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Publishing about Canada, Imperative for Knowing Each Other

In the framework of the eightieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Canada, undoubtedly one of the most important things to think about is the efforts both nations have made to understand each other.

Trade, economic integration, and many other successful social, political, and cultural interactions have bolstered relations between the two countries. Among them, one of the most outstanding activities—and also one of the most transcendental—is the emergence of a critical mass of academic institutions, researchers, and experts from both nations interested and committed to studying and understanding each other, our reciprocal relations, and their place in the world through their integration in geopolitical regions and international bodies of different

kinds. A significant community of Canadianologists has thus emerged in Mexico, and, also, though to a lesser extent, a community of Mexicanologists in Canada. The latter are grouped mainly in the disciplines of Latin American studies and Hispanic studies in general.

In Mexican academia, these efforts in Canadian studies have undoubtedly been led by the UNAM's Center for Research on North America (CISAN), the institution that has dedicated the most labor and capabilities to organizing and structuring the research and dissemination of Canadian studies in our country. The result has been the proliferation of new knowledge about this great country of the extreme North, generated from the Mexican perspective, as well as the very diverse topics that affect our two nations and the North American region as a whole. Among them are migration, seasonal workers' programs, trade, and the multiple agreements about issues such as education, student mobility, technology transfer, and, above

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all, economic integration, first expressed in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and today in the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). All this has transcended to other spheres of society and culture.

In this context, I have had the privilege of participating in one of the tasks I consider most important for strengthening a relationship between the two countries that surpasses diplomatic and political interactions and that in a certain way involves communities, interested publics, and in general all parts of the population concerned about knowing more about the geographic, sociocultural, historic, economic, and political characteristics of a country that is nearer to us every day. This task is the work of dissemination. It takes many forms: the organization of academic seminars and congresses, student exchange, Canadian film festivals, an academic Chair at the UNAM about Canadian literature and culture, and the CISAN's most recent initiative of creating and promoting the Network of North Americanists (REDAN). The REDAN stands out for two fundamental activities: the organization of a biennial congress, whose third session will take place in February 2025, and the publication of a quarterly digital informational bulletin. Both boast a significant presence of Canadian topics. In all these actions, the Center for Research on North America's leadership role is unquestionable.

At this point, I think it is necessary to mention the very important Spanish-language publishing effort about Canada that has been made in Mexico, both through peer-reviewed academic books and journals and in the sphere of publications for the broader public. Many institutions and individuals have participated: the Autonomous Metropolitan University, the Autonomous University of Puebla, the Colegio de Mexico, the Autonomous University of Sinaloa, the University of the Americas, and even associations such as the Mexican Association for Canadian Studies, with its publication *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Canadienses* (Mexican Journal of Canadian Studies), both sponsored by the Canadian government. But, in this area, the CISAN represents the most structured, organized initiative of all.

This is precisely where I can refer to my experience and contributions as an editor of books and articles on a wide range of Canadian themes. In its thirty-five years of existence, the CISAN has published about forty titles on Canadian issues or comparative studies that included Canada. Many, many articles have also appeared in its

periodicals: the popular publication *Voices of Mexico*, the academic, peer-reviewed journal *Norteamérica*, and the informative *Boletín REDAN*. The periodicals have even planned and implemented special sections and dossiers about Canadian issues and put out monographic issues.

I had the opportunity to participate both as a copy editor of texts about Canada and as managing editor, selecting topics and authors for those special sections, and for the "Canadian Issues" section that appeared in many issues of *Voices of Mexico* when I was its editor-in-chief. The aim of all these academic dissemination efforts was always—and continues to be—to share information and knowledge about Canada among the Mexican and Spanish-speaking population in general, and also among American English-speaking followers of *Voices of Mexico*, above all by bringing readers closer to a culture, history, and traditions that it was important to know about, given the events beginning in the early 1990s with regional North American integration.

