

# Translation A Metaphor of Globalization The Case of the Canadian Publishing Industry

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## CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

*Through radio, TV and the computer, we are already entering a global theater in which the entire world is a Happening. Our whole cultural habitat, which we once viewed as a mere container of people, is being transformed by these media and by space into a living organism, itself contained within a new macrocosm or connubium of a supraterrrestrial nature.*

Marshall McLuhan  
*Playboy* interview<sup>1</sup>

Like a postmodern Julius Verne, Marshall McLuhan predicted two things in the 1960s that today seem obvious: the global village and the end of printed books (brought about by the watershed of electronic development—that is, television and computers—in human life).<sup>2</sup> A few years later, Northrop Frye said that the fact that Canada's publishers produced a veritable avalanche of literature exactly at the time of McLuhan's prophecy was a typically Canadian irony.<sup>3</sup>

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Globalization has had diverse consequences in the field of culture. One is that we live in translated worlds, where languages intertwine and nourish each other. This is a familiar experience for

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Canadian literature which from its inception has been produced in two languages, English and French. Translation has been indispensable. The second repercussion of globalization is that the spaces of knowledge we inhabit are an ensemble of ideas and styles with different origins, coming to us mainly through the massive dissemination of cultural products from all over, like the citizens of the mosaic that is Canada today. The third effect is that,

due to transnational communications and frequent migration, each cultural site has become a crossroads and a meeting place, just as the great Canadian cities like Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal have been for decades.

In our time, many places of the world have a culture of the diaspora, a hybrid culture. As a result, people accept that all identities are mobile. Languages participate in the processes molding individuals and collectives. In addition, as awareness of the cultural authority of language and the position of speakers within dominant codes increases, linguistic and cultural stories have acquired a new weight, as they reveal the relationships between the self and the other. This began in Canada long before it happened in the rest of the world.

Theoretician Sherry Simon says that cultural studies have used the discipline of translation as a metaphor to explain our times.<sup>4</sup> Translation serves as a rhetorical figure to describe both the growing internationalization of cultural production and the fate of those struggling between two worlds and two languages. This happens, writes Simon, because the craft of translation is a tangible representation of a secondary or mediated relationship to reality;

translation represents the difficulty of access to language and exemplifies the feeling of exclusion from the code of the powerful. It is, she concludes, a metaphor for the ambiguous experience of those marginalized by Western codes in the dominant culture that has permitted them to find a new place for cultural production, a new position from which to speak, as well as overwhelming evidence of the hybrid nature of communities imagined in a transnational sense. I should note here that Simon has constructed her theory on the basis of her experience as a translator of Québécois literature for the Anglo-Canadian public.

Globalization has spurred the destabilization of cultural identities and become the basis for new modes of cultural creation. Its characteristics have spotlighted translation as a fundamental activity of our day because its processes are present in any type of cultural interchange. It is also important to point out that translation is indispensable in a country like Canada with two official languages.

#### TRANSLATING IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

*Word for word, Galland's version is the worst written of them all, the most deceitful and the weakest, but it was the most widely read. Those who became intimate with it knew happiness and wonder. Its Orientalism, that today seems frugal to us, dazzled everyone who took snuff and plotted five-act tragedies... We mere anachronistic twentieth-century readers, perceive in it the dulcet flavor of the eighteenth century and not the fading Oriental aroma that determined its innovation and glory two hundred years*

*ago. There is no guilty party in the dis-  
encounter, least of all Galland.*

Jorge Luis Borges, "Los traductores  
de *Las 1001 noches*"<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally, translation has operated as a democratization of printed culture: it gives us access to a multiplicity of works written in tongues we do not speak; it has allowed us to have contact with a wide variety of authors, genres, traditions. But, it is the theorization of the exercise, spurred by both globalization and the dissemination of cultural studies, that has made translation a pivotal mechanism in the creation and the transmission of cultural values.

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This is why it can no longer be seen as a series of technical procedures, free of all values. Translating implies creating intercultural and interlinguistic life lines, transferring a text from one significant form into another, transporting works from one historical framework to another, following the track of the migration of meanings from one socio-cultural context to another.

I have spoken in general terms, but I would like to be more specific and

deal now with literary translation. Theoretician José Lambert explains that "literature in translation [is] a complex system,"<sup>6</sup> in which a specific literature applies its own principles of selection, even vis-à-vis very different literatures and foreign works. In this system, the target literature obeys a certain strategy in its translation method. Translations function like an organization. But, in addition, they must be situated in the target literary system and in relation to it.

