THIRTY-ODD YEARS OF CANADIAN WRITING IN GERMAN: TRENDS IN INSTITUTIONALIZATION, TRANSLATION AND RECEPTION, 1967-2000

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In 1997, Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy asserted,

[...] the International Cultural Relations (ICR) program is an important element of the third pillar of Canadian foreign policy and of the government’s commitment to the promotion of culture. It is designed to promote Canadian values and interests abroad [...]. It contributes to the positive image that Canada enjoys around the world [and] helps to build lasting and productive relations.¹

This ministerial statement probably marked one of the high points of Canada’s turn toward “cultural policy” or “public diplomacy,” the notion (since replaced by “branding” [Anholt 2002]) that a country or state gains influence abroad by exporting its cultural products,

¹ “Minister Axworthy announces new guidelines for the promotion of Canadian culture abroad,” News Release no. 23, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 7 February 1997.
and thereby manufacturing interest in and sympathy for its agendas. This idea developed around the end of WWI, after the failure of traditional diplomacy; it brought about the birth of agencies like the British Council, the Institut français, the Goethe-Institut (after WWII), Voice of America, and so on (see von Flotow and Oeding 2005). In Canada, it was hardly an issue until well after the end of WWII, in the post-Pearson years, when the realization came that Canada was losing ground in international diplomatic influence and was being swamped right off the map by media and other imports from south of the border. Further, the fact that there was hardly any “Canadian culture” to speak of came as a warning shout from agencies like the Massey Commission, and finally caused systems to be set up that would support its production. This article looks at some of the subsequently designed “institutional” aspects of literary production in Canada, and its dissemination abroad, specifically in German-speaking countries. It focuses on translation as THE vehicle behind this cultural transfer and, in terms of the importing country, looks at the selections made and the reactions received. How exactly does CanLit (as it has come to be called) travel to a foreign place? What does it mean when it gets there? And how does it work toward “promoting Canadian values” and a “positive image of Canada”?

INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

In late 1950s Canada, Canadian culture in general, and Canadian literature in particular, began to blossom. It had to do with funding for the arts, a response to their then “moribund” and colonized condition^2 that the Massey Commission had described. The establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts with its private, and later public, funding that put in place support for the production of Canadian culture and writing, was the most important event in what has now perhaps

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2. The Canadian Encyclopedia (www.thecanadianencyclopaedia.com) gives a coherent and concise account of the conclusions of the Massey report in 1951, upon which the Canada Council for the Arts was founded.
become institutionalized culture.\textsuperscript{3} The establishment of this agency that has since evolved into numerous sectors, committees and juries, peer-review systems, lobbyists who approach various government and private funding bodies in order to garner financing for culture, and purveyors of special prizes in the arts was key to CanLit. Provincial funding bodies for the arts followed, and so did numerous privately-funded writing awards since the 1970s: the Molson Prize, the Giller Prize and many others – for French and English writing.\textsuperscript{4} Also in the late 1960s and 1970s, and often encouraged by the Canada Council, various writers’, and even literary translators’, organizations were founded. These bodies were generously supplied with funds from the Canada Council, and their mandates were as flexible as the funding has since become. The literary arts, which I am concerned with here, flourished to such an extent that only 40 years later they are part of the government’s diplomatic agenda. Writers could earn some money for their work\textsuperscript{5}; small publishers could not only survive but prosper on block grants; literary magazines and academic journals in which the new writers were reviewed were encouraged financially; and slowly an industry developed.

In the late 1960s the academic field of Canadian Studies was initiated in response to the lack of academic interest in and materials on

\textsuperscript{3} Andrea Oberhuber (2005) traces the ‘institutionalized’ aspect of Québec literature in “Zur Institutionalisierung der Literatur in Québec.” Much of what she describes could be applied in English-speaking Canada. One problem with this type of institutionalization, however, is that readers are indomitably diverse, and cannot be readily institutionalized.

\textsuperscript{4} The array of literary prizes available for French and English writing in Canada, and their history, is detailed in The Canadian Encyclopedia.