From the beginning, the CISAN's editorial strategy regarding Canada focused on two broad areas: on the one hand, publishing academic texts and books that present original knowledge from the Mexican and Latin American perspectives. This was produced by a critical mass of the center's researchers who began to specialize in Canadian studies or in North American regional studies and on comparative approaches that incorporated Canada. On the other hand, it also included the importance of focusing on the topics that were most interesting and could have an impact on bilateral and trilateral relations originating in Canada. This was done not only for Mexican readerships, but also U.S. readers. That is why its main vehicles were the magazine *Voices of Mexico* and the scientific journal *Norteamérica*.

For all these reasons it was and continues to be fundamental for this work to encourage a very close working

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relationship between editors and authors to achieve the best communication possible with interested readers. This approach made it possible, for example, to create a dynamic of academic discussion and feedback that was very useful for achieving the terminological precision in Spanish about many phenomena and developments in Canadian society and culture that did not have exact equivalents in Spanish. In other words, it allowed us to innovate neologisms, but also semantic and morphological clarifications that, on the level of language, better expressed and clarified the ideas and worldviews of a nation that, like Canada, is one of the world's most multicultural.

If we take a quick look at the publications the Cisan has produced over the years about Canada, we can see that they have evolved both in their approach and in their topics. At the beginning, the books depended above all on the efforts of isolated authors, both inside and outside our center. These efforts, however, slowly became a structured, well planned and executed editorial policy, which has achieved its greatest maturity in the last five or seven years. In the first years, Canadian themes were included in books and collections that presented comparative studies about the North American region; that is, they included Canada in studies that also dealt with the United States and Mexico and their reciprocal relations. Examples from this period include *El nuevo federalismo en América del Norte* (The New Federalism in North America); *Los sistemas políticos en América del Norte en los noventa* (Political Systems in North America in the 1990s); *El conservadurismo en Estados Unidos y Canadá* (Conservatism in the United States and Canada); the two-volume work *Nuevos actores en América del Norte* (New Actors in North America); the “Desde el Sur” (From the South) collection co-published with the Latin American Social Sciences Faculty, whose main intention was —as its name indicates— to focus on the United States, Canada, and the North American region in general from the perspective of Latin

America and its interests. This was a reading of the region's countries “from a place,” as Paul Ricoeur would say. The third volume of the collection was dedicated entirely to Canada. In this period, books also began to be published focusing exclusively on Canada, both from the general, panoramic perspective and from a particular focus on culture. Some of the first efforts of this kind were *Canadá en transición* (Canada in Transition) and *¿Sentenciados al aburrimiento? Tópicos de cultura canadiense* (Sentenced to Boredom? Topics in Canadian Culture).

This editorial policy of stimulating the specific weight of books on concrete topics in the sphere of Canadian studies in the construction of the catalogue was consolidated over the following years. It should be pointed out, however, that books and panoramic and collective products never stopped being published. So much so that we could classify a new orientation as a third stage in the Cisan's Canadian editorial strategy: an emphasis on the publication of panoramic works based on specific collective, interdisciplinary, and multinational research initiatives, with the participation of both Mexican and Canadian experts. This strategy began in 2017 and is still in force today.

It should be underlined that a pluralist vision has always been behind the development of the collection of books in our catalogue. This pluralism is inclusive of all the authors' theoretical, methodological, and ideological positions, and it of course covers a great variety of topics and disciplinary approaches. Thus, for example, the center has promoted the publication of titles in the political sphere (*Sucesión y balance de poder en Canadá entre gobiernos liberales y conservadores* [The Succession and Balance of Power in Canada between Liberal and Conservative Governments], *La izquierda como opción electoral en Canadá* [The Left as an Electoral Option in Canada], among several others); the economy (*Financiarización, comercio y desarrollo: cambios en las estructuras de América del Norte* [Financialization, Trade, and Development: Changes in the Structures of North America], *Las relaciones económicas interprovinciales en Canadá* [Interprovincial Economic Relations in Canada], etc.); the social sphere (*Noche urbana y economía nocturna en América del Norte* [The Urban Night and the Nocturnal Economy in North America], *La industria de la cannabis en Canadá. ¿Socialmente responsable?* [The Cannabis Industry in Canada, Socially Responsible?]); the area of culture (*Comunidades virtuales en las industrias culturales en Norteamérica* [Virtual Communities in North American Cultural

Industries], and *Cruzando la frontera. Narrativas de la migración: el cine y literaturas* [Crossing the Border, Narratives of Migration in Film and Literatures]; in the field of bilateral relations with Mexico (*México y Canadá: la agenda pendiente* [Mexico and Canada, the Remaining Agenda] and *Canadá y México durante la era Harper* [Canada and Mexico in the Harper Era]); and of international relations in general (*Dinámicas subnacionales en América del Norte: paradiplomacia de las provincias canadienses* [Subnational Dynamics in North America: Canadian Provinces' Paradiplomacy]).