Although not always completely acknowledged, translations somehow become part of our own literary tradition. They are a different form of literary production. They allow us to establish links with the original works and, with that, are windows onto other cultures.

But, as Bella Brodski says, translation is also a form of redemption that ensures survival, the longevity of the original text through the infusion of otherness. Given this transfusion, the text lives longer and better, beyond the means available to the author. The original continues living after and through its translation. The link between the original and its translation is one of appreciation and indebtedness. A work is only translated when it is considered worthwhile; its ability to be translated is a sign of its aesthetic and political importance.<sup>7</sup>

It is here, however, that I would like to point out the specific stamp that the era of globalization has placed on the signifiers of translation,<sup>8</sup> because today translating not only means transferring a story from one language to another or transmitting and transposing cultural values from one tradition to another. It also means signing contracts, ceding rights, seeking out market targets, that is, choosing what is to be translated, who will be translated, where it will be

published and sold. For the contemporary publishing industry, the act of reading implies something more than *poiesis*, *anagnorisis* and *catharsis*, something more than a bridge between creation, reception and effect. It implies first of all an act of buying and selling, the consumption of a good: a book.

#### THE BOOK PRODUCED

#### THE BOOK READ

*Not only does print vividly discover national boundaries, but the print market was itself defined by such boundaries, at least for early printers and publishers. Perhaps also the ability to see one's mother tongue in uniform and repeatable technological dress creates in the individual reader a feeling of unity and power that he shares with all other readers of that tongue. Quite different sentiments are felt by preliterate or semiliterate people.*

Marshall McLuhan, 1960<sup>9</sup>

The merger of companies for international markets is one of the main characteristics of the era of globalization. Large publishers absorb small ones; thus, a single company may own several publishing houses, each specializing in certain kinds of books.<sup>10</sup>

However, the Canadian publishing industry has operated differently. Several Internet pages shed light on its general panorama.<sup>11</sup> In addition, we have data from Statistics Canada, which can also be consulted on the Net, and academic articles that have outlined this sector's situation in the era of globalization.<sup>12</sup>

In Canada, books are put out both by Canadian and foreign publishing houses producing their own original

titles, covering all production costs and risks. Books by foreign authors are also published by purchasing the rights, or imported by different means (direct purchase abroad, purchases directly from the publisher for libraries, readers' circles, Internet). These books are destined for two very different markets: 82 percent go to the English-language market, dominant not only because it generates a great many titles, but also because it includes imports and distribution; the other 18 percent are books in French, which are more expensive. Publishing in either language has low profit margins given that most of the companies are small and many orient to academia or the cultural market.

Lorimer presents a series of statistics invaluable for understanding how the Canadian publishing industry has behaved given the harsh conditions imposed by globalization.<sup>13</sup>

Between 1981 and 1992, the publication of Canadian authors rose 52 percent, and publishers were concentrating more on Canadian authors, who sell 3.5 times more books than foreign authors published by Canadian firms and eight times more than foreign authors published by companies from abroad. In that same period, books by Canadian authors had increased their domestic sales and exports by 62 percent. Lorimer considers this a valuable discovery from a cultural perspective, which means that Canadian publishing houses have greatly contributed to the ability to decide Canadian priorities, realities, images and symbols. They have provided Canadian authors with an effective vehicle for reaching the public, so effective, in fact, that book sales by Canadian authors have grown more rapidly than the market as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

The link between authors and readers so effectively achieved by the publishing houses and their marketing techniques is surprising. Seventy percent of their own new titles and reprints are by Canadian authors, whose sales of books published by Canadian firms come to:

- 96 percent of national sales;
- 97 percent of all book exports that are not textbooks or paperbacks for the mass market;
- 91 percent of overall book exports; and
- 98 percent of book sales abroad.

All these figures taken together show the dominance of Canadian-owned publishing houses in Canada in terms of title output (85 percent), percentage of books by Canadian authors (96 percent) and number of firms (288). Canadian publishing houses dominate the market, sales and the production of titles; in addition, they practically monopolize exports. The figures are conclusive, belying the prejudice that it is foreign publishers that make authors internationally successful (we will come back to this point when we discuss translation and publishing in Spanish).<sup>15</sup> The conclusion Lorimer reaches is that Canadian companies' publishing and marketing strategies are effective given that the overwhelming bulk of their activity centers on titles by Canadian authors who can have enormous cultural significance.