\textsuperscript{5} Although it is not easy and perhaps not necessary to calculate how much funding highly successful writers such as Atwood or Ondaatje have received from such public bodies over the course of their writing careers, it is doubtless true that the availability of funding supported their efforts. Indeed, the attempt by the Canada Council a few years ago to retrieve some of the funds spent on such established writers would seem to indicate that there was sizeable public investment in their careers.
Canada that was similar to the dearth of Canadian culture noted by the Massey Commission 10 years earlier. By the 1980s it was in full swing, and now has members and associations in over 30 different countries of the world. A fledgling idea, at first, that sought to boost Canadian and foreign interest in Canada by providing funding to academics who would study Canada, it has become an international event, and a participant in cultural policy or “public” diplomacy. Literary studies traditionally make up a large sector in Canadian Studies associations, and the German Canadian Studies Association (Gesellschaft für Kanadastudien),\(^6\) founded in 1980 as one of the first of the international associations, has consistently pursued studies of Canadian literature.

The most spectacular sign of this organization’s interest in Canadian writing is the publication history of its members: this includes doctoral dissertations and “Habilitationsschriften”\(^7\) on Canadian writing, monographs and collections of articles,\(^8\) anthologies of translated contemporary literature with scholarly introductions,\(^9\) critical introductions to a specific Canadian genre or type of writing and countless articles, published in the association’s journal (Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Kanadastudien), in special thematically-linked collections, in conference proceedings or in other international publications.\(^{10}\)

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6. The website of the Canadian Embassy in Germany describes the development of the Gesellschaft für Kanadastudien in some detail: http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canadaeuropa/germany/academicrelations-de.asp. The cooperation and involvement of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Embassy in this development is noteworthy as part of “cultural” or “public” diplomacy.

7. A study that is written after the doctoral dissertation and is generally required by German universities for a university appointment with tenure.


But these German academics have not restricted themselves to academic writing: they have also produced and published translations, taught numerous university courses in CanLit, and, perhaps most importantly, written popularizing overview articles as well as book reviews that appear in the important weekly feuilleton/culture sections of national newspapers such as the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Süddeutsche Zeitung or Die Zeit – thus creating ever wider audiences. Relatively early on, in 1976, Walter Pache, a professor at the University of Augsburg, published a landmark text in Die Süddeutsche Zeitung that announces: “Es gibt eine kanadische Literatur” [There is such a thing as Canadian literature]. Ostensibly a review of two short story anthologies published in West and East Germany respectively, his text was the first to announce to the general public in Germany that Canadian literature existed. In 1984, in Austria, Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, professor for English and American Literature at the Universität Wien, published a long text in the local Presse (26/27 May 1984) that presented a history of contemporary English-Canadian literature, discussing its development, main themes and preoccupations, and the works of individual authors. He wrote about the marginalization of Canadian writing by the USA publishing and film industries, described Canadian anti-Americanism in the wake of the Vietnam war and increased American media presence in Canada, and drew a clear picture of Canadian writers’ interests in overcoming colonial (both British and French) attitudes as well as the clichés of settler survival themes and developing approaches to Canadian identity. In a very opportune manner, this four-page account preceded an international symposium on English-Canadian literature held a few days later in Vienna with Robertson Davies, Jack Hodgins and Margaret Atwood, among others, in attendance. Similarly, in 1994, in the wake of a number of successful translations of novels by Atwood and others, and by then numerous visits by Canadian writers to Germany, Susanne Bach, a university lecturer, published a long overview article dealing once again with the heterogeneous nature of

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bibliography was funded by the GKS, the Canadian Embassy in Germany and the University Library in Augsburg.
Canadian literary efforts since the findings of the Massey Commission, the clichés of survival it was (still) in the process of overcoming and its participation in postmodernism (Stuttgarter Zeitung, 19 March 1994). Finally, and only toward the mid-1990s, did articles appear presenting Québec literature as a new, exciting artistic development that was in the process of driving out "demons of ignorance and impoverishment." Peter Klaus, a lecturer at the Freie Universität Berlin, published a long piece entitled "Vertreibung der Dämonen" [Driving out the Demons] in the Berliner Tagespiegel (14 November 1995) that celebrates the four Canadian women who have been honoured by the French Prix Médicis or Prix Goncourt (Gabrielle Roy, Marie-Claire Blais, Antonine Maillet and Anne Hébert) and then moves on to discuss language politics in Québec, Québec immigrant writers from Italy, the Caribbean, Chile, Brazil and China, developments in theatre, and the powerful institutionalization and subsidization of literature in the province that is the motor for so much creative activity. In a related guise, academic members of the Gesellschaft für Kanadastudien have regularly served as informants for less well-read secular journalists such as Julia Kospach who produce texts such as her "Wie eine Explosion" [Like an Explosion], an enthusiastic report on Canadian writing as a strong competitor against contemporary American Literature, in Focus (9 September 2000), an Austrian weekly similar to Canada’s Maclean’s.

