

TRANSLATION AND NATIONAL CULTURES

Taking the Case of Canada to Trace the Effects of Literary Translation

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Three Challenges: Literary Translation and National Cultures

1. National cultures or multicultures?
 - national literatures or multicultural work?
2. Translational direction?
inward? outward? within a country?
3. Issues around:
 - - translation as *representation* of texts and knowledge about cultures, or nations, and
 - - translation as the *construction* of knowledge about cultures, or nations.

Translations that have had 'national' effects

- **Tacitus: *National Thought in Europe*, Leerssen 2006**
- anyone who believes that Northern Europeans are more trustworthy than Southern Europeans is indebted to Tacitus.

- **Canadian Children's Writing: *Translating Canada*, Seifert 2006**
- uniform images of Canada: endless wilderness, ice-glittering romance, and grim backwoods reality...

- **Hindu Legal Texts: *Siting Translation*, Niranjana 1992**
- Hindu laws had to be taken away from the natives and "purified" through translation before they could benefit from them.

The Case of Canada: Construction and Export of National Culture

- Construction of “Canadian cultural identity” in post-colonial contexts: the Canada Council for the Arts: government-sponsored and subsidized literary production, publication and dissemination – since late 1950s
- Government-sponsored literary translation
 - – within Canada since mid-1970s
 - - outside Canada since mid-1980s

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Constant Questions....

THE GLOBE AND MAIL 

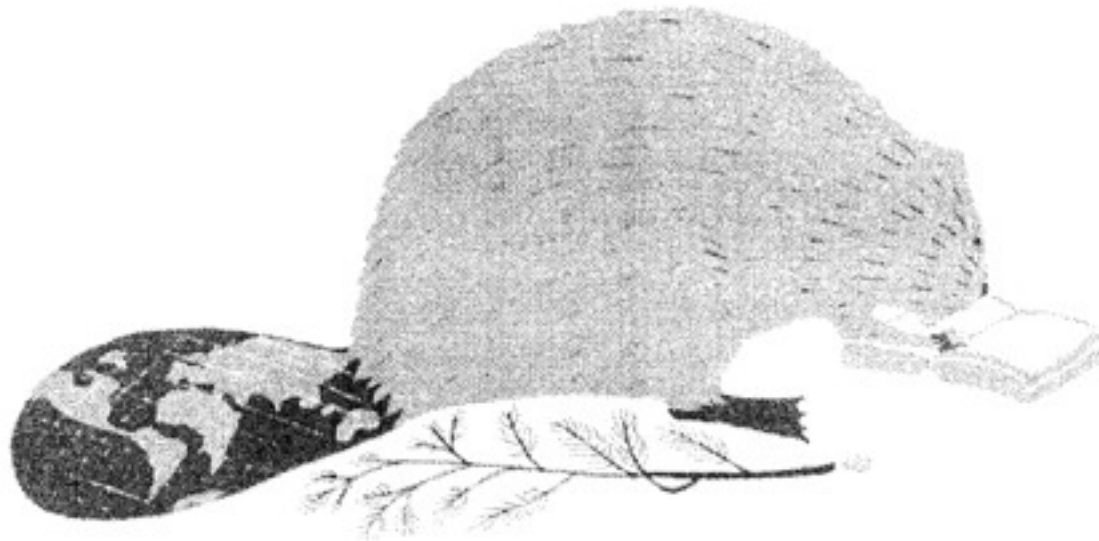
Publishing

Are Canadian writers 'Canadian' enough?

john barber

From Saturday's Globe and Mail

Published Saturday, Oct. 29, 2011 6:00AM EDT



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Translation within Canada



**Conseil des Arts
du Canada**

**Canada Council
for the Arts**

Book Publishing Support: Translation Grants

As part of fulfilling its mandate to foster the production and enjoyment of the arts in Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts provides financial assistance to Canadian publishers to offset the costs of publishing Canadian trade books that make a significant contribution to the development of Canadian literature. A component of the Book Publishing Support program, translation grants provide financial assistance for the first translation of literary works written by Canadian authors. Translation must be into French, English or an Aboriginal language for publication in Canada.