Cultural significance. Herein lies the difference: while the Canadian publishing industry is economically successful due mainly to the grants that subsidize it, I would venture to say that its true success lies in the fact that a market niche or community of readers has been formed for these books. The Canada

Council gives grants for culturally significant books as well as for publishing programs that make a contribution to Canadian literature in the following genres: children's literature, drama, narrative, essay, poetry and short stories. The number of copies sold under this program between 1985 and 1993 increased 37 percent. In general, there is a commitment to the idea that the industry fulfills a social function in that it contributes to the generation of ideas, makes information available and promotes the development of authors. Many firms nationwide seek out titles and authors as a reflection of that responsibility.

Complementing this, Lorimer thinks the liveliness of the Canadian literary community and its pan-Canadian perspective attest to its tolerance of differences. As a cultural policy, encouraging heterogeneity is a powerful weapon.

At the risk of speculating (since it means looking at content), I would go even further with this interpretation. Combining both these conclusions, I would say they are both at the root of the success of the literature produced by contemporary Canadian authors.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, the support policies to the industry have flourished, and its effectiveness has managed to bring together both men and women authors with a readership that finds in them an enriching interpretation of their own reality. On the other hand, the policy of heterogeneity corresponds to the circumstances of our world of today, reflected in Canadian literature and linked to what I mentioned at the beginning of this article: the translated worlds that have destabilized cultural identities and become the basis for new modes of cultural creation. Canadian literature, in which translation has been fundamental, reflects this

intensity of cultural exchange: it is successful because it is the product of a society which is a microcosm of the global village.<sup>17</sup>

Paradoxically, as I pointed out at the beginning of this section, the Canadian publishing industry has stayed on the sidelines of globalization. At the same time, the international market has become more important for it in three ways: it has achieved book sales, the sale of rights to publish elsewhere and the sale of advisory services through internationalization.<sup>18</sup> Canadian companies are active exporters: 34 percent of their profits come from international markets.

Why is this the case? Lorimer and O'Donnell say that in the name of cultural sovereignty, the Canadian federal government has constantly developed a vigorous policy for the industry to make it economically successful and keep it in the hands of Canadians. (It is enough just to look at the diversity of subsidy and grant programs available on the Internet.)<sup>19</sup>

This policy's results are contradictory because industry priorities mixed with cultural goals have led to support for Canadian ownership of the firms. However, Lorimer and O'Donnell say that the fact that publishing houses are Canadian-owned is less important than the size of the firm for the cultural orientation versus a primarily commercial orientation. The industry's priorities always lead to problems of profitability. That is, the profitable firms are generally commercially oriented. In the minds of policy makers, profitability is linked to size and therefore, they give more support to large firms. However, the companies that print the most poetry and narrative, particularly first works, are very often small and medium-sized publishing houses scattered across the country.

The Canadian publishing community has two interest groups. The first group, large publishing houses, should take the road of globalization in the mass entertainment markets for the distribution of world products. They can do this only insofar as legislation allows them to protect their national territory to preserve cultural sovereignty. It would be important that the second group, small, culturally oriented publishers, seek internationalization and favor small Canadian producers over large foreign ones.

Lorimer and O'Donnell come to an important conclusion that contradicts the laws of the market of globalization: it is misleading to think that a policy supporting the industry and directed at cultural publishers will lead to the establishment of commercially successful publishing houses with a cultural orientation, both able and willing to become global giants. I do not think we can emphasize too greatly that the real importance lies in the fact that success is proven at another level, the level of the encounter of books and their readers.

A BOOK SOLD

A CANON TRANSFORMED

*Perhaps the most potent of all as an expression of literacy is our system of uniform pricing that penetrates distant markets and speeds the turn-over of commodities.*

Marshall McLuhan, 1964

The Canadian publishing industry is an exception today since throughout the world subsidies to culture are disappearing daily and cultural industries are expected to be profitable.

“The big fish eats the little fish” seems to be the norm in today’s publishing industry.<sup>20</sup> Companies merge; large publishing firms absorb little ones; a single corporation may own several different firms, each with its own specialty. Book fairs look like stock markets: agents representing authors meet with company heads to sell publishing rights to this or that region of the world. Book prizes beget prestige, thereby creating communities—or market niches—interested in the book selected and in other works by the same author.<sup>21</sup> Publishing houses, like any other company, want to get their investment back: once the work is printed, posters are distributed, book launches organized, interviews come out in the mass media and press kits are made up with reviews of the book.<sup>22</sup>

How does this affect the formation of the literary canon?<sup>23</sup> Robert Lecker

says that it is necessary to research and critique the forces of ideology and discourse that make up the hierarchy of what we value.<sup>24</sup> The canon is the perception of what literary merit is, and today, the values associated with the canonic heritage still have power and exert influence on what is written, what is published and how things are transmitted or taught.