While the GKS/Canadian Studies has certainly done its part in furthering the expansion of CanLit to German-speaking countries, there have been other useful institutional sources of help. The various travel, translation and publication programs and grants provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Canada Council, Heritage Canada and other Canadian federal and provincial government agencies play an important role in the German-speaking world. Public readings are events in German culture,\textsuperscript{11} and an evening with Margaret Atwood, Barbara Gowdy or, more recently,

\textsuperscript{11} A current fashion – the \textit{Lesecafé} – where local or foreign (translated) writers read to café clientele on a regular basis, say, every afternoon from 3-4 p.m. has become very successful in major centres in Germany.
Alistair MacLeod, supported by Canadian government organisms, or even better, hosted by the former Canadian Governor-General\textsuperscript{12} are not to be missed. Similarly, German readers’ awareness of CanLit has also been marked by the Canadian presence at the annual Frankfurt book fair, and Canada’s special guest status at more regional book events in Karlsruhe and Stuttgart, all with the support of the Embassy of Canada in Germany and such agencies as the Association for the Export of Canadian Books. The federally-funded International Translation Program that until 1995 paid for the total translation costs of a book meeting its requirements (and now pays 50\% of these costs) has also had an impact. Especially in regard to less commercially viable works, such as Nicole Brossard’s \textit{Le Désert mauve [Die malvenfarbene Wüste]}, such grants make publication possible.

Finally, a number of personal factors have supported the successful transfer of some CanLit to Germany – these are personal friendships between authors and translators, or more importantly between authors and their publishers. Margaret Atwood, for instance, was “discovered” by Arnulf Conradi, then working as an editor for Claassen. His publication of \textit{Surfacing} in 1979 put her on the German map, and she has remained with him in his moves through various publishing houses until he established his own Berlin Verlag (Conradi 2000). Similarly, there has been a certain continuity in regard to translators in the German

\textsuperscript{12} In the name of “public policy” and spreading Canadian influence through literary and other arts, Adrienne Clarkson (Governor-General from 1999-2005) and her husband John Ralston Saul made an extensive official visit to Germany in the company of numerous Canadian writers and culture workers in October 2002. Saul has regularly published and made pronouncements on the power of Canadian culture abroad, asserting that “Canada’s profile abroad is, for the most part, its culture. That is our image. That is what Canada becomes in people’s imagination around the world […]. Not being a player in international communications today implies disappearing from this planet. It isn’t simply a lost cultural and financial opportunity. It’s a major problem for foreign policy.” “Culture and Foreign Policy,” in \textit{Canada Report of the Special Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy. The Position Papers}, Ottawa, Public Works and Government Services, 1994.
market: all of Atwood's most recent work has been translated by the same Brigitte Walitzek, and Barbara Gowdy has had the same set of three translators sharing the work. This approach produces stylistically coherent work by translators who know their author well, and can render the work according to the requirements of the target readership whose responses they have also come to know over the years of translating the same author.  

To summarize the institutional aspects of CanLit in German then, there are the production aspects in Canada, which include subsidies, prizes, authors' travel funding, Canadian Studies programs and initiatives; and the transfer aspects in/to Germany, German Canadian Studies publications and promotion, translation grants, DFAIT support for book fairs and promotional activities, and the enormous reading and feuilleton culture that keeps the readers of many daily and weekly papers abreast of the newest releases.

TRANSLATIONS: 1967-2000

Germany has a long tradition of translation, with perhaps the Romantic period (late 18th – early 19th century) being one of the most prolific periods for translation as well as the articulation of translation and language theories. Since WWII there have been further waves of literary importation through translation; according to Conradi (2000: 27) only Finland outstrips Germany in this regard. He asserts that two factors have strongly affected this 20th century phenomenon:

13. Conradi (2000) has some interesting things to say on the topic of translation. He supports the idea of one translator for one author, asserts that women authors should be translated by women translators but that they can also translate male authors, and states that translation is a collaborative effort where the editor must play the role of objective critic (33-34).