Category	2010-2011	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
Fiction	41	34	22	21	25	36
Non-fiction	35	43	20	25	27	47
Children's books	20	17	11	14	13	25
Poetry	12	5	3	--	5	9
Drama	3	3	6	5	8	6
Total	111	102	62	65	81	123

Source language	2010-2011	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
English	68	71	40	45	43	71
French	38	27	21	18	33	50
Other	5	4	1	2	2	2

Literary Translation out of Canada

Grants.pdf - Adobe Reader

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International Translation Grants

The International Translation Grants program provides assistance to foreign publishers for the first translation of literary works by Canadian authors, for publication abroad.

Genre	2010-2011	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
Fiction	75	72	83	76	90	76
Non-fiction	14	18	23	19	16	21
Children's	6	9	11	10	14	25
Poetry	2	9	4	3	8	8
Drama	2	1	4	2	3	3
Total	101	109	125	110	131	133

Target language	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08	2006-07	2005-06
Italian	17	21	11	13	14	14
Dutch	10	12	12	21	12	18
German	9	10	15	14	16	13
Spanish	9	7	8	8	5	10
Serbian	9	6	14	11	15	14

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Translating Canada (outward)

- What is translated?
- Who decides? Who chooses texts?
- In what condition do the texts arrive?
- How and by whom are they read/used?
- What is their effect? What images of Canada do they produce and disseminate?

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What is Cultural Diplomacy? (a)

- In Canada

“the use of culture by one nation to influence public or elite opinion of another nation for the purpose of turning the policy of the target nation to advantage” (Evan Potter 2002);

(using culture to sell tractors or wheat)

What is Cultural Diplomacy (b)

- - in (recent) USA: “Cultural Diplomacy: the Linchpin of Public Diplomacy” (US State Department 2005)

in the wake of the invasion of Iraq, the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo cultural diplomacy “reveals the soul of a nation”

- helps create a foundation of trust with other peoples
- demonstrates our values
- creates relationships
- reaches influential members of foreign societies

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Why We Need Cultural Diplomacy

- **Because the power of individual governments has declined:**
 - - traditional diplomacy: secret and confined to elite interest groups has been seen to fail (at least since WWI);
 - - national interests are entangled in multinational interests;
 - - proliferating communications systems undermine state-centric governance;
 - - non-governmental organizations erode national sovereignty;
- **Cultural diplomacy serves purposes of *image-making, persuasion, storytelling, and image-management***

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Targets and 'High Culture' Products of Public Diplomacy

- Elites:
- the only group that counts [...] that numerically limited group capable of and interested in manipulating doctrinal matters, the men of ideas who pull the intellectual strings « informing » or at least pre-disposing the attitudes and opinions of those who in turn lead public opinion. (Saunders 1999, citing Charles Burton Marshall in *The Limits of Foreign Policy* 1953).
- Elites are deemed to consume 'high culture (i.e. literature):
- (US State Dept.): *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson*
- (Goethe Institut) : NOT Ulrike Meinhof, Emine Sevgi Oezdamar

US State Department 2005: Cultural Diplomacy, the Linchpin of Public Diplomacy

- Cultural diplomacy is the linchpin of public diplomacy; ***for it is in cultural activities that a nation's idea of itself is best represented.*** And cultural diplomacy can enhance our national security in subtle, wide-ranging, and sustainable ways. Indeed history may record that ***America's cultural riches*** played no less a role than military action in shaping our international leadership, including the war on terror. For ***the values embedded in our artistic and intellectual traditions form a bulwark against the forces of darkness.***

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Culturally Diplomatic Organisms and Translation

- Alliance française – 1883
- British Council – 1930
- Goethe Institut – 1951
- CIA : 'Psychological Warfare' Initiatives – 1948-1970s
- Laura Bush Global Culture Initiative – 2006
- Canada Council for the ARTS – 1970s and 1980s onward
- RECIT: European Translation residencies
- Banff Literary Translation Residence: 2000s
- New Books in German: 2000s

All subscribe to idea of culture as an export item worthy of dissemination (via translation)

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Branding and Nation-Branding

- **Product branding:** “gives products an emotional dimension with which people can identify.” (Van Ham)
- **Nation-branding:** “nations need to continually present and re-present their past cultural achievements in ways that are fresh, relevant and appealing to younger audiences.” (Anholt)
- Emotional dimensions created through narrative / story-telling.
- - *in advertising* - wordless video sequences to avoid the “nightmare of translation”
- - *in nation-branding* – storytelling, fiction, narratives and poetry

Translation: cautious assessments from the US State Department

- “Translation lies at the heart of any cultural diplomacy initiative; *some* misunderstandings between peoples may be resolved through engagement with each other’s literary and intellectual traditions; the poverty of insight displayed by American policy makers and pundits in their view of other lands may *in some cases* be mediated by contact, in translation, with thinkers from abroad.”
- “Translation *can lead* to cultural cross-fertilization” : in USA, of a total of 185000 books published in 2004 only 874 were books of literary translation : “we are not privy to the conversations—literary, philosophical, political, and spiritual—taking place in much of the world.”