We cannot deny that, at least until recently, the canon was formed on the basis of the aesthetic value that readers, critics and academics found in a book, plus the maxim that all of us who have studied literature have heard: that a text withstands the passage of time without getting old. The recognition of these values was crowned then, by translation, the journey into another language, the possibility of moving into another literary tradition. This is how a piece became a classic of universal literature.

To underline what I said at the beginning of this section, I agree with Lecker when he says that the ideal examination of any canon should include a study of market forces, of the publishing industry and book sales. (He also adds several points that I had not taken into account: the development of school and university curricula, government attempts to foster national literatures and their promoters, as well as the dissemination of literary values in newspapers, magazines, academic publications and books.)

Contracts for translations are drawn up in the same way as those for publications. For example, based on a market study, an author whose work is excellent but complicated because of its structure will be published by one of the lesser firms because in his/her homeland—where no one is a prophet—he/she has not sold enough. This

**TABLE 1**  
**CANADIAN BOOK SALES AND EXPORTS**  
(Thousands of Canadian Dollars)

	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995	1996-1997
<b>Sales in Canada</b>					
In English	981,261	979,780	978,016	1,103,218	1,191,752
In French	264,121	277,572	287,620	306,474	304,167
<b>Publication of Original Titles (1)</b>					
In English	437,655	439,158	443,751	529,940	577,772
In French	144,072	159,192	162,252	164,895	160,649
<b>Exclusive Agents</b>					
In English	543,606	540,622	534,265	573,278	613,980
In French	120,049	118,380	125,368	141,579	143,518
<b>Exports and Other Foreign Sales</b>					
In English	205,933	244,452	322,302	357,390	388,047
In French	20,222	29,764	21,677	12,373	17,729

(1) Includes only publishing activities.

Source: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/pgdb/People/Culture/arts02.htm> and <http://www.statcan.ca/english/pgdb/People/Culture/arts05.htm>

implies that the printing run will be small, and the books will be distributed only locally. At the same time, another author, of lesser quality but easier to read and who therefore guarantees sales, is published by the multinational firm and distributed over a wide geographic area. Two things happen then:

a) The kind of recognition that translation implies will be the reward for profits on book sales, not literary quality;

b) The works included in literary traditions different from that of the culture of origin may be neither its most representative nor its best.

What alternatives do authors have, then? Among the Canadians, the best known authors also have a literary agent.<sup>25</sup> The others have to make direct contact with foreign publishing houses to promote their work outside Canada or wait until foreign publishers become interested in the titles that have been given prizes and therefore, covered with the aura of prestige, can be offered with a guaranteed seal of approval of quality.<sup>26</sup>

#### CANADIAN LITERATURE FOR EXPORT

*Translating the spirit is an ambition so huge and so phantasmagoric that it may well be considered harmless; translating the exact words, a precision so extravagant that there is no risk it will be undertaken. More serious than those infinite aims is the conservation or suppression of certain details; more serious than these preferences and forgotten oversights is the movement of syntax.*

Jorge Luis Borges, "Los traductores de *Las 1001 noches*"

The sadly renowned English patient, played by the beautiful Ralph Fiennes,

unfortunately focused the eyes of the world on Canadian literature. And I say unfortunately because I ask myself if those who met him in the darkness of the movie theater will ever make the link between Canadian-Sri Lankan author Michael Ondaatje and the work of Anthony Minghella. In addition, if they do, and they actually buy the novel (Please note: the cover was changed to jibe with the movie's poster —after it became a box-office success, of course), I ask myself if they will not be disappointed by the novel's complex structure, closer to a jigsaw puzzle than a conventional love story.

Until recently,  
literary canons  
were formed on the  
basis of the aesthetic  
value of a text, but  
the ideal examination  
of any canon should  
include a study  
of market forces.

This digression allows us to see the pattern of how translations of Canadian literature come to the Spanish-speaking world, whose publishing industry has definitely suffered the effects of globalization: the multimedia conglomerates include large publishing houses with headquarters in Spain that have absorbed small local publishers.

These publishing houses operate in the following way:<sup>27</sup> the rights for a given text can be decided directly with the author or through a legal representative, whether a literary agent or any other authorized person. The contract

can be for publishing or for the acquisition of rights. The specific case that interests us here is the publication of translations. The rights for a work in any other language are purchased from the owner of its copyright or directly from the author. The contract for the translation must be a separate document, signed by the person who bought the rights and the translator.<sup>28</sup> Rights are given for a specific geographic area and a specific time period.

Let us speak of the market we are part of, Mexico. Very little literature comes to Mexico from Canada. When originally written in English, most of it has been translated and printed in Spain, so our knowledge of the complete works of some Canadian authors is subject to the zigzags of globalization.

