

From the National Film Board of Canada

Talking Translation

with Sheila Fischman & Roch Carrier

Although many of us learn French as a second language, the work of most Quebec writers would not be accessible to English readers without the creative efforts of literary translators.

Sheila Fischman has a passion for fine novels. Through her efforts, over fifty of them have been translated from French to English. But she not only translates, she also pushes and prods publishers to present these works to English-speaking readers. She also initiated the translation into French of a number of English novels.

National and international prizewinner Fischman has translated such authors as Roch Carrier, Anne Hébert, Jacques Poulin, François Gravel and Michel Tremblay.

This production describes the literary association between Roch Carrier and Sheila Fischman, one that has lasted for over twenty years. Join them as they explain their roles as writer and translator. Gain an insight into the qualities needed to take us, the readers, to other times, places and cultures. And compare French and English readings from several Carrier works, including the 1992 prizewinner of the Leacock Medal for Humour.

Director: Claire Helman
Producer: Tamara Lynch

16 minutes 25 seconds
Order number: C 9193 009



Closed captioned for the deaf and hard of hearing.
A decoder is required.



Photo credits :
Sheila Fischman—Don Winkler
Roch Carrier—Jonathan Wenk

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Talking Translation

Talking Translation



avec Roch Carrier



with Sheila Fischman

Talking Translation

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Literary translation opens doorways to the literature of the whole world. In Canada, it is one possible link between French and English.

This video focuses on literary translator Sheila Fischman and Quebec writer Roch Carrier as they discuss their respective roles and their particular method of working.

The process of translation is demonstrated by French and English readings from three Carrier novels, including **Prayers of a Very Wise Child** which won the 1992 Stephen Leacock Award for Humour, and by animated sequences illustrated by award-winning filmmaker, Joyce Borenstein.

Discussion questions

- What are the respective roles and responsibilities of writer and translator?
- Is their working relationship co-operative or symbiotic in nature?
- Does the reader have to approach a translated text with a different perspective than when reading an original language text?

- Should the translator be expected to "translate" the culture as well as the words—or is it the task of the writer to supply what the reader requires for comprehension and enjoyment?
- Is the translator ever tempted to turn author?

In Sheila Fischman's case, some of the answers are surprising.

Another point of interest is the difference between spoken and written French, European French and the French of Quebec.

Astute viewers may notice that the spelling of the curses in the video are the same as that used in **La Guerre, Yes Sir!** but not the same as would be written today.

Concerning the use of the curses themselves, as Fischman noted in the introduction to her translation of **La Guerre, Yes Sir!**, "Learning to swear in the other language may be an unorthodox way to begin, but it could stir up some interest."

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Claire Helman

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of Canada

Colour
16 minutes 25 seconds

Order number:
C 9193 009

Readings are from:

La Guerre, Yes Sir!
Éditions internationales
Alain Stanké Ltée, 1968

La Guerre, Yes Sir!
Stoddart Press, 1968

They Won't Demolish Me
Stoddart Press, 1973

Prayers of a Very Wise Child
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.,
1991

Related NFB videos and films

Roch Carrier, Storyteller Supreme
26 min.
C 9191 036

The Sweater (Le Chandail)
10 min.
C 0180 079 (C 0280 079)

The Ungrateful Land (Une
terre ingrate — Roch Carrier se
souvient de Sainte-Justine)
27 min.
C 0172 104 (C 0272 104)

La Guerre, Yes Sir! (French)

La porte de la petite maison des Corriveau n'avait pas été faite pour qu'y passe un cerceuil. Les porteurs le déposèrent dans la neige, calculèrent dans quel angle il pourrait passer, étudièrent de quelle manière ils devaient se placer autour, discutèrent, finalement le Sergent donna un ordre, ils reprirent le cerceuil, c'était lourd, ils l'inclinèrent, ils le placèrent presque sur le cant, ils se firent le plus minces possible et ils réussirent à entrer, hors d'haleine, épuisés.