14. Contemporary translation theorists such as Antoine Berman, André Lefevere and many others regularly refer to this period as one of the most important for contemporary ideas about translation; see, for example, Berman's L'Épreuve de l'étranger (1984), a study of the German Romantics' views on translation.
reaction against the cultural xenophobia imposed by the Nazi regime in the 1930s and 1940s, and the need to air out the stuffy, provincial atmosphere of post-war West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. There are doubtless many other reasons for translation being an important industry in Germany; in regard to CanLit, translation has brought in work from a country that Germans hold in high esteem: Germany’s Green ideas in the 1980s made Canada into a sort of paradise, the wave of German tourism to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s acquainted millions of Germans with real aspects of the place, the role Canada is often allotted as the “good” North American country has played a role, and especially English-Canadian writing has benefited from this craving for good foreign work, and from a very particular German interest for texts from the “Anglo-Saxon world.”¹⁵ French-Canadian writings, on the other hand, have fared less well.

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE AT THE OUTSET

The translation of Canadian literature began relatively hesitantly in the early part of the 20th century, with children’s literature (largely focussed on bad weather, backwoods and bears)¹⁶ and adventure stories featuring “real men in the wilderness” making up a large part of it. Some of the most translated authors in this genre are Ernest Thompson Seton, Farley Mowat and James Houston, all of whom cater to the German taste in “Nature and Natives.”¹⁷ Martina Seifert (2007) writing on the translation of children’s literature says in this regard:

*it could be said that up until the 1980s, virtually no text that presented Canada as anything other than a vast northern*

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¹⁵. German reviewers regularly claim that “Anglo-Saxon writers just tell a better story.” Der Spiegel (December 1992) goes into some detail on the disaster that is contemporary German literature, and its very successful rivals in the English-speaking world (including Atwood).


wilderness inhabited by animals, Natives, and a few white male adolescents qualified for translation, and the titles selected for translation in the context of existing hetero-images helped to perpetuate such conceptual constructs (Seifert, 2007 : 228).

In her discussion of this phenomenon, she shows that women authors or girl protagonists just did not make the grade for translation into German, since their work did not correspond to this cliché. Anne of Green Gables, for example, did not appear in German until 1986, long after Lucy Maud Montgomery was cited by Astrid Lindgren as her inspiration for the Pippi Longstocking character. Indeed, Seifert’s research shows that many of the stereotypic ideas that still abound in Germany about Canada probably derive from these very selective translations of children’s books. She claims that the images of Canada promulgated by these texts have not changed substantially over the last 100 years; only their interpretation has altered with images of Canada:

ranging from an “adventure play and training ground for male protagonists in the 1920s,” a “survival of the fittest” arena for the Aryan heroes during the Nazi regime (1933-45), and a tabula rasa escape haven in the German post-war imagination, to a place of spiritual healing and self-discovery that today seems to qualify easily as an ecological paradise (Seifert, 2007 : 221).

While English-Canadian children’s writing has been most successful in German, more recently some French-Canadian titles have also been translated, but from English! Most of the successful Québec writers and illustrators of children’s books such as Marie-Louise Gay or Pierre Pratt, who have very recently begun to appear in German.

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18. Marie-Louise Gay started her picture book illustrating career with Québec publisher Les éditions de la courte échelle, but soon moved on to publish her books simultaneously both in French (mostly Dominique et compagnie) and English (mostly Stoddard and Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre). The German translations of the successful Stella-Series published by Carlsen are all based on her English text (she translates her English texts into French herself): Marie-Louise Gay: Stella, Star of the Sea (1999),
appear first in English translation in Toronto – and are sold in Germany as “translated from English.” Yet, their work is quite different from the stereotypical “Nature and Native” materials described above: vividly illustrated and highly imaginative, these books often feature urban, female protagonists, whose encounters with bears are minimal.

ADULT FICTION

In the area of adult fiction, the period up to the 1980s saw a meagre crop of translations from Canada to Germany: Mazo de la Roche shows up with six books translated in the 40 years from 1936 to 1975.19 Arthur Hailey and Malcolm Lowry are also published in German though their status as “Canadian” writers is not acknowledged in reviews, and is, in any case, rather dubious.20 Some of Leonard Cohen’s work is translated in the wake of his success as a singer-songwriter over the course of the 1970s (but hardly reviewed); two books by Mordecai Richler


