

## "CANADIANIZING" AN AMERICAN COMMUNICATION TEXTBOOK

JENNIFER M. MACLENNAN *University of Saskatchewan*

**ABSTRACT.** All discourse, says Edwin Black (1972), exerts "the pull of an ideology" even when not explicitly designed to display such a pattern of beliefs. Much of the discourse that helps shape our identity and understanding does so through a network of interconnected beliefs and implicit assumptions that are rarely explicitly recognized. Textbooks perform exactly such a function, since, as many people would acknowledge, to do so is precisely their purpose: to help "enculturate" newcomers to the expectations and assumptions of a discipline. This paper offers a study of the process involved in what has become almost a minor industry in Canada: the "Canadianization" of American texts for the domestic market. The paper's focus is my experience in producing the Canadian edition of David Zarefsky's *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success*. My goal is to reveal something of the extent to which the study of communication not only "naturalizes" a disciplinary model but also implicitly encodes a set of identifiable cultural values and assumptions.

**RÉSUMÉ.** Selon Edwin Black (1972), tout discours permet à «la force d'attraction d'une idéologie» de s'exercer, même si le discours ne vise à affirmer aucun modèle de croyances. La plupart des discours qui contribuent à façonner notre identité et notre compréhension font intervenir un réseau de croyances et d'hypothèses implicites qui sont reliées entre elles et dont l'existence est rarement reconnue explicitement. Les manuels jouent précisément ce rôle, car, comme beaucoup le reconnaissent volontiers, leur raison d'être est précisément de faciliter «l'acculturation» des novices qui assimilent les attentes et les hypothèses propres à une discipline. Cet article porte sur un processus qui constitue pratiquement un secteur d'activité mineur au Canada : la «canadianisation» de manuels américains pour le marché canadien. Il traite surtout de l'expérience personnelle de l'auteur qui a participé à l'adaptation canadienne de *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success* de David Zarefsky. Il vise à montrer dans quelle mesure l'étude de la communication a pour effet non seulement de «naturaliser» un modèle de discipline, mais aussi de coder implicitement un ensemble de valeurs et d'hypothèses culturelles reconnaissables.

Canadians who teach subjects such as public speaking, interpersonal communication, argumentation, and communication education are aware, at least superficially, of the extent to which the field in which they are working is a fundamentally American phenomenon: its roots are American, and so are most of its theoretical developments, its professional organizations, and its textbooks (Smith, 1954). These books, for the most part produced for American students studying in departments of speech communication in American colleges and universities, form a primary resource for all who teach courses in the discipline, including those who do so in Canada. Although the discipline traditionally known as speech, or more recently speech communication, is a familiar one in American universities, it is all but unknown in Canada. With its roots in the ancient discipline of rhetoric, the modern department of speech communication offers courses in a variety of areas of communication study, including rhetoric, instructional communication, communication theory, philosophy of communication, organizational communication, and so on. Public speaking is offered as a “basic course” by most such departments. (For a more detailed discussion of the discipline’s nature, see MacLennan [1999 & 1998], National Communication Association [1996], and Smith [1954]. Brief overviews are also available on-line at the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Washington and at the National Communication Association). Speech communication teachers in Canada, then, face an interesting problem: although the authors of textbooks in communication conscientiously strive – perhaps even more so than scholars in other disciplines – to make them inclusive by freeing them as far as possible from culturally bound assumptions, speech communication as a discipline does in fact exhibit a distinctively American cultural ideology. I hope to show in the pages that follow, that it does so fundamentally, not just incidentally.

The central question that this paper poses is this: To what extent, and in what ways, have the disciplinary values in the field of communication been shaped by the American experience? To what extent do the cultural attitudes and values assumed by a course text affect the audience’s understanding of speech communication as a discipline? As a way of “getting at” this question, this paper will focus on my experience in creating the Canadian edition of David Zarefsky’s *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success* (Zarefsky & MacLennan, 1997). My goal is to reveal the extent to which the discipline of speech communication not only “naturalizes” a disciplinary model but also implicitly encodes a set of identifiable cultural values and assumptions that are rooted – not surprisingly – in the American experience.