Mexico City book stores sell different works by Douglas Coupland, who invented the term "Generation X";<sup>29</sup> novels and stories by Margaret Atwood, the world's most widely recognized Canadian author; three novels by Carol Shields, the most famous of which is *The Stone Diaries*, for which the author won Canada's most important literary award;<sup>30</sup> *The English Patient*, with a translation that does not seem to me to respect the original structure very much, to say the least,<sup>31</sup> and *In the Skin of a Lion: A Novel*, both by Michael Ondaatje, winner of the Booker Prize. We can also find several novels by Margaret Laurence. I find the list significant because it is all by English-language authors, and we should remember that 82 percent of the books produced in Canada come out in English. The multimedia groups based in Spain, then, are providing us with titles from a dominant culture: we should remember that English has been the language favored by globalization.

We already said that translation implies transferring elements and values from one culture to another. What does it mean, then, for us Mexican readers to receive Canadian authors in a doubly foreign way?

To exemplify, I would like to look at two cases, by chance, by the most famous authors.

Two stories in Margaret Atwood's *Dancing Girls: And Other Stories* refer to Mexico.<sup>32</sup> One, "A Travel Piece", a parody of travelogues that look at everything about a country, including its inhabitants and customs, through a rose-colored glass because readers do not want to know about its drawbacks; in other words, they refuse to look at the truth. The protagonist is a reporter whose plane crashes into the Caribbean on the way back to Canada. With her is a group of tourists. The absurd thinking given the context, the characters' increasingly savage attitudes, more and more like animals and less like humans, make up this story in which the only reference to Mexico is in the closing scene in which a pig is slaughtered on a beach to satisfy the imbecilic whims of an American tourist. Making tourism the theme and presenting it as a ridiculous, pointless activity stands out because of the story's ironic tone, which brings out the snobbery and lack of commitment of anyone who enjoys it. The translation is no problem here.

The second story, "The Resplendent Quetzal," takes place in Yucatán (at least, this Mexican reader surmises that it does). In this case, it is interesting to approach the text through a translation done in Spain, because it gives a foreign, alien tone to everything the protagonists see and experience. The references to archeological sites, the descriptions of buses and little restaurants

seem familiar and yet, because they are written in a Spanish that is not our usage, we seem to be looking at them from far away. The plot is built around a sacred *cenote*, or deep pool typical of Yucatán, translated back into Spanish as "*el pozo*," which in Mexico means a well, and a Christ Child from a Nativity scene, translated "*el belén*" instead of the more familiar Mexican "*el nacimiento*," from Tlaquepaque in Jalisco state, as well as sacrifice and rebirth. The plot is well conceived, alternating between the points of view of the two main characters, a man and woman, both Canadians, who are spending

Mexican readers receive Canadian authors in a doubly foreign way, as most of their books have been translated and printed in Spain.

their vacations on the Yucatán Peninsula, where they go through an epiphany that will change their relationship as a couple for the better. Here, the vocabulary used in translation is important for the Mexican reader's reception: the description of something familiar to us with words that are not quite so familiar maintains a distance between the characters and the reader.

Another example is the case of Douglas Coupland's *Generation X*.<sup>33</sup> Coupland's novel is American on purpose: he has decided to set it in California and not Toronto or Vancouver because

somehow, one of the things that distinguishes North America is the preeminence of the United States, particularly in the dissemination of popular culture, and, in turn, life styles. In this sense, of course, it also refers to globalization and one of its paradoxes, the link to local issues. As Mexican readers, if we have access to the original version in English, we have no difficulty in understanding the references to consumerism, to the products of popular culture, to brand names. We have no problem decoding what a Barbie doll is. Those of us who grew up watching television can all remember the Brady Bunch.

In fact, our Spanish is full of Anglicisms. The Mexican upper-middle class lives in a very similar circuit, definitively marked by the flow of cultural products that flood in from the north (although we should be clear that no one is immune from transculturation). But it is difficult for a Mexican reader to understand "*todas las chicas parecen bolleras pelirrojas*" ("all the girls look like red-headed dykes"). While we Mexicans might understand the use of *chica* instead of our more common *muchacha* for "girl," we are totally baffled by the use of *bollera* instead of our word for dyke, *tortillera*. We also have a hard time imagining a pair of Californians asking each other, "How do you and Rain stand each other?" (*¿Y qué tal os soportáis tú y Rain?*), when what is really meant, is "How do you get along with Rain?" which in Mexican Spanish would be "*¿Cómo se llevan tú y Rain?*" Maybe it's the influence of dubbing. What the translation does do in this case is distance us from a life style, the very leitmotif of Coupland's novel, which is then rendered rather ineffective in the context of Mexico,

like watching a Woody Allen film in a movie theater on Madrid's Gran Vía.

