

A book review of *Ultra Libris: Policy, Technology, and the Creative Economy of Book Publishing in Canada*. By Rowland Lorimer. Toronto, Canada: ECW Press, 2012. 432 pp. ISBN 9781770410763

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In *Ultra Libris: Policy, Technology, and the Creative Economy of Book Publishing in Canada*, Dr. Rowland Lorimer traces the continuous transformation of Canada's book market from the 1970s to the 2010s, from a wholly dependent market on imported authors, books and topics to a market characterized by a presence of books written by Canadian authors on Canadian topics and other topics that Canadians are interested in. He also documents the cooperation among various agents in Canada's book industry, including governments at federal and local levels, foreign and domestic publishers, and other institutions and organizations supporting books and publishing. As he mentions, the understanding of the transformation of Canada's book market would not be comprehensive without a thorough analysis of the government policies on books and publishing, its connection to international ideas of cultural diversity, the contribution of publishing to capital accumulation and proliferation, as well as the technological revolution and its far-reaching impacts on publishing processes, techniques, and the public's reading habits.

Among these important topics, the cultural policy for supporting book publishing in Canada remains Lorimer's foremost concern. Canada's book market is up against the double invasion of industrial mergers and cultural integration led by the United States. To efface marketization impact on domestic book publishing, the Canadian government adopts support policies at the institutional and economic level to maintain its own market within the global competition and ensure cultural independence.

To specify, on the one hand, institutional support includes the amendment of *The Copyright Act*, the signing of *The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, and the institutional support to the education industry. Thus, foreign publishers are kept within limits and the independence and integrity of the Canadian publishing industry are preserved. On the other hand, economic support includes the Canada Book Fund from the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Export Marketing Assistance Program and the Foreign Rights Marketing Assistance Program initiated by the Association for the Export of Canadian Books (funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage), and the Block Grants and the Emerging Publisher Grants organized by the Canada Council for the Arts. Those policies make book publishing prosper in Canada when domestic book publishing is high on the list of priorities.

In the book, Lorimer figures out that the share of foreign-owned publishers is gradually shrinking in Canadian book publishing as Canadian book publishers have a more competitive edge owing to government support policies. In sharp contrast, Canada's domestic book publishers continue to grow in size and diversification from great companies like Harlequin and Nelson Education to small companies with an annual turnover of about fifty thousand Canadian dollars. These domestic publishers are increasing their share in the Canadian book publishing market year by year and play an important role in many fields.

In China, it is of great significance to improve the 'soft power' of national culture and promote the 'going out' of culture by developing the publishing industry^[1]. Especially since the 21st century, the Chinese government has carried out a whole string of support policies in book publishing that share similarities to that of the Canadian government, in a bid to promote the development and prosperity of socialist cultural undertakings as well as speedily fulfill the strategic goal of 'developing a strong socialist culture in China'.

At the institutional level, these policies specifically involve the promotion of Chinese publishing conglomeration and the expansion of platforms for Chinese publishing 'going out'^[2]. For instance, the Chinese government continues to increase the export amount of its publications at the Beijing International Book Fair, making China's book publishing surpass the bounds between countries and regions, and become an indispensable part of the global market. Besides, projects including China Classics International Publishing Project, Chinese Publications International Sales Channel Expansion Project, Overseas Support Projects for Chinese News and Publishing Enterprises, Cross-strait Publishing Communication and Cooperation Project, and China International Book Fair and Sales Center Construction Project are set up to push Chinese book publishing forward. At the economic level, the policies focus on the establishment of special funds for publishing development and the projects espoused by the National Publication Foundation. Furthermore, the allocation of publishing resources is regulated through the tax system to develop publishing in the interest of the nation. It is worth mentioning that the projects espoused by the National Publication Foundation have the most far-reaching influence in virtue of the huge investment amount and scale, and high specifications of funded projects^[3]. Through directly funding publishing projects, the National

Publication Foundation has maintained and stimulated producers' power. Meanwhile, it has played a vital role in accelerating the sound development of the publishing industry and guiding the optimal allocation of public welfare publishing resources.

The foregoing discussion reveals that China and Canada share common ground in the cultural policies for supporting book publishing, to wit, the key path for the sustainable development of book publishing in China and Canada lies in seeking a balance in the game process of 'market logic' and 'cultural support'.

First, keep a balance between 'openness' and 'regulation'. Through the introduction and reinforcement of competition together with the development and reconstruction of enterprise-oriented modes, book publishing in China and Canada presents a picture of 'openness' with the widely-applied market logic and turns into a new platform for both transnational and domestic capital accumulation. Especially in China's book publishing, marketization is gaining ground as media conglomeration reform has been in full swing since the 21st century^[4]. However, it gives rise to many issues such as the increasing monopoly of transnational publishing groups in the international book trade, and the increasing cost of innovation due to restrictions on local publisher development and rapid technological development. Therefore, the Chinese and Canadian governments have 'restraints' on their book publishing and push on 'cultural support' policies to wipe out drawbacks brought by 'market logic'.