The “Canadianization” of American texts for the Canadian college market involves translating American references and contexts into terms more immediate to, and comfortable for, a Canadian audience. At first glance, this task might appear to be a straightforward one of replacing recognizably

American names and diction with Canadian equivalents. It is true that some direct substitution is possible; for instance, a list of well-known speakers such as “Jack Kemp, Ann Richards, Mario Cuomo, Jesse Jackson, and Barbara Bush” can readily be replaced by a Canadian list that includes “Joe Ghiz, Pierre Trudeau, Margaret Atwood, Bob White, Gwynne Dwyer, and Mary Walsh”; “dormitories” easily become “residences”; and “affirmative action” can be replaced by “employment equity.”

However, the process of textbook transformation is at once more subtle and more complex than such instances of simple substitution would suggest. Making a truly Canadian edition of an imported text involves much more than cosmetic adjustments, because an American text – particularly one in communication – is culturally different not only in diction and example, but also in assumption, value, and orientation. That speech communication textbooks display American cultural values should surprise no one; after all, just as communication practices have a cultural dimension not always visible to participants in a given communication exchange, so too is the study of communication given colour by the values of the culture in which it takes shape.

As a product of its American context, speech communication cannot help but display the “dominant opinions and unquestioned beliefs which form an integral part of [that] culture” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1971, p. 20). What is interesting about culturally naturalized assumptions is that, as pervasive as they are, they are not normally visible to those within the culture; instead, these cultural attitudes are embedded beneath the surface of cultural participation, taken for granted in social exchanges “typically without either [participant] being aware of [them]” (Fairclough 1989: 83). They are simply part of the “common sense” of the cultural ethos, and are assumed by the members of the culture “to be shared by every reasonable being” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, p. 99).

For anyone who teaches and practices speech communication in Canada, the problem of cross-cultural adaptation is compounded by the subtlety of cultural distinctions. This professional community operates within a “North American” context that may appear, especially from south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, as synonymous with “American.” Given the surface similarities between the two cultures, an American might be tempted to assume that no special accommodation is required in adapting an American text for a Canadian audience. After all, how different can the cultures be when the bulk of Canadian television programming, nearly all feature films shown in Canadian cinemas, and the majority of available print materials in Canada are American in origin? Besides, even where differences exist, clearly Canadians are used to reading American materials and making the mental adjustments necessary to translate to their own experience.

However, as I hope to illustrate in this paper, there are important and systematic differences in values, culture, politics, and public life between the Canadian and the American experiences that have been traced, documented, and revealed by numerous scholars in the humanities and social sciences (Gwyn, 1995; Adams, 1995; Lipset, 1990; Malcolm, 1985; Gwyn, 1985; Frye, 1982; Berton, 1975).<sup>1</sup> Among the differences that these scholars have documented are historical (Canadian history is counter-revolutionary, in contrast to the revolutionary spirit of the US); political (Canada's parliamentary democracy contrasts with the American constitutional republic); and sociological factors (collectivist, even socialist, in contrast to the culture of individualism that distinguishes the US). As well, our central philosophies also differ significantly; Canada's original constitution, the British North America Act of 1867, established "peace, order, and good government" as the central aims of the society that would become Canada, in contrast to the "life, liberty, and happiness" that shaped the American ideal. The relevant passage reads, "It shall be lawful for the Queen, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate and House of Commons, to make Laws for the Peace, Order, and Good Government of Canada" (Talman, 1959, p. 107); the centrality of such values to the Canadian psyche is discussed by, among others, Pierre Berton (1982).

My objective in creating the Canadian edition of Zarefsky's text was to incorporate these distinctively Canadian cultural patterns and values wherever possible. I had been teaching rhetoric in Canada since 1992, and had frequently been discouraged by the almost total lack of Canadian textual materials. Like many Canadian educators, I believe that our students should see themselves and their values reflected in their course texts, particularly in culturally sensitive fields such as communication. As well, my work in an area I had dubbed "the rhetoric of Canadian identity" had convinced me of the extent and significance of certain identifiable patterns of values and cultural commonplaces. As a result, the opportunity to offer Canadian students of rhetoric a theoretically sound book incorporating significant and distinctly Canadian examples was one I could not turn down. This analysis, in which I will juxtapose parallel segments from the two editions, is intended to reveal the extent to which these patterns of difference in the two cultures, though subtle, are both pervasive and profound (Lipset, 1990; Frye, 1972; Atwood, 1985; Atwood, 1982a).