US State Dept: decision to believe in translation

- “Translation is an *inexpensive form of exchange*, the fruits of which—the dissemination of information and ideas, the inculcation of nuanced views of foreign cultures, increased empathy and understanding, the recognition of our common humanity—will be on display for a very long time.”
- “The task now is to *present the enduring truth* of the American experience—that we are a people capable not only of espousing, enacting, and spreading our noblest values but also of self-correction.”

Research Projects on Canada in Translation

Theoretical Bases

- **Translation** is *the* motor of the intercultural/cross-cultural exchange of texts, a **deliberate act** set in motion by various forces in order to transfer texts and ideas between languages and cultures.
- **Literary translation operates differently at different times**, affected by
 - - market forces - branding
 - - political forces – cultural diplomacy
 - - funding opportunities - subsidies
 - - literary trends
 - - censorship
 - - power differentials between cultures

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Theoretical Basis (2)

- **As part of Canada's cultural policy, translation is selectively deployed and supported in areas where Canada has geopolitical, cultural and economic interests:** notably, today, Mexico, Brazil, China, India. (This includes funding for Canadian Studies).
- Yet, personal contacts and networks are also vital to translation, and **texts can move across borders quite free of government intervention, by chance, by accident, informally – examples from Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay.**

Project 1: Canadian Writing in German = Images of Canada? (2006)

- What is translated?
- Who decides? Who selects? How and why?
- In what condition does the text arrive?
- How is it packaged and sold?
- How is it read?
- What effect does it have?

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Canada in German 1967-2000: Selected Findings

- *Children's literature in English* : an ongoing success – with bears and backwoods predominating in the images that are transferred.
- *Adult fiction*: 1980s – an explosion of women writers, in the wake of Atwood (feeding German readers' interests in women's writing and comparing favourably with local feminisms) – from 1980 – 1990, 26 novels by Canadian women and 12 by men.
- *Multicultures*: 1990s – still ruled by women writers (51 vs 26), but focus on multicultural writers in wake of Ondaatje's *The English Patient* , and Germany's unification problems.
-

Canada in German: Reviews and Effects

- *Reviews:*
- - narcissistic readings that always compare/relate translated text to home environment;
- - work with stereotypes and exploit/maintain existing images: “Eiskalt in Kanada” (the title of a review of Anne Hebert);
- - often derivative, with reviewers working in packs, all promoting the same type of work or the same author;
- - pedagogical, teacherly – explaining ‘use’ or possible ‘function’ of the new book in its new environment.

- *Effects:* hard to measure in short term (though influence/power of women writers was noteworthy).
-

Current Project:

Canada in Latin America

- All literary works translated into Spanish and Portuguese in the last 35-40 years – in South America, Central America, Spain and Portugal – and **disseminated/distributed in Latin America.**
- This includes drama in English and French, poetry, short fiction, novels, political essays, non-fiction, biography – and children's literature. **Anthologies are of particular interest.**
- Same research questions: what, who, how, where, when and the response to the work???

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Focus on Mexico, Brazil, Argentina

- **Objects/Translations:** *collect* materials, *create* database of all possible works published in translation in Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil and beyond. Search for reviews.
- **Agents/Networks:** *follow* work of agents - translators, publishers, academics, enterprising individuals, international associations, Canadian Studies initiatives – to understand and trace the transnational movements of our corpus.
- **Events/Effects:** *study* Canadian government initiatives and support systems, public events (Margaret Atwood - recipient of Principe de Asturias prize 2010), and the local work of reviewers and other networks. (La Semaine du Quebec in Buenos Aires – August 7-14, 2011)

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1. Data collection and organization

- *Database* (now with more than 900 entries) – including cover image of the book, and the blurb on the back; materials sorted according to author, date of publication and publisher, sex of author and translator, genre of text, keywords, etc.;
- *Reviews* of and references to Canadian writers, texts, events, culture, etc. from a wide selection of Latin American papers.