Several anthologies have been published in Mexico, the majority of which are by Quebequois authors, thanks to the funding for translation and the many scholarships given by the Quebec government. The spectrum offered to the Mexican public is quite broad, taking in both poetry and narrative. Among other anthologies of French-language literatures, Laura López Morales' book includes chapters about Quebequois literature, with authors who do belong to the canon.<sup>34</sup> In contrast with the prologues or introductions in other anthologies, she presents brief histories of Quebec literature and very complete bibliographical and biographical notes about the authors, so that although it is not completely dedicated to the topic, her work is the one that gives us the most complete overview.

An anthology of Anglo-Canadian short stories edited by John Metcalf has also been published,<sup>35</sup> and another, *Desde el invierno, 23 cuentos canadienses*, edited by Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson.<sup>36</sup>

Two magazines have also published monographic issues on the topic. In 1996, when Canada hosted the Guadalajara Book Fair, *Viceversa* put out an issue jointly with the Montreal magazine of the same name, printing narrative and poetry by five different authors. Later, *Blancomóvil* compiled and translated work by several Quebequois poets.

Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve* (Mauve Desert) is the first Quebequois novel to be published in our country.<sup>37</sup> Its appearing under the Joaquín Mortiz label has two implications: first, for all faithful buyers of Mexican literature, it is a guarantee of quality; second, it means that the multinational Planeta decided

to invest in a translation for the national Mexican market.<sup>38</sup> We should not forget what was said at the beginning of this essay: translation implies many things, including a dialogue between cultures, a form of legitimation and, therefore, the introduction of new elements into a literary canon. In the case of Brossard's novel, translated by Mónica Mansour, another interesting detail is that it deals with a marginalized subculture and comes from a culture not considered dominant. Lastly, the leitmotif of the novel itself is translation.

It is pertinent here to speculate once again and ask ourselves why *Mauve*

Small markets  
are of no interest  
to the global publishing  
houses. In Mexico local  
importers decide what  
materials to select,  
purchase and  
distribute.

*Desert* is the only Canadian novel translated in Mexico. One reason, of course, is its importance within the national canon; another is the author's importance both in the field of creative writing and in literary criticism. But, in addition, it is because *Mauve Desert* is a North American novel: it takes place in the United States; it has links to Mexico; and the literary conceit of its being found by the translator places the discovery in Quebec. Precisely the non-obviousness of its links to matters Quebequois, its North American-ness, makes us think not only about lan-

guage, but also about national cultural paradigms and their translation for foreign readers. The novel puts forward what has been the main problem for the creation of a canon for Canada as a whole, the creation of a single cultural identity. Since the novel centers around writing and, therefore, on language — one's own and an acquired language — the characters make us think about taking on an identity on the margins of the official discourse. North American-ness is expressed in the leitmotif of the words in English that accentuate the presence of a dominant English-speaking culture that has to change and be appropriated through translation, the conversion from one language to another, from one cultural code to another. For all these reasons, translation as interpretation becomes fundamental.

And here is where a concern similar to Douglas Coupland's arises, although expressed in a much more elaborate and complex way.

I have dedicated more space to the analysis of this novel because it is the first book by a Canadian author "exported" directly for the Mexican reading public. It is an effort which, as I mentioned in another case, seems wasted because it merits both better promotion and better distribution. I can make this observation about the anthologies, also: they also deserve to reach a wider readership.

In conclusion, I would just like to point out that a series of things would lead us to believe that the big multinationals headquartered on other continents are not interested in the exchange among cultures that share a common territory. There is still no market in Mexico for Canadian literature: it has not been publicized enough. Except for



*Mauve Desert* and the anthologies, most Canadian books are imported and therefore expensive. We should remember that a characteristic of globalization that has had an effect on the publishing industry is that some markets are so small that they are of no interest to the global publishing houses. This is precisely the case of Mexico. As a result, local importers are the ones who make the decisions to select, purchase and distribute materials.<sup>39</sup> The selection is left in the hands of Mexican book sellers, who decide on the basis of two possible attitudes: making books that sell well available to the public, or making books that disseminate the significant features of other cultures available to

the public. Although still insufficient, the distribution of Canadian literature to Mexican readers seems to have been done on the second basis. ■■■

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Erik McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, *Essential McLuhan* (Ontario: Anansi, 1995), pp. 233-269.

