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Canada in Eight Tongues. Translating Canada in Central Europe /  
Le Canada en huit langues. Traduire le Canada en Europe centrale

**Katalin Kürtösi, ed.**

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*Canada in Eight Tongues. Translating Canada in Central Europe / Le Canada en huit langues. Traduire le Canada en Europe centrale* (2012) is a volume of twenty-five papers by some prominent – mostly European – scholars and translators about the changes and the current trends of the Central European translations of Canadian literature in the past century. Owing to the editorial work of Katalin Kürtösi, Associate Professor of the University of Szeged, we can hold in our hands a collection of studies penned by eight countries' committed supporters of Canadian literature, criticism, and texts in other areas of humanities and social sciences in their own native languages.

By reading the papers, written in English and French, presenting the works of the most popular Canadian authors translated in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia, we can become acquainted not only with their literary preferences but can also keep track of the linguistic predilections of these countries. Moreover, we can gain insight into some of the translators' difficulties – such as the domestication of certain Canadian animals and how to apply numerous theoretical terms in the European context.

The volume can be divided into four broader sections, informing the reader of (a) the most translated Canadian books in Central Europe, (b) their various receptions, (c) how their genre and gendered distribution varies from country to country, as well as (d) what challenges their translators found in their work. They beautifully depict what has been achieved so far and what gaps should still be filled in in order to further acquaint the European readers with Canada's unique and "exotic" (Anikó Ádám, 61) writing.

"A Panorama of Translations in Countries of the Region" demonstrates how the publishing policies changed throughout the twentieth century, scrutinizing the period's historical cornerstones, which either boosted or kept back the dissipation of



the “dangerous” foreign ideologies of the era. Historical events such as the two World Wars reshaped the publishing policies and, thus, the translating regulations of the region. Czechoslovakia, for example, was incorporated into the Third Reich during World War II and there was only one book by a Canadian author (Ernest Thompson Seton) which went through censorship amid those radical years (Don Sparling, 43). In the post-war period, however, Canadian Dyson Carter’s anti-West and pro-Communist world picture was translated not only in Czechoslovakia, but in the USSR, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and East Germany, too, without any governmental intervention (Lucia Otrisalová, Marián Gazdík, 119).

The Yugoslav Wars ended with the declaration of independence of the constituent countries step by step, which contributed to the reawakening of their political, cultural, and linguistic efforts. As Jason Blake argues in “Late for the Party: Alice Munro in Slovenian Translation,” although Slovene censorship was unpredictable before the fall of Yugoslavia, the translation market in Slovenia has been thriving since then (180). Likewise, after the formation of Croatia in the early 1990s, Canadian translations into Croatian finally began to make their way from works by authors such as Michael Ondaatje, Barry Callaghan, and Robertson Davies (Petra Sapun Kurtin, Mirna Sindičić, 50).

As Communism toppled in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the transition period to new democratic political systems gradually gave way to translations of Western literature. From this moment on, it is the rules of the market economy and sales potential that have dictated what should be translated. Publishers tended to gravitate towards those works that already proved international acclaim (such as Lucy Maude Montgomery of *Anne of Green Gables* fame), for which authors received some prestigious awards (including Booker Prize winner Margaret Atwood), or that discussed some pertinent contemporary issues (Douglas Coupland).

The authors of the next section, “Translations and Reception of Authors and Works”, enumerate some of those translated Canadian works that fought their way through the strict censorship of the ruling governments. The translations of the highly renowned Canadian writer Timothy Findley (Galina Avramova, 131) and Michael Ondaatje (Madeleine Danova, 139) are accentuated in Bulgaria. Hungarian Zoltán Kelemen chooses Leonard Cohen, who has mostly been known as a guitarist and singer and not as a writer of poetry and fiction for the Hungarian audiences (145). Robert Kroetsch’s *The Studhorse Man* is assessed by Tanja Cvetković as a prominent representative of the Serbian translations of English Canadian texts (149). While Marián Gazdík presents the chronological development of the reception of Margaret Atwood’s works in Slovakian (155), Lucia Otrisalová focuses on the Slovakian translation of *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, one of the most translated and most popular Canadian authors in the world (169).



The “Genres and Gender” section includes papers on Canadian short stories and drama which gained significant readership in Croatia and Hungary, respectively, and Mirna Sindičić Sabljo and Petra Sapun Kurtin’s study draws attention to some Canadian women authors translated in Croatia. Sabljo and Kurtin (191) point to the fact that Canadian literature was not well-known in Croatia before the 1990s and the first translation of a novel by a female Canadian writer (Edna Mayne) appeared only 60 years after the appearance of Seton’s works. As Croatian was neglected for the benefit of Serbian and Serbo-Croatian (or Croato-Serbian) during the Yugoslavian regime, it was not until 1991 that one noticed the beginning of the inflow of Canadian books into Croatia. Since then Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Carol Shields, theorist Linda Hutcheon, and many more have had their works translated into Croatian. Despite the positive changes, according to Sabljo and Kurtin’s tally, male-authored works still outnumber works by Canadian female authors.

Antonija Primorac gives an overview of the representation of Anglophone Canadian short stories in Croatia (201), putting a special emphasis on three anthologies: *Antologija kanadske kratke priče na engleskom jeziku* (An Anthology of Canadian Short Stories in English, 1991), *Veliki safari kroz carstvo engleskog jezika* (A Great Safari through the Realm of the English Language, 2001) and *Život na sjeveru* (Northern Exposure, 2009). The first was addressed to the reading audience of former Yugoslavia, and the second aimed at showing the richness of contemporary short stories coming from countries that used to be part of the British Empire, including five Canadian pieces.

In the next paper, Katalin Kürtösi switches from the short story to Canadian drama translated into Hungarian (209). She raises the question of translatability, and what the publishers take into account when they choose works to be translated. She enumerates some of the works translated in the genre, highlighting a drama anthology: *Történet a hetediken* (Seven Stories) that includes Michel Tremblay’s successful *Les Belles-Soeurs*.

The last chapter of the volume, “Translators’ Insight”, reveals the work and hardship of some of the translators who engaged themselves in bringing Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* to the Czech and Hungarian readers. Sylva Ficová emphasizes that she had difficulties in finding suitable Czech literary terms identical in meaning to the ones applied by Frye (224). Recounting the same difficulty, József Szili adds that he needed to translate several “old terms with a fresh reference to comply with the needs of the theoretical integrity of the work” (228).

The volume ends with Ljiljana Matic’s French study of the influence of contemporary Quebec writers on Serbian literature, mentioning some of the best known emigrant writers from Serbia, such as Négovan Rajic and Ljubica Milićević (237). *Canada in Eight Tongues, Translating Canada in Central Europe / Le Canada en huit langues, Traduire le Canada en Europe centrale* is a comprehensive work of Central European



scholars and translators who took up a pen to show us the translating trends of Canadian works in their countries since the beginning of the twentieth century. The various authors show how translations came into being and how their efforts were received in various nations. Their labour is invaluable because literary translations function as a means of cultural transfer and it is through their work that the Central European readers formed and continue to form an image of Canada.