Margaret Atwood

Liste des éditions Voir Auteur

Auteur de l'original: **Atwood, Margaret**

Éditer Imprimer

Auteurs

- Abley, Mark
- Agnant, Marie-Célie
- Alexis, André
- Anderson, Paul
- Andrés, Bernard
- Atwood, Margaret**
- Barlow, Maude
- Bishop, Elizabeth
- Blais, Marie-Claire
- Blaser, Robin
- Bock, Dennis
- Bouchard, Michel Marc
- Bown, Stephen R.
- Brossard, Nicole
- Burnard, Bonnie
- Carson, Anne
- Charbonneau-Tissot, Aude
- Chen, Ying
- Clarke, Tony
- Cohen, Leonard
- Cohen, Matt


Prénom: Margaret

Nom: Atwood

Sexe: Femme

Province: Ontario

Pays: Canada



Titres

Titre	Année de l'édition
Oryx and Croke	2003
Alias Grace	1996
Surfacing	1972
Lady Oracle	1976
The Blind Assassin	2000
The Edible Woman	1969
Murder in the Dark	1983
Bodily Harm	1981
The Robber Bride	1993

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Translation of Warrior's Honour

[Liste des éditions](#)
[Voir liste des éditions](#)
[Voir édition](#)

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Édition de la traduction

[Éditer l'édition](#)
[Nouvelle réédition](#)
[Voir réédition](#)
[Imprimer](#)

Titre de la traduction:

Titre original:

Traducteurs:

Langue:

Année de la traduction:

Maison d'édition:

Année d'édition:

ISBN:

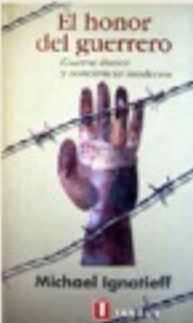

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Type:

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Analyse:

Subventions

Subvention	Pays	type de subvention

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Publishers

Liste des éditions Voir Maison d'édition

Maison d'édition : **Ediciones B, S.A.**

Éditer Imprimer

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Liste des maisons d'édition

- Celeste S.A., Ediciones cen/edusp
- Circe, S. A., Ediciones
- Círculo de Lectores, S.A. Colombie
- Círculo de Lectores, S.A. Espagne
- Columna, S.A., Ediciones
- DIFEL 82. Difusão, S.A., Editorial
- Dopesa, Ediciones
- Proa, Editorial
- Ed. da Univ. de São Paulo
- Ed. Ediouro
- EDHASA Barcelona
- EDHASA Buenos Aires
- Livros do Brasil, Edição
- Aguilar S.A., Ediciones
- Ediciones B, S.A.**
- Botella al Mar, Ediciones
- Cultura Popular S.A., Ediciones de

Maison d'édition: Ediciones B, S.A.

Pays: Espagne

Adresse: Consell de Cent, 425-427, 08009 Barcelona


Région: Barcelona

URL: <http://www.edicionesb.com>

Traductions éditées

Titre de l'édition	Année de l'édition	Type
Oryx y Crake	2004	Edition
Alias Grace	1998	Edition
El asesino diego	2001	Edition
La novia ladrona	1996	Edition
El cuento de la criada	2001	Edition
Ojo de gato	2002	Edition
El asesino diego	2005	Edition
Alias Grace	2006	Edition

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Funding

Liste des éditions Voir Subvention

Subvention : Conseil des arts du Canada-Canada
Canada

Éditer Imprimer

Université d'Ottawa - University of Ottawa

Organisme


Conseil des arts du Canada-Canada
DFAIT/MAECI - Dept. of Foreign Affairs
Sherritt International Corporation
Institution des Lettres Catalanes
Délégation Général du Québec au Nouveau Brunswick
SODEC-Québec
PADIÉ - Progr. D'aide au Développement
non applicable
Asociación de Estudios Canadienses
Dept. de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya
Ministeri de Turisme i Cultura del Govern de les Illes Balears
Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes
SNCA - Sistema Nacional de Creadores de Arte
FECAZ - Fondo estatal para la cultura
Writer's Development Trust, University of Toronto
AIEQ - Association Internationale de Écrivains
Associação Brasileira de Estudos Canadenses