<sup>2</sup> For a look at this thinker's most important works, see Erik McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, eds., *Essential McLuhan* (Ontario: Anansi, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Frye also adds that McLuhan has been irresponsibly misquoted out of context since he never actually predicted the end of the book. Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," *Literary History of Canada*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1976), pp. 318-332.

<sup>4</sup> Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation, Cultural Identity and the Politics of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 134-167.

<sup>5</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, "Los traductores de *Las 1001 noches*," *Historia de la Eternidad*, in *Obras Completas*, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Emecé, 1996), pp. 397-413.

<sup>6</sup> José Lambert, "La traducción," *Teoría literaria*, Marc Angenot, Jean Bessière, Douwe Fokkema and Eva Kushner, eds. (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1993), p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> Bella Brodski, "History, Cultural Memory and the Tasks of Translation in T. Obinkaram Echewa's *I Saw the Sky Catch Fire*," *PMLA* vol. 114, no. 2 (March 1999), pp. 207-220.

<sup>8</sup> This observation could be expanded to include publishing industry procedures in general.

<sup>9</sup> Erik McLuhan, op. cit., pp. 270-297.

<sup>10</sup> Following Lorimer and O'Donnell's nomenclature, by globalization we will understand that markets for finished media products (film,

**TABLE 2**  
**BOOK PUBLISHERS AND LITERARY AGENTS BY LANGUAGE (1)**

	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995	1996-1997
<b>Companies</b>					
English Language Publishers	207	201	197	207	351
Literary Agents (English)	30	27	26	26	35
French Language Publishers	115	122	119	119	160
Literary Agents (French)	17	14	13	14	16
<b>Titles Published (2)</b>					
English	6,548	6,346	7,218	7,536	8,078
French	2,604	3,155	3,039	3,084	3,322
<b>Titles Reprinted (2)</b>					
English	3,198	3,532	3,936	3,850	4,004
French	2,867	3,249	3,312	3,483	3,537
<b>Total at Press (2)</b>					
English	38,621	39,313	42,299	44,306	52,113
French	23,494	24,653	28,540	30,642	35,836

(1) For the English-language publishers, this includes "other languages."

(2) Includes only the publishers activities.

**Source:** <http://www.statcan.ca/english/pgdb/People/Culture/arts02.htm>  
<http://www.statcan.ca/english/pgdb/People/Culture/arts05.htm>