Of course, works explaining North American integration play an outstanding part (*Senderos de la integración silenciosa en América del Norte* [The Path of Silent Integration in North America], *El Tratado México, Estados Unidos, Canadá: transformaciones recientes en América del Norte* [The USMCA: Recent Transformations in North America]; and *Proceso de integración en las Américas* [The Process of Integration in the Americas], among others), as do comparative studies of different countries and regions (*Ciencia y tecnología en América del Norte y Europa* [Science and Technology in North America and Europe] and *Dos modelos de integración energética: América del Norte/América del Sur* [Two Models of Energy Integration: North America/South America]).

Another area covered is multidimensional regional themes such as migration, security, human rights, energy, the media or borders—in this last topic with an approach that considers its broadest meanings—, as well as other topics (*Nuevas experiencias en la migración de retorno* [New Experiences in Return Migration], *Tú migrante: la construcción de las representaciones de la migración en el contexto de América del Norte y Centroamérica* [You, Migrant: The Construction of the Representation of Migrants in North and Central America], *Sociocibernética crítica: un método geopolítico para el estudio estratégico del sistema de medios de comunicación no presencial en América del Norte* [Socio-cybernetic Criticism: A Geopolitical Method for the Strategic Study of the System of Remote Communications Media in North America], *Guerras necropolíticas y biopolíticas de asilo en América del Norte* [Necropolitical and Biopolitical Asylum Wars in North America], *Fronteras en América del Norte: estudios multidisciplinarios* [Borders in North America: Multidisciplinary Studies], etc).

I strongly believe that this third stage of CISAN's publications about Canada is characterized by a much more organic, structured relationship between research and its corresponding products, conceiving both dimensions

as a single unit from the very start and producing much more consistent results. Perhaps, from my point of view, the prime example of this is *Canadá y sus paradojas en el siglo XXI* (Canada and Its Paradoxes in the Twenty-first Century), a work in two volumes. The output of the Permanent Canadian Studies Seminar, also hosted and organized by the CISAN, with broad interinstitutional and international participation by expert Canadianologists, this work focuses on the analysis of the most important, transcendental problems faced by Canada today. It does this from a highly critical perspective that delves into the realities of Canadian society, dissecting official discourses and deepening constructively an understanding of the historic phenomena and twists and turns that have even produced very visible retreats and obstacles for the evolution of our far-northern neighbor as a multicultural, democratic country that defends broad human development. It is a highly recommendable read, both for experts and for newcomers to such polemical and regionally important topics as the migration of Mexican agricultural laborers there; policies linked to climate change and the defense of the environment; the violation of First Peoples' human rights; the sometimes-visible stagnation of its political and electoral institutions, etc. Of course, the two volumes also recognize the great contributions the country has made to world governance and the well-being of its own inhabitants, so widely recognized by the international community. All of this leads me to say that this work shows a high level of maturity in publications about Canada in Spanish.

In addition, I must reiterate that this overall aim of disseminating information about Canada and Canadian studies has been complemented in our three periodicals, which have included about 150 articles by individual or collective authors, in special sections, dossiers, and special issues.

This has been a very important challenge for me as an editor of Canadian topics. It has motivated me to look more deeply—to almost immerse myself—in the history, culture, and contemporary dynamics of that great country of the North of our continent.

It solely remains to point out that only some of the books that the Center for Research on North America has published about Canadian topics are mentioned in this article. The complete catalogue can be found at <<http://www.cisan.unam.mx/catalogo.php#gsc.tab=0>>. ■■