Subvention: Conseil des arts du Canada-Canada Council for the Arts

Pays: Canada

Traductions subventionnées

Titre du livre traduit	Année de la traduction	Année de l'édition	Subvention
Oryx y Crake	2004	2004	Subvencion a la traducción
Resurgir	2004	2004	Subvencion a la traducción
El asesino ciego	2001	2001	Subvencion a la traducción
Juegos de poder	2000	2000	Subvencion a la traducción
Luna nueva	2000	2000	Subvencion a la traducción
Madame Oráculo	1984	1984	Subvencion a la traducción
Vulgo Grace	1997	1997	Subvencion a la traducción
Diario íntimo seguido por...	2003	2003	Subvencion a la traducción
Camino a Trieste	2005	2005	Subvencion a la traducción
Los habitantes del fuego	1993	1993	Subvencion a la traducción



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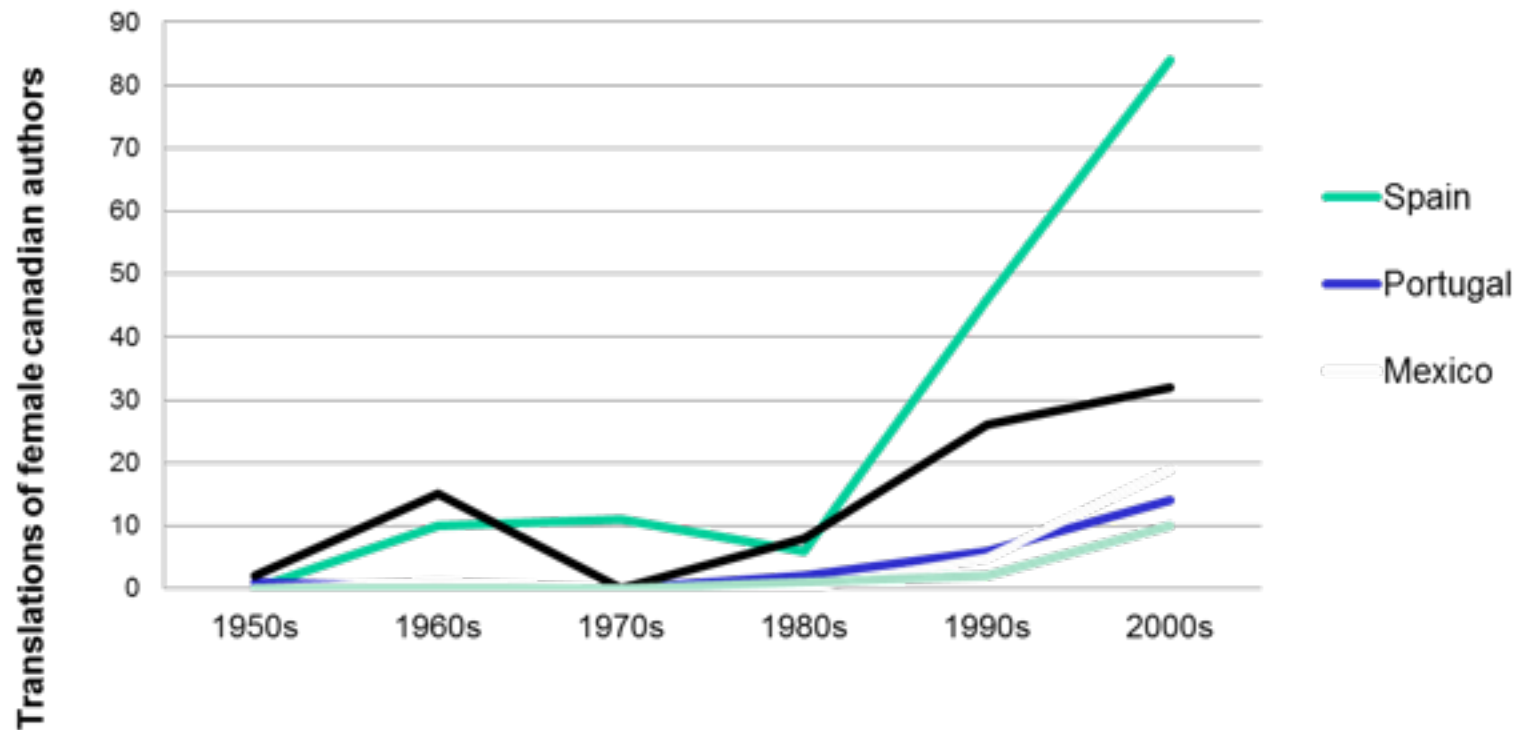
2. Quantitative analyses to establish research axes