- video, television programs, musical recordings, books, magazines, newspapers) expand from certain centers in developed countries to other developed and less developed countries. Rowland Lorimer and Eleanor O'Donnell, "Globalization and Internationalization in Publishing," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 17 (1992), pp. 493-509.
- <sup>11</sup> The Association for the Export of Canadian Books (AECB) and Canadian Heritage's "Books on Canada" page (<http://accb.org>) provides links for specific interests: for a list of Quebecois publishers, the Association National des Éditeurs de Livres page; for literary publications, the Canadian Book Review Annual page; for information on the Book Publishing Industry Development Program and export market technology and participation in international trade events like fairs and salons, the International Marketing Assistance Programs page published by Canadian Heritage and AECB; for information about cultural industries, figures, development plans, cultural policies, the Canadian Heritage Cultural Industries Branch page; for criteria for eligibility for scholarships and financial support, the Cultural Development Homepage; for criteria for federal support, the Canada Council for the Arts page.
- <sup>12</sup> Rowland Lorimer, "Book Publishing," *The Cultural Industries in Canada. Problems, Policies and Prospects*, Michael Dorland, ed. (Toronto: Lorimer, 1996), pp. 3-34.
- <sup>13</sup> The tables can be consulted in Lorimer, op. cit. They are not included here because for the purposes of this article, I was interested above all in interpreting the data. However, table 1 in this article presents current statistics developed by Marcela Osnaya, to whom I owe my thanks, about the Canadian publishing industry's trade.
- <sup>14</sup> Lorimer, op. cit., p. 10.
- <sup>15</sup> Canada's most famous men and women authors launch their novels simultaneously with Canadian, U.S. and/or British publishing houses, which is what the aforementioned prejudice refers to.
- <sup>16</sup> This is the case not only inside Canada, but also abroad.
- <sup>17</sup> To look more closely at postmodernism in Canada, see Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988) and *Splitting Images. Contemporary Canadian Ironies* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1991). I am aware that certain critics think Hutcheon is insufficiently audacious (Speaking of Canadian ironies, perhaps she is too Canadian) and that she normalizes the postmodern condition in Canada. See Lorraine Weir, "Normalizing the Subject: Linda Hutcheon and the English-Canadian Postmodern," Robert Lecker, ed., *Canadian Canons. Essays in Literary Value* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 180-195.
- <sup>18</sup> By internationalization, I mean the subdominant, longstanding and still existing form of international media operations directed at world audiences; it is the trade in products for national audiences or special interest groups among media producers located in different nations. See Lorimer and O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 494.
- <sup>19</sup> See the articles published on the Working Group on Cultural Policy's web page about the Canadian Conference of the Arts, "Preliminary Findings of the Working Group on Cultural Policy for the 21st Century," 1998; Gary T. Neil, "MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) and Canada's Cultural Sector" (October 1997); and Lesley Ellen Harris, "Copyright Issues in Trade Agreements" (October 1997).
- <sup>20</sup> M. Rodríguez Rivero, in his article "El libro, divertido accesorio de moda" (The Book: A Fun Fashion Accessory) published in *Babelia*, the supplement of the Madrid daily, *El País*, talks about mega-book shops and what they will mean to the reader who will become a consumer of books, objects dependent on fashion.
- <sup>21</sup> Although the information is not completely up to date, for details of the Mexican publishing industry, see María Hope, "Industria editorial. Las batallas en el desierto," and "Libreros y editores. A punto del salto mortal," *Expansión* (30 August 1995), pp. 20-29.
- <sup>22</sup> For a Mexican perspective on this, see Ricardo Nudelman's article "Sobredosis. Apuntes sobre la situación actual del sector del libro," *Hoja por hoja*, bibliographical supplement, *Reforma* (Mexico City) (6 February 1999). Nudelman explains that publishing has not escaped the mechanisms of globalization, where in the long run, only a handful of multimedia groups and distribution chains will be left and that they need to launch a great many new products to be able to recoup their investment: he calls this "flexible quality books." To this we can add the lack of policies to promote reading and the creation of readers.
- <sup>23</sup> It could be observed here that there has already been one literary movement created by the publishing houses: the Latin American boom, the exoticism of our lands published and promoted for European audiences.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert Lecker, "Introduction," *Canadian Canons. Essays in Literary Value* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 3-16.
- <sup>25</sup> Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Carol Shields and Douglas Coupland all have agents in charge of making deals, and they are the ones who have been published by the giant multinationals.
- <sup>26</sup> I thank Professor Rowland Lorimer for answering the questionnaire I sent him about the export of titles and translation of Canadian work, via Internet, September 17, 1999.
- <sup>27</sup> I would like to thank Freja Cervantes Becerril for her help in designing the questionnaire for publishing houses Tusquets and Alfaguara about copyright law.
- <sup>28</sup> Translations are also protected by copyright law.
- <sup>29</sup> Douglas Coupland, *Generación X* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 1993).
- <sup>30</sup> The case of *The Stone Diaries* is interesting because book distributors had imported half a dozen copies for the Guadalajara Book Fair dedicated to Canada, but only after they were sold out did they order another half dozen for sale in book stores. This anecdote shows how the market is gauged: practically by direct order.
- <sup>31</sup> Michael Ondaatje, *El paciente inglés*, Carlos Manzanao, trans. (Madrid: Plaza&Janés, 1995). There is also a Mexican reprinting of the 1997 original paperback.
- <sup>32</sup> Margaret Atwood, *Chicas bailarinas*, Víctor Pozanco, trans., Colección Femenino Lumen 40 (Barcelona: Lumen, 1998).
- <sup>33</sup> Douglas Coupland, *Generación X*, Mariano Antolín Rato, trans. (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 1993).
- <sup>34</sup> Laura López Morales, comp. and trans., *Literatura francófona* (Mexico City: FCE, 1996).
- <sup>35</sup> John Metcalf, ed., *Cuento canadiense contemporáneo: Breve antología* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1996). With an inexplicable waste of funds, the anthology with the same contents has been published in two different editions. This is surprising given that the efforts to disseminate Canadian literature in Mexico are so embryonic.
- <sup>36</sup> Margaret Atwood and Graeme Gibson, ed., *Desde el invierno, 23 cuentos canadienses*, Blanca Acosta and María Teresa Ortega, trans. (Havana: Ediciones Unión and McLelland and Stewart, 1997).
- <sup>37</sup> Nicole Brossard, *El desierto malva*, Mónica Mansour, trans. (Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1996).
- <sup>38</sup> Joaquín Mortiz, now part of Planeta, for many years produced an important part of Mexican literature by young authors who currently are part of the established canons of Mexican literature. Its publishing continues along the same lines, but its print runs are significantly smaller than those of other firms owned by the multinational.
- <sup>39</sup> Lorimer and O'Donnell, "Globalization and Internationalization in Publishing," op. cit.