too Aboriginal. It could be argued that a domesticating violence was done in the translating of this story for cinema. Yet the director made the film with the goal of telling an

alternative history of Australia, a “counter history”, and it appears to have been successful in gaining widespread attention and support. What pedagogical effects might this counter history produce, and what might be the effects of various kinds of images in our own work: beautiful photos of “pristine” environments, black and white archival photos with their sense of a world already lost, or Elizabeth’s own, so full of life and love and blood and mess? As with all the examples in this essay, the answer is not simple and much depends on context and a willingness to look, and to listen.

Listening

[Stories from the north] are inaccessible, if we mean by that geographically remote from the south: a pious and ironic alibi. But, more than this,... many from elsewhere have not had ears with which to hear them. It seems clear as well that voices from the North seldom gather sufficient force to rise above the colonial din of southern settler life. (Peter Van Wyck, 2010, p. 16)

The problematic of globalization today leads to the ethical character of translation as listening and the responsibility of the translator towards the Other. (Susan Petrelli & Augusto Ponzio, 2006, p. 222)

I want to emphasize two specific points here: the role of the translator as listener, and thoughts on “gathering force to rise above the colonial din” so that this story from the north can be heard. Although this section is short, both of these points are important, so much so that listening, in the sense of being open to the other and making the necessary effort to

understand another reality, could be considered the primary form of engagement.

The first point, about the role of the translator, is in some ways straightforward. In the kind of work Elizabeth and I are doing, I am literally a listener. Yet there is more to it than that and the role of the translator is a controversial one. Theoretical understandings of translation range from “a field... defined by problems of linguistic and textual fidelity; to the original” (Apter, 2006, p. 3) or what Grossman (2010) calls “the literalist fallacy”; to Benjamin’s opposing view, that “[N]o translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original” (1923/1968, p. 74); to Venuti’s (2008) notion of the inherent violence of translation, especially in postcolonial contexts; to Petrelli and Ponzio (2006) who suggest that there is a “semioethics” of translation and a deep responsibility towards the Other. Petrelli and Ponzio also distinguish between listening and wanting to hear. Listening is opening ourselves up towards the Other, responding, offering hospitality. Wanting to hear is more possessive, less reciprocal. It defines, judges, classifies. When a translation is also a collaboration in which neither participant has all the skills nor information, both must be listeners.

Yet such a collaboration is not only about the application of skills and the transfer of information. Lévinas (1961) suggests that an ethical encounter requires the recognition that the Other is ultimately unknowable, combined with a willingness, despite this, to learn. It is not through identification with the Other, or through mastery of what they tell us, that we can learn, but through understanding that their experience is unique and different and still listening attentively, being open, committed to our responsibility towards them. Only through this kind of listening can we come to understand things differently. And such listening is not only about attending to the words that are spoken, important though they may be, but also to the embodied presence of the

Other, which exceeds spoken words. Sharon Todd applies Lévinas's ideas to social justice education, asking how the development of such a relationship can contribute to a larger sense of responsibility, beyond the one on one encounter. She suggests that "justice depends on our capacity to be moved, to have ourselves shaken up to the point where the lives of others matter" (2002, p. 411).

The second point I want to discuss is how to create conditions in which readers of a book like Elizabeth's will try to listen, in which they might be moved and "shaken up to the point where the lives of others matter". This is an aesthetic question with many possible answers. One interesting response comes from a surprising place, far from Nitassinan. Valerie Henitiuk recently won a prize for her research on translations of the 11th century Japanese classics, *The Tale of Genji* and *The Pillow Book*. (See interview at http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/results-resultats/prizes-prix/2005/postdoctoral_henitiuk-eng.aspx .) Students study them in high school and, until recently, tended to think of them as difficult and dry, if not completely incomprehensible. However, they have now taken on new life in manga comic versions and a movie. According to Henitiuk, a main reason for this new interest is the fact that, in English translation, they have become part of world literature, thus raising international interest which made its way back to Japan. I offer this as a fragment, the beginning of an idea, but one that suggests a role that certain kinds of translation might play in enabling a voice from the margins to be heard. Could translation, especially into popular forms such as film or graphic novel, lead to widespread international interest in Elizabeth's story, and the Innu? And, if so, what might be the effects of these forms of translation?