19. De la Roche (1879-1961) is best known for the “Jalna” series, a family history set in fictitious Whiteoaks, Ontario.

20. Hailey immigrated to Canada from England after WWII, and then spent many years living in the Bahamas. Lowry, too, came from Britain, spent several years in Canada and Mexico, then returned to the UK.
appear, and so does Snow [Schnee] a book by Philip Frederick Grove, a German who, for years, posed successfully as a First Nations man. There are a number of works from French Canada: three novels by Gabrielle Roy were translated between 1956 and 1970, Anne Hébert’s Kamouraska appeared in 1972 (two other works came out in the 1990s), Marie-Claire Blais’ Médicis Prize-winning Une saison dans la vie d’Emmanuel [Schwarzer Winter] was published in 1967. Until the late 1970s, there was thus a fairly spotty, fragmented transfer of Canadian writing into German. Further, translated works were rarely, if ever, reviewed as texts coming from or relating to Canada, and the work was often marked as translated “aus dem amerikanischen Englisch” [from American English].

In regard to coherent presentation of Canadian authors, the two anthologies reviewed by Walter Pache (1976) as evidence of the existence of Canadian literature – Ernst Bartsch (ed.) Die weite Reise. Kanadische Erzählungen und Kurzgeschichten (Volk und Welt, (East) Berlin, 1974) and Walter Riedel (ed.) Moderne Erzähler der Welt (Erdmann, Tübingen, 1976), along with his review, may be seen as a sort of breakthrough, offering as they did a wide selection of short pieces by many different English-Canadian writers. At the very least, they foreshadowed what would indeed become a relative “explosion” – of English-Canadian writing in German.


22. I take this term from an enthusiastic article by Julia Kospach (2000) from the Austrian weekly magazine Profil. Entitled “Wie eine Explosion,” it discusses numerous Canadian writers, claims that Atwood and Ondaatje are out-doing and outselling American writers, and announces “the Golden Age” of Canadian writing. However, the term must be seen in relation to actual book imports. In 1990, for example, of the over 9000 works of literature published in Germany, almost 50% were translations. The eight Canadian works among them (the average per year in the 1990s) would hardly warrant the term ‘explosion.’
1980s – CANADIAN WOMEN

This explosion seems to have been initiated by two factors: on the one hand, the translation of a large number of works by women writers and the public relations work they were willing and able to do in Germany; on the other hand, the huge interest in women’s writing, women protagonists, women as writers and the general impact of second wave feminism in Germany. The “women” factor was so powerful that numerous mainstream German publishing houses set up series of women writers. A few more avant-garde feminist publishers such as Frauenoffensive, Orlando Verlag developed, but have remained small and often experimental. Marian Engel’s Bear [Bär] (1976/1986) and Nicole Brossard’s Le Désert mauve [Die malvenfarbene Wüste] (1985/1989) appeared with such publishers – Frauenbuch and Frauenoffensive, respectively. In any case, in the decade from 1980 to 1989 a total of 38 Canadian novels was published in German, 26 by women and 12 by men. Margaret Atwood was in the forefront. Her novel Surfacing (1972) had appeared in two German versions in 1979 – as Strömung in East Germany and Der lange Traum in West Germany, both by the same translator.23 There were a number of very solid reviews of the book, and this as well as Atwood’s willingness to perform at readings, book signings and interviews set off a flow of translations: Life Before Man [Die Unmöglichkeit der Nähe] (1979/1980), Lady Oracle [Lady Orakel] (1976/1984), True Stories [Wahre Geschichten] (1981/1984), Bodily Harm [Verletzungen] (1981/1984), The Edible Woman [Die Essbare Frau] (1969/1985), Murder in the Dark [Die Gefälscher] (1983/1985) and Dancing Girls and Other Stories [Unter Glas] (1977/1986). By the mid-1980s, she was being interviewed and reviewed regularly in all the major papers, as well as on culture programmes on radio. When her novel Der Report der Magd [The Handmaid’s Tale] published in 1987 was made into a German film by Volker Schlöndorf (Die Geschichte der Dienerin, 1989), some say she became one of the elite authors read in

