

“Transatlantic Transformations: adapting British English novels for the North American reader”.

Recent scholarship in textual studies has emphasised the instability of texts, the idea that a work may exist in many versions and that it will have been produced by various agents. From theories on multiple authorship (Stillinger 1991) to a sociology of texts (McKenzie 1999) or a socialization of texts (McGann 1991) scholars have demonstrated that the notion of authorship is more complex than at first appears and that the text that emerges as a final product in the book we read is far from containing a single unified voice. Most work in textual criticism proceeds by comparing manuscripts and subsequent editions. In this paper, however, I shall be interested in the difference between American English and British English editions of novels published over the last couple of decades. The corpus studied will include novels from various genres: children’s fiction, biography, romance, Booker Prize Winners and translations of French novels. How far can the work of the editorial staff be compared to that of a translator? How far is the material text adapted to suit the cultural requirements of the new readership? Is the adaptation/translation invisible, or does the superposition of cultural layers become visible at certain points? What do such transformations suggest for the future of the English language? These are some of the key points that I shall be addressing in the paper.

I hope that this proposal will interest you.

Yours

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