It is possible that the comic and movie versions of *Genji* and *The Pillow Book* represent a domestication, and that it is because of this domestication that the stories now appeal to wide and diverse audiences. Nevertheless, like *Rabbit Proof Fence*, this is an interesting example of an

important but little known or unappreciated story that drew widespread attention following translation. As we have seen, the “translation” of Rabbit Proof Fence was a reinterpretation of the story as a film. In the Japanese examples, there were several kinds of translation: the “bringing over” (Grossman, 2010) into English, and into manga and film versions. There are implications for curriculum studies here relating to bringing peripheral stories to national and international consciousness. Doing so potentially “introduces discourse shifts, destabilizes received meanings, creates alternate views of reality, establishes new representations, and makes possible new identities”. (Tymoczko, 2003, p. 27)

Speaking

That slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture or way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings. (Benjamin, cited in McCall, p. 36)

How to represent Elizabeth herself in a project like this? And can she speak through the translators’ act of listening? What ethical obligations come from speaking on behalf of the other? I have already suggested that Elizabeth has limited access to dominant or resisting discourses in majority languages. Yet she has an extraordinary ability to reach people, to move them, and to form strategic alliances. In both the senses of representation as used by Spivak (1988) of *darstellen* (to represent aesthetically) and *vertreten* (to represent by proxy as a chief or a politician represents her people), Elizabeth can be said to represent many Innu. *Vertreten* applies because she was a leader in the struggle against NATO, because she still represents those Innu, many of them elders, who do not support further development of the Mista-shipu and,

because of her numerous public interviews, consultations and presentations as an Innu spokesperson. Darstellen also applies because the iconic image of her figure walking on snowshoes pulling a toboggan in nutshimit is recognized by everyone in Nitassinan, and has clearly inspired others such as Michel Andrew who now leads a walk of young people from Sheshatshiu to Sept-Îles (about 3400 kilometers return) and Stanley Vollant, an Innu surgeon who invited people to walk with him from Blanc Sablon to Natashquan. Dr. Vollant (2010) stated, "If I can inspire one or two young people in each of the communities I visit over the next five years, I would say that would be mission accomplished." Elizabeth has inspired many and the translation and publication of stories from her diaries will inspire many more.

The diaries are not just an ethnographic record (though they are that and Elizabeth is, in a sense, an ethnographer documenting a life, a history and a cultural context in rich and intimate detail). They are also a set of texts of literary value, full of humour, powerful storytelling, and poetic observations of intimate moments: a set of texts through which Elizabeth hopes to speak to the world. So many of her stories come to mind: the waking up in her tent at dawn to the song of the *kautuásikunéstkuenést* and looking at the play of light across the canvas; the travelling by train to Uashat gazing out at the land and imagining her ancestors walking over it; the anguish of prison; the loneliness of a night spent meditating alone on a mountain; and the triumph of reaching Mineinipi Lake on foot the first time. Nolette's (2012) discussion of the power of certain kinds of art seems to apply to the aesthetic value of Elizabeth's voice:

[A]rt is understood to have a role in the present, as a protective form with an 'in spite of' quality that enables people to tolerate suffering not so that they become immune to it, but so that they have the energy to continue to resist. [...] Second, participation in the joyful is part of a

dream of a 'beautiful future', in the sense that it becomes an inspirational force. Far from being a diversion, it acts to make visible a better world (p. 2).

Spivak asks that translations give a "tough sense of the specific terrain of the original" (2004, p. 330), one that, according to Nolette, "demands an individualized aesthetic reaction, which in turn moves outside the body into realms of sociability and hermeneutics" (2012, np). Nolette goes on to discuss how diverse audiences might be mobilized through the pleasure of aesthetic engagement and from there led to seek explanation. "To seek explanation," Fouillard suggests, for example, that Innu words such as "nutshimit" should simply be used in English. Let us learn their word. The word has been variously translated as "in the bush", "in the country" "on the land", and "in the wilderness". In French I have seen "à l'intérieur des terres" and "dans la nature" and one version of the wilderness walk was described as "une randonnée sauvage". (In New Brunswick and Québec until at least the 1970s some people still referred to Indigenous people as "les sauvages" or savages. This is clearly not the referent in the translation above but nevertheless there is a certain connection.) Recognizing the difficulty of translating the word "nutshimit", Elizabeth herself says "in-the-bush-in-the-country" as if it were all one word. I think it could also mean "home" as she and other Innu use the term so lovingly. It seems to me that speech that is beautiful (as are many of Elizabeth's stories) but at times mysterious or elusive (as are incomplete translations) might move people to "seek explanation".