German. In her wake came works by Margaret Laurence: *The Stone Angel* [*Der steinerne Engel*] (1965/1988) and *A Bird in the House* [*Ein Vogel im Haus*] (1970/1992), and Alice Munro: *Lives of Girls and Women* [*Kleine Aussichten*] (1971/1983), *Who Do You Think You Are?* [*Das Bettlermädchen*] (1977/1989) and *The Moons of Jupiter* [*Die Jupitermonde*] (1986/2002). All of these show a gap of several, often many, years, between the publication of the source text in Canada and its German translation; the translations, however, all post-date the major Atwood translations and can thus be considered a result of her success. Indeed, many of the reviews of other Canadian women writers refer directly to Atwood as the reference, the most current and important name to compare all the rest to – for both reviewers and readers. In the case of later books by Munro, or new work by Barbara Gowdy and other writers of the late 1980s and 1990s, the translation into German occurs almost immediately: Munro’s *Friends of my Youth* [*Glaubst du, es war Liebe?*] (1990/1991), *Open Secrets* [*Offene Geheimnisse*] (1995/1996) and *The Love of a Good Woman* [*Die Liebe einer Frau*] (1998/2000) are examples of this quick translation – a sign of the publishers’ high hopes for sales. Jane Urquhart, Carol Shields and numerous others (Bonnie Burnard, Mavis Gallant, Elizabeth Hay, Joy Kogawa) benefited from this wave.

**THE ISSUE OF REVIEWS**

It is not easy to gauge the responses to these works, except by sales figures (which are impossible to acquire) and by the reviews written by professional readers. As a discursive form, the review has considerable weight, especially in middle-class German culture where thousands of readers of the *feuilleton* pages are kept informed on recent publications by the latest authors. Indeed, for many readers the review is the book. The reviews written about Canadian women writers over

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24. This, at least, is the opinion of Astrid Holzamer (2000: 18), culture worker at the Embassy of Canada in Berlin. Volker Schlöndorff’s film was not a great success.
the course of the 1980s are interesting examples of this literary form and its impact.

First and foremost, it is a form that is firmly rooted in its home turf, narcissistically relating and comparing the incoming materials to literary and other conditions at home (Flotow 2003). Atwood and other Canadian mainstream writers, for instance, are always compared favourably to German versions of “women’s writing,” which are largely seen as boring and too introspective on the one hand, or crude, shrill, aggressive and programmatic – far too politicized “Kampfesliteratur” [battle writing/writing of struggle] on the other. Atwood, and the quieter novels of writers such as Laurence, Burnard and Urquhart are considered works that “even” men could read,25 that is, works that address women’s interests, but refrain from polemics, and most importantly, tell good stories. Atwood gets special praise for writing about issues that most “modern” women face: career and family, emancipation and dependence, and for doing so “mit Witz und Tiefe und weniger Ernst als deutsche Schriftstellerinnen”26 [with wit and depth and less seriousness than German women authors], i.e., not exaggerating the political import of these topics. In reviews of The Robberbride [Die Räuberbraut] she is also credited for devising a new type of woman: “dämonisch, skrupellos, egoistisch und schön” [demonic, unscrupulous, egotistical and beautiful],27 a type that presumably contrasts with the suffering, or angry, heroines of the vituperative German women’s writing of the period.

25. Günther Schloz (1985), “Schön kühl gehaltene Frauen,” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (9 October), writes, for example, that there can be no doubt that all these books have been written by a woman […] but there is nothing in them that would interest only women, “weder Weiberkram noch Frauensache” [neither women’s nonsense or women’s stuff].


Second, the review is a genre that works with stereotypes, easing readers into foreign materials by providing short-cuts and succinctly setting this material into commonly known facts about the culture in which the book originates. Many reviews of Canadian writing evoke Canada’s climate or topography in the title of the review, discuss it at some length in the body, and often draw parallels between these clichés and the content of the work. A review of Hébert’s Kamouraska, for example, is entitled “Eiskalt in Canada” [Freezing Cold in Canada]. For the reviewer, life in Percé for the immigrant family with the dirty secret of torture in Alberto Manguel’s first novel “fließt wie ein breiter Strom” [flows like a wide river],28 and the comprehensive review of Atwood’s work published in Buchkultur 94, entitled “Guerilla in der Wildnis [Guerilla in the Wilderness],” opens with a list of Canadian scenes as we all know them from postcards: “Wiesen, Wälder, Seen und Stille; schneebedeckte Gipfel vor strahlend blauem Horizont…” [meadows, forests, lakes, silence: snow-covered summits and bright blue horizon].29 Not a mosquito or blackfly in sight, and no vicious subsub-zero temperatures either.

Third, reviews are seldom original pieces of work; they are derivative and repetitive, and reviewers seem to operate in packs; they develop a fascination for a type of writing or a particular author, and then remain faithful, to the exclusion of other, possibly equally valuable or interesting work. Canadian women writers such as Atwood have drawn considerable benefit from this tendency, not only because many of their reviewers were also women in an “era” of women’s writing, but also because they stayed with their authors (and developed a readership for them).

