

IRGF Final Report

Eche - #103624

The Circulation of Knowledge in the Eighteenth Century: An Examination of the Role of French Translations of Travel Books.

1.1 Project Summary

This project consists in the study of the translation in French of an English collection of voyages and travels published in the eighteenth-century. The objective is to offer a comprehensive view of the transformations observed in two French versions and challenge some of the assumptions traditionally held regarding this translation.

1.2 Project Outcomes and Impacts

The goal of the research conducted in Archives and Special Collections was to gather data from original 18th century editions. I compared the two French versions of the *Histoire générale des voyages* to the English original (*A New General Collection of Voyages and Travels*) and inventoried strategies used by the first French translator and the editor of the second version. I specifically paid attention to the descriptions of non-European peoples, as well as natural spaces and indigenous items. The strategies used by the translator reveal the impact of translation on geographical and ethnographic knowledge on French society at the time: while the English author also shared a Eurocentric view of the world, the French translator seems to have accentuated the negative portrayal of non-European peoples. This research allows us to revisit the role of translation at the time and also helps to relate current racial issues in France to the views that stemmed from this translation.

2.1 Use of Awards Funds

I used the funds for three research trips to France: one in December 2023, one in May-June 2024, and one in December 2024. It allowed me to conduct research quite extensively at two French regional libraries. The amount used for the three research trips was \$5,471.54 CAD. The second trip also included the presentation of a paper at a conference held at the University of Salamanca in Spain where I was able to present some of my preliminary findings. The amount used for the conference was \$1478.81 CAD. The total of these expenditures amount to \$6,950.35 CAD. The funds were mostly used to cover airfare and, in the case of the conference, air fare, ground transportation, accommodation and per diem.

2.2 Additional Outcomes/Research Issues

N/A

2.3 Dissemination of Project

I was able to include some of my findings in two papers that I presented in 2024. The first one is entitled "Beyond fear and wonder? The filtering of the Americas in Abbé Prévost's *Histoire générale des voyages* (1746-1759)" and

was presented at the conference “Leaving a trail: the voice of memories, reports and maps beyond the fascination and fear for and of the New World”, Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Salamanca (Spain), on May 15, 2024. My paper was selected by the organizers for publication in a collective work that will be published in English. I revised it and submitted it on January 19, 2025. The second one, “De l’abbé Prévost à Jean-Nicolas Démeunier : la traduction au service de la colonialité”, was presented at the conference “Des récits d’exploration aux écritures ethnographiques : perspectives traductologiques”, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris), on October 17-18, 2024. I submitted a revised version of this paper to the French peer-reviewed journal *Palimpsestes*, which is a highly regarded publication in the field of Translation Studies in France. I’m hoping to present some of my findings at MRU and in Alberta at some point this year. Some materials will be used in my new course, FREN 2260 French (De)Colonial Legacies which should run in the fall.

2.4 Future Research Plans

The objective is to publish a scholarly book on this topic, widening the scope of research to other translated travel books. The research conducted and the data gathered will definitely play an important part in this project as it will constitute the backbone of the book itself. I am hoping to finish my manuscript around mid-2026. In the meantime, I will present some of my findings at a couple of conferences.