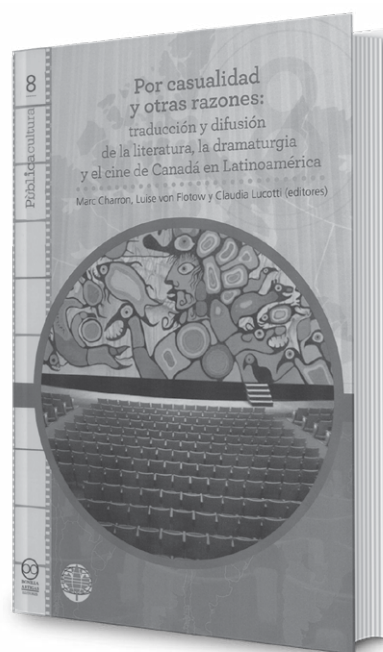


**Por casualidad y otras razones: traducción y difusión de la literatura, la dramaturgia y el cine de Canadá en Latinoamérica (By Chance and Other Reasons: Translation and Dissemination of Canadian Literature, Drama, and Cinema in Latin America)**

Marc Charron, Luise von Flotow,  
And Claudia Lucotti, comps.  
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This volume presents a brief but substantial and plural review of some of the cultural ties among Canada, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil constituted not through literature, theater, and film *per se*, but through the translation of Canadian literature, theater, and film into Spanish and Portuguese. Perhaps both end up being the same if we recognize openly and consciously—the underlying meaning of several of the ideas put forward in the book—that the translation of a work, of whatever kind, is usually the pre-requisite for approaching it and is a necessary, constituent element of it.

The panorama proposed by the body of *Por casualidad y otras razones...* is framed by certain hypotheses explored from the point of view of translation studies. This field, inaugurated in the 1970s by a series of academic voices interested in the systematic, descriptive, critical, and not exclusively linguistic study of the textual, cultural, social, and political phenomenon of translation, aids in understanding the position, functioning, and circulation of these



works. This book can also be examined in light of the discussions of translation, comparative literature, and world literature by Emily Apter and Pascale Casanova when they delve into the historic role of translation in the construction and consolidation of cultural and literary objects, which in turn will form traditions and cultural hegemonies that it is fundamental to reflect upon.

From these visions, then, it is significant that the first two articles (“La difusión de los cines anglocanadiense y quebequense y la posible formación de un público Mexicano” [The Dissemination of Anglo-Canadian and Quebec Film and the Possible Formation of a Mexican Audience], by Graciela Martínez Zalce, and “El teatro canadiense en Latinoamérica: traducción y difusión” [Canadian Theater in Latin America: Translation and Dissemination], by Hugh

Hazelton) very concretely inaugurate the argument made throughout the book that certain basic, persistent problems exist. Both articles pinpoint the lack of recognition of translation work and lead us to reflect on the fact that due attention is not given to the name of the person who writes the subtitles and the dubbing script for audiovisual works. Among other consequences, this can lead to a lack of awareness that the translations used are marked by the historicity of the specific dialogue involving the translator and not merely the author.

Both these articles also emphasize, as do others in the book, the issue of institutional support for translation projects. They mention that in Quebec, above all, this kind of support does exist; this is politically and culturally very important for the profession due to the special characteristics and role that the province has played in this regard. They also mention it in their critical comment about the systems of corruption and cronyism that are barriers to fostering the translation of Canadian texts. This can be understood given the attention that contemporary translation studies pay to the media and conditions in which translations are produced. In this sense, it is fundamental to point out the cultural policies and political customs in cultures, which affect translation, and, therefore, communication and the relationship between linguistic and cultural traditions.

Also, speaking of certain concrete and even material elements involved in circulating the text makes it possible to observe that literature depends on translation for its construction and placement in national and international literary spaces. Douglas Kristopher Smith deals with this in his article “La traducción del exilio, en el exilio; el exilio en traducción: el caso de Chile” (The Translation of the Exile Community in Exile; Exile in Translation. The Case of Chile). As Walter Benjamin points out in “La tarea del traductor” (The Translator’s Task), this serves to prolong its life, but it is not due only to the will of the translator, but to the convergence of the mechanisms of publication and dissemination of interested, willing, and ideal actors.

Smith’s article, on the other hand, makes us aware that translation is both an individual and a collective act, and that it participates in national and international processes marked by the extra-literary that need to be seen, from the translation itself, in its full historicity and as a part of complex socio-cultural and political developments. This is

the case of the Chilean exile community and the way it has affected cultural production in more than one country.

Marta Huertas Prego, in her “Traducción y difusión de obras de teatro canadienses en Uruguay” (Translation and Dissemination of Canadian Plays in Uruguay), points out a daily translation practice centered on the real dimension of dramatic performance and the work done by people who actually work in the theater. She underlines that in the Uruguayan theater something happens that we can also see as a general problem facing translation: the participation and payment of professionals who have specific training in the field are thought to be unnecessary. Huertas Prego adds another crucial issue: the non-existence or deficiencies of translation criticism seen not as a curiosity or journalistic condescension, but as a serious, specialized practice of analysis and cultural and literary criticism that can see this task as much more than a vehicle for getting to the original text.