Reminding us of the possibilities of partial translation and of aesthetic engagement, Venuti writes:

Translation is a process that involves looking for similarities between languages and cultures... but it does this only because it is constantly confronting dissimilarities... A translated text should be the site where linguistic and cultural differences are somehow signalled,

where a reader gets some sense of a cultural other, and resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best signal those differences, that sense of otherness, by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures. (2008, p. 264)

The travel writer Pico Iyer (2009) suggests that travel writing is different from other kinds of writing because “it engages with the world in a very urgent and specific way, keeps ... one’s eyes constantly fresh, confers on life the sense of an adventure and reminds you that every moment is provisional, every perception local...” (p. 131). Perhaps this, along with an aesthetic of discontinuity, is the real pedagogy of Elizabeth’s voice as she speaks to us via her diaries.

Teaching

Translation is relation. Inasmuch as language is constitutive of thought and of experience, translation is the enactment of language contact, the encounter of diverse ways of understanding thought and experience. Translation is also a drive. A failure to understand, a desire to continue to hear, to know, however imperfect, fragmented or messy, are evidence of the drive to translation. (María Constanza Guzmán, nd, np)

How can we promote the idea of conversation rather than dictation? How, indeed, can we make or challenge dominant languages to enable without disabling, to enable visibility without, at the same time, uprooting intellectuals from their languages and cultures? This must be the function of translation: playing a key role in all of that

conversation. In other words, we see translation as the language of languages or as the language which all other languages speak. (Ngugi Wa Thiong-o, 2006, np)

The process of translation – all the different kinds I have described here – reveals many of the challenges of using aesthetic and narrative approaches in curriculum studies. Communication is never transparent, and any attempt to render a version of a story in another form, whether through images, language standardization, or bringing over a written text from one language and culture to another, shows just how complicated and unpredictable it can be. As well, the process suggests how difficult and unpredictable teaching about such things can be.

Elizabeth is adamant that she is a teacher. Her political struggles, her walks on the land, and the work on the books all have a profoundly pedagogical purpose. This article has focused on language and images, but teaching in (or about) Indigenous contexts is also, and in some cases primarily, about the land. Because of this, I want to end this article with some discussion of practical examples of teaching that make connections between language, stories, and the land.

One example -- intended more to gather evidence for land claims and to stop construction of the MacKenzie valley pipeline, but nevertheless profoundly pedagogical -- is the Mapping Project coordinated by Phoebe Nahanni and other Dene in the 1970s. In this project, participants (all of whom received field training and spoke fluent Dene) spent two years travelling to peoples' trap lines and walking on hunting and gathering trails with them. During the process, they interviewed them, collected stories, and made maps. They later returned to the trappers to verify the maps, thus ensuring a collaborative process from start to finish. McCall (2011) writes that, "for participants in the mapping project, the politics of 'voice' and of 'land' were mutually constitutive and interdependent" (p. 54). In Labrador, Innu and Inuit teachers have sent their students to ask