Laisse-le maintenant, grogna le père Corriveau. C'est assez qu'il soit mort; vous n'avez pas besoin de le balancer comme ça.

Anthyme et sa femme ne comprenaient pas ce que disaient les Anglais, mais ils n'aimaient pas entendre les sons de leur langue à cause de leurs yeux qui n'étaient pas francs pensait Anthyme. Ils avaient l'impression que les Anglais parlaient pour se moquer d'eux.

This video is a companion piece to ROCH CARRIER, STORYTELLER SUPREME, C 9191 036 which profiles the author and his background and features excerpts from five of his novels, with commentary by Sheila Fischman. Although each video can be shown separately, together they make a uniquely informative package.

J'aime écrire. Quand on écrit, on invente les choses qu'on veut, avec le monde qu'on veut, avec les couleurs qu'on choisit. On fait comme Vous quand Vous avez créé le monde. Écrire c'est ma petite création du monde.

Prayers of a Very Wise Child

Writing is the best thing to do in the world, after looking out the window. When I write, I always look out the window. When people pray they look out the window. Praying and writing are a little bit the same. When you write, you look up at the sky every two or three words. That's where I find my most beautiful words when I write my compositions.

I like to write. When you write you invent the things you want, with the people you want and colours you choose for yourself. Like You when You created the world. Writing is my version of the creation of the world.

Le Deux-millième Étage

Des hommes s'étaient abattus comme un vol d'oiseaux sur les toits plats des édifices, ils arrachaient les couvertures de papier goudronné dont les épluchures planaient dans l'air... Plus haut, des dizaines de grues étaient armées au bout d'une chaîne, d'une énorme boule d'acier qui oscillait dans le vent. Des toits, ici et là, sautaient brusquement comme de gros crapauds.

They Won't Demolish Me

Men had landed like a flock of birds on the flat roofs of the buildings; they pulled off the tarpaper covers and bits of the paper went sailing through the air... Higher up there were dozens of cranes armed with enormous steel balls that were suspended from chains and swaying in the wind. Here and there roofs flew abruptly into the air like enormous toads.



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Nous sommes tous des Canadiens français ici, songeait le père Corriveau. Mon petit garçon qui est mort est un Canadien français, tout le monde est Canadien français, toute la province est canadienne-française, puis il y a des Canadiens français à travers tout le Canada, il y en a même aux États-Unis. Alors, pourquoi ont-ils envoyé des Anglais reconduire mon fils ?

La Guerre, Yes Sir! (English)

The door of the Corriveau's little house had not been built to accommodate a coffin. The bearers put it down in the snow, calculated at what angle it could pass, studied how they should arrange themselves around it, argued. Finally the sergeant gave an order; they picked up the heavy coffin again, inclined it, placed it almost on edge, made themselves as narrow as possible, and finally succeeded in entering, out of breath and exhausted.

"Leave it now," grumbled old man Corriveau. "It's enough that he's dead, you don't have to swing him around like that."

Anthyme and his wife could not understand what the Anglais were saying, but they didn't like to hear the sounds of their language because of their eyes. "Their eyes aren't frank,"

thought Anthyme. They had the impression that the Anglais were making fun of them when they spoke.

"We're all French Canadians here," thought Father Corriveau. "My little boy who is dead is a French Canadian, everyone is a French Canadian. The whole province is French Canadian, there are French Canadians all across Canada, even in the United States. So why did they send these Anglais to bring back my son?"

Prières d'un enfant très très sage

C'est la chose la plus agréable, écrire, après regarder par la fenêtre. Quand j'écris, je regarde toujours par la fenêtre. Quand on prie, on regarde aussi par la fenêtre. Prier et écrire, c'est un peu pareil. Quand on écrit, on regarde à tous les deux ou trois mots vers le ciel. Quand j'écris mes narrations, je ramasse dans le ciel mes plus beaux mots.