A close relationship exists between translation and the formation and problematization of identities. This is the central discussion in the other two articles, “De Quebec a Brasil: la traducción como un diálogo fructífero entre *Américanité* y *Americanidade*” (From Quebec to Brazil: Translation as a Fruitful Dialogue between *Américanité* and *Americanidade*), by Marc Charron and Luise von Flotow, and “*Born in Amazonia* de Cyril Dabydeen en portugués: la cultura en traducción” (*Born in Amazonia* by Cyril Dabydeen in Portuguese: Culture in Translation), by Miguel Nenevé and Simone Norberto.

In the discussion of their translation of poems that touch on Canadian and South American mythical elements—and are therefore culturally determined and located—, Nenevé and Norberto postulate that those who study specific translations often do not only reflect on something given, but also construct their own object of study. This constitutes an approach on at least two levels (the origin and persons responsible for the object being explored, and the origin and those responsible for the observation and exploration of the object), and implies an exercise of self-criticism.

Through their observations about what nourished their translation process, Nenevé and Norberto delineate notions of identity marked by cultural and literary plurality, in what turns out to be a concern shared by the text contributed by Charron and Flotow. The latter show the relationship between the two connected concepts that

deal with notions of identity (*américanité* and *americanidade*) and explore their links to the translation into Portuguese of Jacques Godbout's *An American Story* (1986).

This article offers a series of commentaries about the novel's paratextual elements, and, with that, makes more flexible and broadens out the notions of "translation," since it goes beyond the "strictly linguistic" to consider other textualities and mechanisms for constructing meaning, representation, and circulation. The authors' clear problematization of the relationship between the identity-linked concepts of *américanité* and *americanidade*—following Edwin Gentzler's *Translation and Identity in the Americas* (2008) and Emily Apter's *Against World Literature* (2013)—also leads them to question translatability and the transfer of concepts and tools that we use to talk about, in this case, identity and translation.

That is, the article discusses the mobility of base concepts transported through translation and that become the point of departure for our argumentations about issues of culture and identity. It takes us through translation as an actor in the construction of concepts and ideas, a crucial epistemological element, and leaves behind the image of translation as a factor of transmission with a secondary, derived function. Flotow and Charron open an indispensable discussion:

If these are Quebec novels in which *américanité* is a distinctive trait, what does this mean in translation? Is it precisely this quality that makes it easier for them to travel to the rest of the Americas? If that is the case, what remains of the Quebec *américanité*? Is it preserved in the translation? Does it mix with—or perhaps resist—the other possible forms of *américanité*, whether they be Anglo-Canadian *Americanness*, Hispano-American *americanidad*, or the Brazilian *americanidade*? (p. 126)

To the negative response and the suppositions derived therefrom by Flotow and Charron (the possibility that it had occurred with non-fiction texts and that *américanité* had even been a criterion for choosing the work for translation), I would add a question about the awareness that the translator may have had of these issues. With that arises the need to explore the figure of the translator and the motivations that explain and justify the strategies chosen.

This book is proof that translation is a relevant process for the task and development of diverse interests

and areas in literature and the humanities. This confirms what studies about translation have put forward for decades: the proposal to broaden out its field of action and observation beyond the linguistic and the literature considered in a conventional sense.

In addition to touching on these specific, clearly delineated areas, *Por casualidad y otras razones...* makes us aware of the way in which translation is crisscrossed by issues that have been pointed out for years by eminent theoreticians of translation like María Tymoczko, Edwin Gentzler, and Lawrence Venuti: translation is a process and, also, in and of itself, an analytical, critical reflection on the construction and functioning of identities, collectives, institutions, political, social, and cultural structures, and the power dynamics based on cultural and linguistic hegemonies that may be observed in the life and circulation of texts and the creation of literary traditions.

Until recently, in Mexico a gap has existed with regard to the practice, dissemination, and publication of studies of translation, above all from the point of view of the concrete experiences of translating and reflecting on this topic in Latin America and specifically in Mexico. The title of the Bonilla Artiga Publishing house "Pública cultura" (Public Culture) and "T de traducción" (T for Translation) collections show that this vacuum is no longer as big as it was and that these kinds of study are by no means lacking, nor is their publication, but rather, their wider distribution, which would turn them into authentic fields for inter- and intra-institutional discussion. It is no small matter that my exploration of the topic of translation has discovered above all theoretical, methodological, and critical proposals from Eurocentric academic circles. Our vision of what we do tends to be filtered and ruled by the tools and gaze of those spaces that, paradoxically enough, translation itself can disrupt. In that sense, this book is one way of doing that. And to that must be added, as also happens in this case, the possibility of establishing more equitable dialogues among the different parts of the hemisphere and constructing proposals that show the diversity of approaches that could arise out of the conversations among countries with different linguistic, cultural, and academic traditions, and that display the complexity of the notions of identity, culture, tradition, and translation. **NM**

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