It is true that Canadian popular media are dominated by American products, and that Canadians have become adept at successfully negotiating this "continental divide." However, I propose that they do so through a process akin to suspension of disbelief, which consists of "the willingness to withhold questions about . . . truth, accuracy, or probability. . . [that] makes possible the reader's temporary acceptance of the vicarious participation in an . . . imaginative world" (Holman & Harmon, 1986, p. 492). Another way

of understanding this process is offered by Norman Fairclough, who distinguishes between two dimensions of textual coherence. The first refers to a text's internal sense – that is, “how the parts of the text link to each other,” and the second refers to “how the text fits into [the reader's] previous experience of the world” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 72). A text is perceived by the interpreter as “coherent” if it “presuppos[es] a view of the world that is ‘common sense’” to that person – in other words, if its internal logic corresponds to the interpreter's naturalized assumptions (Fairclough, p. 79). It is, of course, possible for a text to make sense internally without necessarily corresponding to the world as the interpreter experiences it. When this happens, the interpreter may reject the text as incoherent, perceive it to be figurative,<sup>2</sup> or experience it as fanciful entertainment requiring the willing suspension of disbelief I have already described.

It would of course be impossible to discount either the pervasiveness or the influence of American popular culture in Canadian society, and much has been written on the subject (Flaherty & Manning, 1993; Granatstein & Hillmer, 1991; Atwood, 1981; Desbarats, 1981; Redekop, 1971). Nevertheless, despite the ubiquitousness of American popular culture, it seems that Canadians read its “texts” in the latter way, engaging temporarily in a willing suspension of disbelief in exchange for the entertainment of American movies, television programmes, or popular magazines. As Margaret Atwood points out, “the States is an escape fantasy for Canadians” (Atwood, 1982a, p. 385). In order to make sense of these discourses, then, Canadians temporarily entertain the interpretive framework the texts require, without necessarily having to embrace the worldview they represent. As well, there is some indication that Canadians have developed a kind of cultural “anti-language” for dealing with the dominant American cultural symbolism. Anti-languages, as Fairclough explains, are “set up and used as conscious alternatives to the dominant or established discourse types” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 91). Such an anti-language is evident in much Canadian popular culture, from advertisements to political satire to news reports, two common forms of which are “the American bully” (Berton, 1982; MacLennan, 1993-94) and “we know more about them than they know about us.” *This Hour has 22 Minutes*, the satirical CBC production, routinely runs a segment that displays American ignorance of, or naiveté about, Canadian history, culture, and politics, a segment that Canadian viewers love. Canadian advertising, notably the Labatts’ “We Are Canadian” campaign, uses this same commonplace of Canadian culture as a platform for appealing to its Canadian audience. The weekly news magazine *Maclean's* freely features on its cover the headline “Darn Yankees” (1997) or a provocative illustration of the Canadian one-dollar coin featuring the image of George Washington, over the slogan “Say It Ain’t So – Canadian Sovereignty: is the loonie next to go?” Whether the stereotype implied by such headlines and images is

accurate is beside the point; what matters insofar as the language of resistance is concerned is that the pattern is recognizable and comfortable enough to function as a commonplace of Canadian culture. The extent of its appearance in public discourse suggests that it is both.

However, whatever strategies Canadians have devised for dealing with an extensive exposure to American popular culture, the commercial marketplace of popular media is a different environment from the classroom, where students are required to display mastery of disciplinary concepts, even to the point of applying these interpretive frames to features of their intellectual, social, or cultural environment outside the classroom. Students in university courses are not asked simply to grasp content, nor is a temporary suspension of disbelief all that is expected. Instead, they are invited to embrace a disciplinary way of seeing and valuing that will eventually become naturalized – “implicit, backgrounded, taken for granted” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 77). These naturalized disciplinary values in turn provide a necessary framework for understanding other course information, as well as for interpreting and evaluating larger fields of experience. As part of the means by which we enculturate newcomers, textbooks help to establish and reinforce these expectations. An American textbook in a fundamentally American discipline will automatically, and naturally, rely on American values to help achieve these ends.