Lastly, reviews can be pedagogical, didactic, teacherly, explaining the possible function of the reviewed book in its new environment. This aspect comes out strongly in the reviews of women’s writing, but also

in those of so-called multicultural or international authors. Reviews of Michael Ondaatje are a good example: *The English Patient*, for instance, is described as “evidence of a search for a new equilibrium to be won by trespassing cultural boundaries,”30 and equilibrium to be “won” by readers as well, presumably. Indeed, Canada’s openness toward other cultures is regularly noted and praised.

1990s – MULTICULTURES

If the 1980s were “ruled” by women writers, things changed somewhat in the 1990s. Canadian women continued to be published in large numbers – in this decade 77 books of Canadian fiction were translated into German – 51 by women, 26 by men. But this seems to have been the decade in which multiculturalism and its challenges entered German literary awareness. The trigger for Canadian work was Ondaatje winning the Booker Prize for *The English Patient* [*Der englische Patient*] (1992/1993) and the enormous subsequent success of the work as a film. Again the local situation played a role: Germany in the early 1990s faced serious challenges relating to German unification. Among these were the xenophobic attacks unleashed by some small sectors of the population against Turkish and other visibly foreign residents, while the debates initiated by the Green Party around the issue of citizenship for Turkish children born and educated in Germany, and the ongoing discussions about whether or not Germany is a “country of immigration” [*ein Einwanderungsland*] also played a role. The discourse around foreigners, migration, racism, and integration may well have caused German readers to turn to Canada’s multicultural social space and literature with keener interest.

Ondaatje, with his roots in Ceylon and his “international” topics, was certainly of great interest to reviewers and readers, and he is regularly linked to the concept “multikulti” (a short form of “multikulturel”) in reviews and their titles. While this term is not wholly neutral, and is sometimes used as a sarcastic dig at liberal left-wing

discourse, it reveals the German fixation of the moment. In accounts of his books and his own background, it is writ large: “The author, who has Sinhalese, Tamil and Dutch ancestors, can be seen as the personification of a ‘multi-kulti’ world” (1995) [my translation] writes one anonymous reviewer in the Austrian Kleine Zeitung. And another claims that Ondaatje takes an interest in marginal figures such as jazz trumpeter Buddy Bolden because of his own life between cultures, yet another instance where a review uses cliché as an easy shortcut to literary criticism. In any case, Ondaatje opened the gates to other “international bastards” with Canadian documents, especially after he was awarded the Nelly-Sachs Prize by the city of Dortmund in 1995, a prize for work that embodies the idea of “Völkerverständigung” [understanding between peoples]. Shyam Selvadurai’s Cinnamon Gardens [Zimtgärten] (1998/2000), Rohinton Mistry’s A Fine Balance [Das Gleichgewicht der Welt] (1995/1998), Michael Ignatieff’s Asya [Asja] (1991/1992) and Alberto Manguel’s News from a Foreign Country Came [Im Siebten Kreis] (1991/1996) followed in translation — all with “exotic,” non-Canadian settings or characters, yet clearly marked as books by Canadians, who were, however, not quite Canadians since they had done away with the “Holzfäller- und Lachsfschorklischeebild” [the cliché of woodcutters and salmon fishermen] (Kospach 2000). Indeed, these international authors seemed to suddenly give Canadian literature a special cachet of worldly, widely-travelled, cosmopolitan writing by authors with exactly those qualities.

THEATRE

The change toward more worldly, universal topics than the issue of Canadian identity that dominated the 1970s has been viewed as the most important component in making Canadian theatre translatable

31. Reviewer Reinhard Helling quotes Ondaatje as referring to the many “international bastards who were born in one place in order to then live in another,” Abendzeitung (10 July 2000). The same line is quoted by Kospach (2000).
and performable in German, with Brad Fraser’s *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* (1989) often cited as a breakthrough (Glaap 2007). The 1990s have seen a marked increase in Canadian work arriving on German stages. Interestingly, the French-English ratio is about even, with francophone playwrights such as Michel Marc Bouchard, Marie Laberge and Robert Lepage recently outdoing most of the individual English-Canadian writers, except George Walker, who had five plays staged in German in 2003 (*The End of Civilization, Criminal Genius, Heaven, Featuring Loretta and Adult Entertainment*). Again, the Canadian Studies influence is important, with academics such as Albert-Reiner Glaap (Düsseldorf) compiling anthologies of Canadian plays for circulation to theatres, universities and schools (Glaap 1997 and 2003), and Hanspeter Plocher (Augsburg) actually translating, staging and then publishing Michel Tremblay’s *Les belles sœurs* as *Schwesterherzchen* (1968/1986).