One of the most direct support policies is substantial investment from the Chinese and Canadian governments in their book publishing. In China, financial support from the central government (like the National Publication Foundation) and the local governments (like the Book Publishing Special Fund of Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation) for book publishing cannot be underestimated. From the perspective of the political economy of communication, to cope with changes like the mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures of global transnational book publishing groups which reflect 'market logic, these funded projects embody that China strives to readdress malpractices caused by 'market failures', not merely act as macro-control measures for book publishing. Concurrently, these projects shut down the foreign capital share in domestic book publishing and lessen the possibility of global transnational media groups further merging domestic book publishing enterprises, so that the wanton expansion of multinational groups is curbed in the global industrial value chain.

Second, keep a balance between 'commercialization' and 'commonweal' (aka the public good or welfare). On the one hand, cultural products have a 'commercialization' attribute, and marketization is seen as the ideal and feasible way for domestic book publishing to 'go out' and improve its 'soft power'. On the other hand, cultural products have a 'commonweal' attribute. Hence, book publishing shall give full play to values that consist of knowledge communication, cultural inferences, historical records and scientific promotion. Coincidentally, the Chinese and Canadian governments have carried out institutional protection and coordination on book publishing. Also, both governments have established 'cultural security' on national sovereignty through the application of the

'cultural exception' principle under the framework of free trade of the World Trade Organization.

What needs to be emphasized is that the Canadian government has kept book publishing as an important tool to construct cultural identities. The multicultural policy emphasized by Canada is to ensure the production, expression, and retention of Canadian culture in 'cultural globalization', and then to inherit the values and mainstream ideology that sustain the survival and development of the country and nation. In China, governments at all levels continue to cultivate and foster socialist core values through book publishing, and cast off the economic, political, and cultural control and dependence between developed and developing countries on the global scale. In this situation, it becomes essential for the Chinese government to enhance the overall strength and competitiveness of the cultural industry by way of carrying forward its cultural values and national interests in the international community when in the face of cultural values, cultural invasion, and challenges reflecting dominators' interests from western developed countries.

On this account, book publishing in China and Canada have extensive consistency and common interests to meet challenges from large multinational publishing groups. In particular, Canada, as an American neighbor, has a 'long history' and 'rich experience' in confronting the institutionalized American cultural hegemony and defending state cultural sovereignty. Accordingly, the cultural industry with national characteristics has been shaped, and it breeds the value orientation of the Canadian government's policy. Canada provides China with lessons in the decision-making of book publishing on how to protect its cultural market and products on the basis of cultivating and maintaining an open, fair and just cultural market order, so as to safeguard national interests^[5]. To sum up, Canada inspires China in book publishing from two aspects:

First, market logic cannot give full play to the productivity of the publishing industry. It goes without saying that American multinational publishing groups exert an effect on Canadian book publishing due to geographical relations, language and culture. The ascendancy of scale effect enables the groups to follow 'market logic' and 'recklessly' dump American books on the Canadian market to generate a huge bulk of profits and monopolize the Canadian book market. Such monopoly not only disrupts the book market but impedes the formation and development of an independent and rounded book market in Canada, which echoes why the productivity of the publishing industry cannot be fully exploited by market logic.

The Canadian government resorts to supporting policies to deal with the strong capital invasion and communication hegemony of American transnational book publishing groups, such as tax adjustment, the funded project to support local publishers, restrictions on Canadian book publishers from importing books directly from America, and the management augmentation on content quota. In addition, Canada never ceases to sharpen its competitiveness through a huge investment in domestic book publishing for market expansion. Therefore, it is not hard to draw a conclusion: government (especially the federal government) actively participates in the power distribution of the publishing industry by implementing market regulation that boosts book publishing development and protects national characteristics.

In the meantime, we know full well that the government's administrative intervention also has negative results. For example, since the Investment Canada Act has been issued and put into practice, the enthusiasm of foreign book publishers is dampened in Canadian book publishing. As far as book publishing in China is concerned, the following three questions shall be taken into consideration. Will book publishing gain all-around development when the power of the media industry is transferred to the market? Is the government's macro-control and subsidy the answer to the competitiveness improvement of China's book publishing when facing international competition? Which model works best in the book publishing transition in China? The answers to these questions will help China's book publishing to strike a balance between 'government intervention' and 'market logic'.

Second, human resources shall be valued and talents in the book publishing industry shall be cultivated. Foreign-owned book publishers represented by America that merged with Canadian book publishing have revolutionized the pattern of the Canadian publishing market and resulted in a brain drain. Some talents are attracted by decent salaries to pursue their careers in America. Some talents choose to leave the book publishing industry as they suffer a setback in careers caused by factors like investment deficiency. The brain drain in Canada is a warning sign for the development and improvement of Chinese book publishing. Only by laying much emphasis on human resources and book publishing talents can China's book publishing industry achieve sustainable development^[6]. The fact of how far China's book publishing can go and how bright its future can be hinges on personnel training.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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