

THE LANGUAGE OF QUÉBEC STUDIES

As a result, the path towards Québec Studies most often begins with the study of the French language or French literature.⁹⁵ It follows that comparative or interdisciplinary perspectives are limited by the linguistic competencies of researchers, as well as by the availability and variety of works about Québec in languages other than French. There are two divergent views on this question. On the one hand, one can deplore “the lack of linguistic competencies among social science professors”⁹⁶ and favour a wider knowledge of French. On the other hand, one can call for the translation (or publication) of a greater number of studies on Québec in languages

95. Árpád Vígh underlines the random character of this itinerary : “it is indeed clear that the Québec specialists in the region are or were teachers in Departments of French Studies, and it is indeed in this guise that they came, most often by chance, to deal with the American francophonie.” (Árpád Vígh, *op. cit.*, p. 115 [our translation]).

96. Jane Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 381 (our translation).

other than French. In fact, the two approaches are not contradictory and they should be able to be pursued in parallel. However, both require long-term action, in cooperation with other francophone countries in the first case, and supported by an informed translation program in the second.

The problem, in terms of the development of a reflection on Québec, relates less to literary or artistic knowledge, which can be diffused through translation (literary or cinematographic) or through works that do not require the use of language (visual arts, architecture). The problem is more pressing when one must take into account a tradition of critical discourses and studies. Jacques Portes thus relates the supplementary challenge for the field of history :

historical research requires original archives. These exist in Québec, but are necessarily in French or in English, which can discourage students who are not familiar with either of these languages. A

student of literature, for instance, does not encounter exactly the same problem. He or she very possibly may have been first seduced by the translation of a novel by Michel Tremblay or Marie Laberge, before taking up the task of reading the original version.⁹⁷

The disadvantages that can ensue from limited knowledge of the language raise methodological questions as well as questions about the consideration of Québec as a singular object of study. This is particularly the case in political science where English-Canadian and Québec perspectives are often opposed. In the United States, for instance, few political scientists⁹⁸ are able to do research and write in French.⁹⁹ The situation is the

97. Jacques Portes, "L'émergence de l'histoire du Québec dans le monde?" *Globe. Revue internationale d'études québécoises*, vol. 4, n° 2, 2001, p. 295 (our translation).

98. Al Hero, Martin Lubin, J.J. Jockel, Robert Gill, Marc Levine and Krisan Evenson, among others.

99. Jane Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

same in economics, which leads researchers to use American and English Canadian works in their research, and to ignore work conducted in Québec or by foreign *québécois* who write in French.

This situation is not limited to English language countries. In India, one also observes that Québec Studies which deal with non-literary subjects “tend naturally to adopt the anglophone point of view and to ignore that of the francophones.”¹⁰⁰ Of course, the British colonial heritage in India is involved in this case, so that it is more “natural” to Indians to adopt this viewpoint. In other cases, the difficulty of having documentation at hand¹⁰¹ simply leads to the absence of research (and, consequently, the misunderstanding of Québec), to the inability to develop new

100. Romey Borges, *op. cit.*, p. 353-354 (our translation).

101. Deming Cao writes, “Given the difficulty of obtaining documentation in Chinese, most researchers in Québec Studies are francophone faculty.” (Deming Cao, *op. cit.*, p. 138 [our translation]).

comparative perspectives¹⁰² (with the Nordic countries, the other countries of the Americas, and other small nations) and finally to the exclusion and to the “nearly complete effacement [of Québec] within the programs.”¹⁰³

Fortunately, the discourse on Québec is written in a language spoken in many countries and taught everywhere around the world. This facilitates distribution. Unlike the Scandinavian countries, which cannot assume a widespread knowledge of their national languages abroad, Québec Studies can rely on a network of scholars with a mastery of French. Nonetheless, this position can sometimes give the illusion that works published in French can reach the whole academic world. Furthermore, it links the future and current development of Québec Studies to the vitality of French-language teaching overseas.

102. On this subject, see Elisabeth Lauridsen, *op. cit.*, p. 339.

103. Rachel Killick, *op. cit.*, p. 173 (our translation).

Peter Klaus and Ingo Kolboom emphasize this danger, which threatens to undermine the progress made in recent years with respect to knowledge about Québec. They write that “the dramatic decline [of French as the second living language] to the benefit of the hegemony of English represents a mortal danger in the long run [...] for studies of Francophone Canada, and particularly of Québec, which would risk being marginalized anew by studies of Anglophone Canada.”¹⁰⁴ Of course, in some regions (like the United Kingdom), the study of French remains strong. Elsewhere, notably in the African countries, where Québec Studies are still in their beginning, the demographic potential of the French language remains fascinating.¹⁰⁵ Still,

104. Peter Klaus and Ingo Kolboom, *op. cit.*, p. 265 (our translation).

105. Amadou Lamine Sall, citing Jean-Louis Roy, stresses the need to pay greater attention to Africa: “In 2020, in a world of 8 billion people, 164 million francophones will live in Northern countries, of which 24 million will be under

the constraint of language must remain a fundamental question for Québec Studies, which cannot forget the necessity of supporting initiatives in favour of French language teaching (and thus lend a hand to France in its fight to maintain French and francophone studies), as well as the need to ensure the translation of part of the scientific discourse on Québec into English and into other languages.

PROBLEMS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The rapid development of Québec Studies around the world must not lead us to forget the considerable problems that remain and which still prevent any firm guarantee of their

20 years of age, and 640 million will live in francophone Southern countries, of which 280 million will be under 20 years of age" [writes Jean-Louis Roy]. That's why the AIEQ's outlook, as with that of Québec Studies in general, must turn towards Africa." (Amadou Lamine Sall, *op. cit.*, p. 278 [our translation]).