Yet, despite the efforts of individual academics and translators (such as Andreas Jandl, the recent translator of Daniel Danis), the export and translation of theatre is affected by many more problems than those that confront books – of fiction or non-fiction. These include accessibility and information: while Canadian agencies such as the Playwrights’ Guild and the Centre des auteurs dramatiques (CEAD) do what they can to disseminate information about Canadian plays, it is not easy to reach the individual dramaturgs who make decisions about annual playbills in the over 250 German theatres. German theatres do not have scouts in Canada nor do they pro-actively look for promising or successful Canadian plays. Further, the contracts are more complex than for fiction and non-fiction, since they include clauses about royalties and performance, publication, even film, CD and DVD rights. Moreover, negotiations are often confounded by the different practices that contracting parties are familiar with; for example, arguments over royalties based on ‘net’ or ‘gross’ box office income can completely foil a translation (see Oeding 2007).

Nevertheless, the years since 2000 have seen an increase in the exporting of theatre work from Canada to Germany; French-Canadian and Québec playwrights seem to be reaping substantial success: Michel
Marc Bouchard, Marie Laberge, Normand Chaurette, Daniel Danis (with three plays), Éveline de la Chenelière, Michael Mackenzie, Sébastien Harrison, Larry Tremblay, François Archambault, Stéphane Hogue, Frédéric Blanchette, Nathalie Boisvert, François Létourneau and Michel Tremblay have been translated and staged since 2000. Reviews are rare, but perhaps the increased frequency of translation speaks for itself.

NON-FICTION

Finally, much like the development in the other genres, Canadian non-fiction has been read in German mainly since the 1980s and ranges from Northrop Frye’s Anatomy of Criticism [Analyse der Literaturkritik] (1957/1964), a wonderful example of “failed reception” due to European developments in literary criticism that dated Frye’s work (Banita 2007), through the work of Charles Taylor,32 with which Jürgen Habermas and other German social philosophers have engaged, to Naomi Klein’s No Logo/No Logo (2000/2002). While coffee table books such as Stan Garrod’s Canada: The Scenic Land/Der Zauber des schönen Kanada (1981/1984) or Freeman Patterson’s Canada: The Last Wilderness/Kanada - PhotoImpressionen aus der letzten Wildnis (1990/1991) exist, and may have helped whet readers’ appetites for other Canadian writing, they are not a staple of non-fiction translation. Instead, work such as that of Marshall McLuhan (a

latecomer to German translation\(^{33}\), John Ralston Saul and Paul Roazen, a Freud specialist from York University, dominate the genre. Again, in this area, reviews are scarce, and the translations seem destined to a specialized public.

**SUMMARY**

All in all, the last thirty-odd years have seen a sharp increase in the transfer of Canadian material to German-speaking countries, and, as “universal” themes and topics increase in the source texts, so does their export. In the area of fiction, the most important genre for export and “influence,” the cachet of “cosmopolitanism” that even writers such as Robertson Davies have been assigned by reviewers seems of particular interest, while the “women’s factor” also remains a strong element that sells Canadian work. In general, the clichés of “nature and natives” have subsided considerably, though their influence on readers raised with such texts remains redoubtable.\(^{34}\) Cultural subsidies from various Canadian sources have substantially aided not only the production of these source texts, but also their dissemination abroad. Nonetheless, authors need to do considerable public relations work, travel, submit to interviews and readings in order to help their books gain access to the local readers. In fact, the local context, the local reading space, which tends to find and translate what it needs when it needs it, is probably the most important factor in the selection and success of a work. This is the most interesting aspect of the whole picture: while Canadians may think they are making the world a better place by “exporting their values” (to cite Axworthy 1997), as much depends on what the


34. Hartmut Lutz (2002), a German Canadian Studies specialist, has analyzed Germans’ fascination with the “native” in some detail.
importing culture wants, and how it reads these texts. Paradoxically, those aspects are beyond the control of any culture official and may have little to do with national identity or interests.
WORKS CITED