elders how to say things that have been forgotten by younger generations and to experience and document traditional ways of life. And Elizabeth herself spends countless hours on the land, and in her tent, teaching children and young people in small groups or one-on-one. There have also been other projects in Nitassinan, including the Innu mapping project (Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation, 2008), in which Innu elders worked with outside researchers to map, document, and digitize place names and stories relating to them, and the Ashkui project (Government of Canada, 2007) a collaboration between the Innu nation and university and government scientists. They studied questions raised by the Innu and considered important for their survival on the land as well as for gaining a more holistic understanding of a specific ecosystem. Finally, Cynthia Chambers (2008) describes a research project exploring the literacies of the Kangiryuarmuit of Ulukhaktok, NWT. She writes “the literacies are not new but old, non-scriptist literacies that are necessary to live in particular places, literacies that are being re-newed, re-learned and retained in contemporary times” (p. 114). The project, documented in an exhibit called Pihuaqtiuyugut: We Are the Long Distance Walkers, shows that stories, songs and ceremonies are understood as ways of mapping and as literacies. A curriculum of place, according to Chambers, includes a different sense of time, a learning of new skills, largely through hands on experience, a sensuous engagement with the world, and “way finding”, which is learned through mentors and also through poems, songs, maps and stories. It is obvious that most people will not be able to go to northern places that are very far from their homes, and that not all of the kinds of learning suggested here can be accomplished through translation and engagement with exhibits and written and multimedia texts. Yet such texts have much to offer. Wherever people live, a serious consideration of *nutshimit*, and of the thoughts, stories and languages of someone from a place like the

MacKenzie Valley or Ulukhaktok or Nitassinan can open up new ways of thinking about the world.

The above is a very short list of examples of collaborative projects for teaching and learning that focused on the land and involved storytelling, translation and various forms of communication and representation across differences. This article has also discussed other activities that raise questions or suggest practical possibilities for curriculum and teaching: the use of photography and graphic novels to translate experiences and stories into images, the issue of language standardization and potential losses and gains involved in the process, the potential of popular culture and world literature in raising awareness of traditional stories and values, the possibility that partial translation and aesthetic engagement might lead readers to “seek explanation”.

What can we learn from all this, and how can we teach? Clearly, no single strategy of translation or representation and no school-based approach to curriculum will do justice to this kind of complex work and its goals. Indeed, school itself is in many ways antithetical to the land. If children are at school they are not on the land and it is difficult for people living in cities to be close to nature. Yet, if they can hold both in their minds, as Bhabha (1995) says, “Something opens up... that cannot be returned to the two oppositional principles. And once it opens up, we're in a different space, we're making different presumptions and mobilizing emergent, unanticipated forms of historical agency (1995, (np).” Is it possible to hold school learning and learning from life on the land in the mind at the same time? Is it possible to imagine a curriculum, perhaps like some of the examples given here, that would enable this? Might attending to the challenges of translation and the dilemmas of representation play a key role in such a curriculum?

There are no straightforward answers to any of the problems this article has set out to discuss, and trying to translate across such

difference, in contexts where the stakes are so high, is risky. Yet not to try is far riskier.

Notes

¹ The lower Churchill River

² Innu-aimun for “path”

³ The term “transmedia” refers to presentation of Elizabeth’s stories through several different media.

⁴ The Innu school board has recently decided to use only standardized language materials in an effort to make learning to read and write Innu-aimun easier. The work of standardizing the diaries will be done by linguists in consultation with the school board.

⁵ Elizabeth suggested that pictures would be important as many elders cannot read written text in any language but they could relate to the pictures.

⁶ Innu land

⁷ Innu-aimun word for non-Innu, or white people

⁸ An Innu-aimun word which I discuss in more detail in a later section, and which can be translated as the land, the bush, the country, the wilderness -- travelling there has even been translated into French as “randonné sauvage”-- and perhaps for many Innu it can also be translated simply as “home”.

⁹ Inuttitut word with roughly the same meaning as Akenashau, but from an Inuit perspective. Inuttitut is the Nunatsiavut variety of Inuktitut.

Acknowledgements

We have received a great deal of support for this project. Funders include the NL Arts Council, NL Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Smallwood Foundation and SSHRC. I thank all of them for their generosity. Most of all I thank Elizabeth herself. Originally, she asked me

to help her but in the end it has been an incredible gift for me to have spent countless hours learning from her. Her stories are hers to tell and I use only short excerpts here, to illustrate certain points. Readers interested in learning more about her life and work can follow her blog at <http://elizabethpenashue.blogspot.ca/> and will also find publications, interviews and images by googling her name. She is also featured in the NFB/Nexus film *Hunters and Bombers* (1991) which provides background information on the Innu struggles against NATO. A partial bibliography of her publications and interviews follows the reference list at the end of this article.

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