Example: *women writers*

1. Publications per country and language, compared to men writers, genres, decades; how are they presented?
2. Funding: equal to male writers? More funding? Other sources?
3. Reviews: numbers, mention of author's Canadian status?
4. Agents or events propitious to promoting women writers?
Atwood/Roy Chair in Canadian Studies at UNAM 2004, Atwood – Principe de Asturias prize 2009.

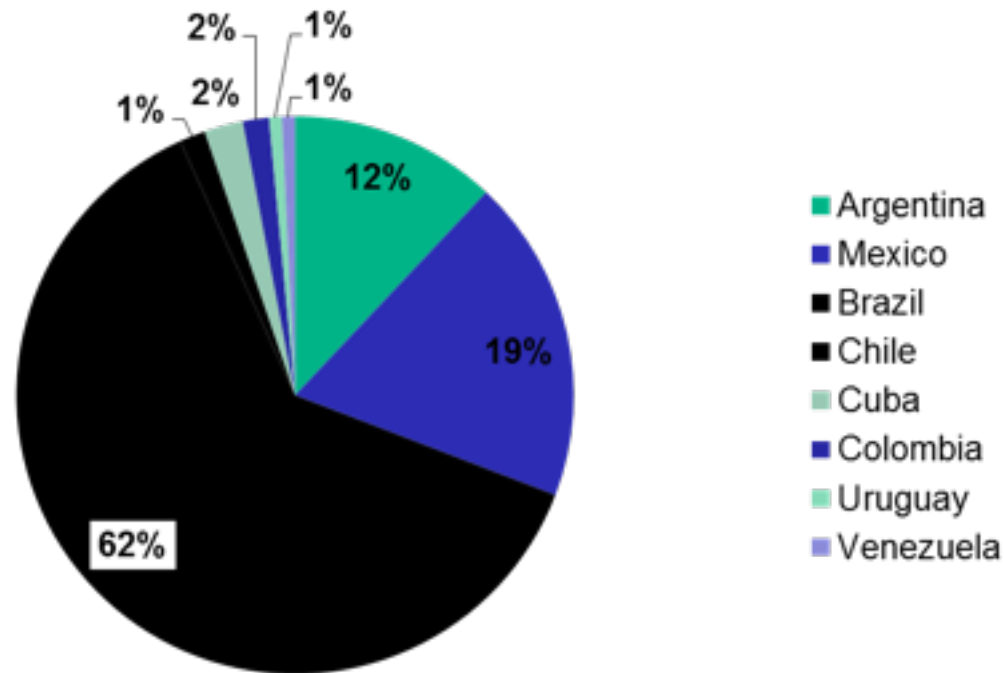
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Translations of Canadian Women Writers by country and by decade



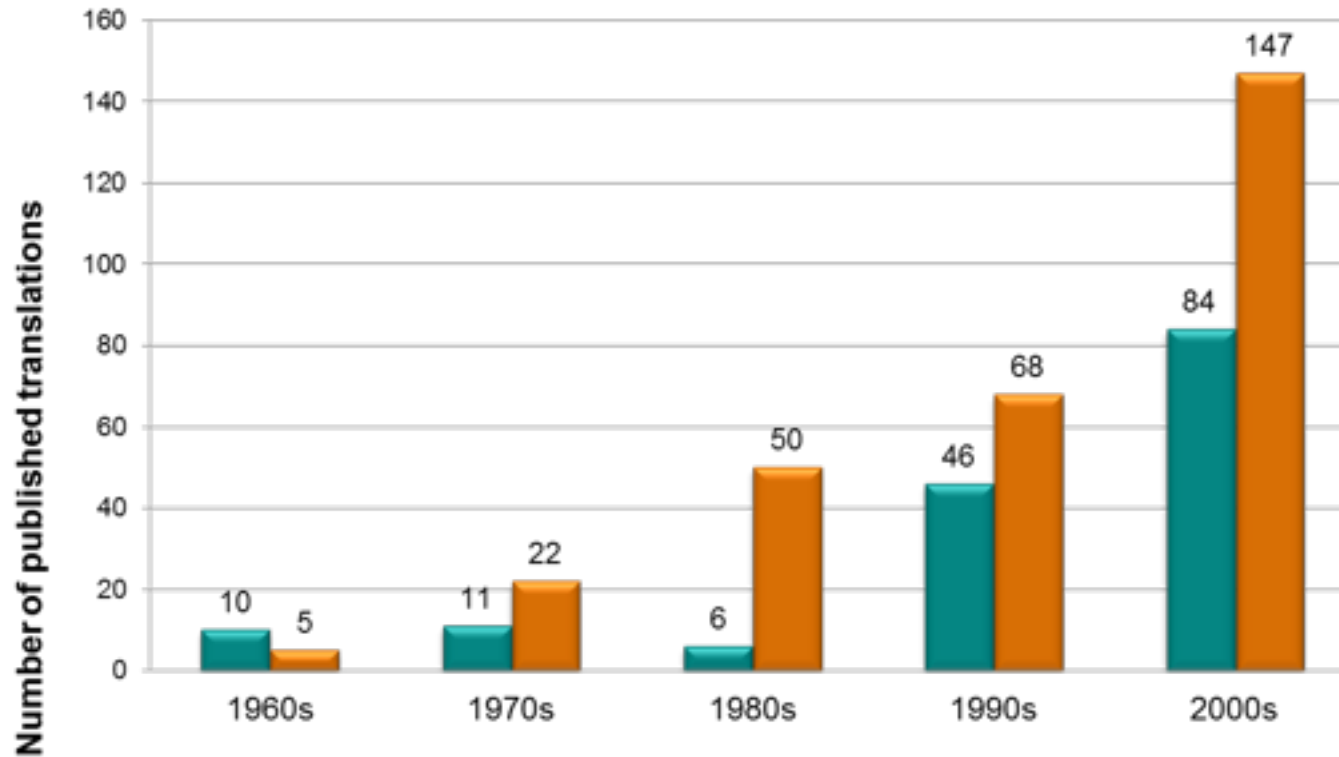
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Canadian Women Writers % by Country in Latin America



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Canadian Men vs Canadian Women Writers in Spanish



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Reception: Atwood

- See Atwood file

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More detailed research questions - production

- Influence of Spanish publishing houses (Madrid and Barcelona) and selective dissemination in Latin America;
- Effect of peninsular Spanish in Latin America;
- Demise of Portuguese publishing vs Brazilian publishing – does this affect Canadian products?
- Packaging of literary translation products: what role does Canada play – cover design, blurb?

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More questions: reception

- Importance of women writers (Atwood? And many others? What affects this reception?)
- Importance of multicultural aspects of Canada:
Ondaatje, Bissoondath, Selvadurai, Thuy, Chen: other
“international bastards.”
- Treatment of Latin American writers/Canadian residents:
Alberto Manguel (Argentina), Sergio Kokis (Brazilian), numerous
Chileans, Mexicans, Salvadoreans.
- Americanite?: indigenous cultures, settler narratives, European
immigrations, vast spaces, wilderness stories.

More questions: genres - fiction vs non-fiction, theatre, poetry

- Quebec theatre vs Anglo-Canadian theatre? Which works where? How has it travelled?
- Quebec poetry anthologized in Brazil and Mexico? Why not in Spain?
- Rise of Canadian non-fiction (largely marketed without national markers) – John Ralston Saul, Naomi Klein, Charles Taylor, Malcolm Gladwell, Pierre Levy... Why is non-fiction less important to 'cultural diplomacy' or branding?

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Summing up the details

- Translation is at the heart of these systems of exchange – which in the context of Canada involve:
 - - conditions of production of BOTH source texts and translations
 - - funding of source and translated texts, and their transfer abroad
 - - conditions driving the selection for translation and publication
 - - conditions of dissemination and reception in Latin America
 - - recognition of texts as ‘Canadian’ literature
- FINALLY:
 - - images of Canada produced in and for Latin America???

Argument FOR Translation Studies

We

- follow traces and clues to cross-cultural contacts that are created by translations;
- understand how and why certain works and ideas end up on other countries' bookshelves, and others do not;
- describe decisions made and work done by numerous highly-qualified and interested individuals who work in literature and culture and its movement and diversification;
- study the effects of these transfers.