The solution to the challenge facing Canadian practitioners might seem self-evident: if the American product is a “poor fit,” why don’t Canadians simply write their own textbooks? The answer to this question plunges us right into the heart of Canadian-American economic and cultural difference, a full exploration of which is obviously beyond the scope of this paper. However, I would like to briefly consider why there is no significant body of Canadian educational material in the discipline.

The biggest reason for the lack of Canadian texts is that departments on the American speech-communication model have had little representation in Canadian universities. Canadian departments of communication studies tend to focus their attention on mass communication or journalism, and – more recently – on composition or professional communication (King, 1999; Urquhart, 1999). Of these few, only two (at University College of Cape Breton and the University of Waterloo) in any way resemble American-style speech communication departments. Even more frequently, courses in “communication” are offered in other departments, such as English, where they form only a small part of the curriculum and where they are typically taught by those with expertise in fields other than communication. Although in the US, the National (American) Communication Association of today can trace its origins to 1914 (Smith, 1954, p. 456), there is no similar longstanding tradition of communication study in Canada. Indeed, the official name change of the Speech Communication Association to the

National Communication Association in 1997 itself suggests the extent to which its practitioners take for granted the conflation of discipline and culture, since “national” obviously has different meanings for anyone who is outside the US. Quite simply, there are no Canadian texts because there are few Canadian practitioners and almost no departments, and because courses in speech communication are largely scattered and recent developments (King, 1999; Rolls, 1998; Brent, 1990).

A second reason for the lack of Canadian textbooks in the discipline has to do with the economics of publishing. The textbook business is highly competitive, and the practice of simply importing educational materials from the much larger US market into Canada has a long history (Lorimer, 1996). As well, most textbook publishers in Canada are subsidiaries of American multinationals, as is Prentice Hall/Allyn & Bacon Canada, the publisher of the Canadian edition of *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success* (Zarefsky & MacLennan, 1997). It is much cheaper for these publishers to extend a print run of an American text than to develop a text exclusively for the much smaller and less lucrative Canadian market, particularly since Canadian textbooks rarely penetrate the American market and so have little chance to enlarge their already small audience. Even more than trade publications, Canadian textbooks, in order to be produced at all, must be assured of a large piece of a small available market already flooded with American competitors (Meisel, 1986; Atwood, 1982b). For these reasons, Canadian educational institutions have long depended on course materials produced in the US, and this dependence continues in fields such as mathematics and the natural sciences, where issues of cultural distinctiveness are less directly relevant.

The production of “Canadianized” editions of American books is a compromise solution to the demand for Canadian content in educational materials, which in turn is a product of the cultural nationalism that developed during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the most powerful influences in this regard was the 1951 Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, led by the Right Honourable Vincent Massey. The motivation for the Commission was that the “Canadian people should know as much as possible about their country,” and that it was in the “national interest to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life. . . .” The Report examines the impact of broadcasting, film, literature and scholarship (including educational materials) on Canadian culture (Massey, 1951; Smith, D., 1985). A cultural, political, and economic phenomenon, Canadian nationalism was a response to what many saw as a serious threat to Canadian cultural autonomy posed by the closer economic and military ties with the US following the First and Second World Wars. The influx of American capital gave short-term pros-

perity, but at significant cost to indigenous industries, particularly “cultural” ones (Lorimer, 1996; Newman, 1995; Davies, 1989; Fulford, 1987; Government of Canada, 1987: Article 2005.1).

One of the places where the new nationalism had significant impact was in education. In academic disciplines where cultural, political, historical, and social differences are significant – history, political science, literature, and sociology are a few of these – demand for Canadian course materials began to increase during the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, the pressure has been intense enough that, in fields where numbers warrant, Canadian books in such disciplines have actually been published by the multinationals. However, in fields such as speech communication that are relatively new or have little representation in Canada, there are still too few courses and programmes to make a large investment viable from the point of view of the publishing houses. At the same time, however, exclusively American books in such fields are no longer readily accepted by either students or instructors, and so “Canadianization” is still an important part of the mix of available materials. It should be noted that Canadian texts in established disciplines must also compete with “Canadianized” editions of American books in the lists of the multinationals.

My goal in adapting the Zarefsky book for a Canadian readership was to make the book as Canadian as possible by drawing upon the cultural commonplaces that its intended readers would recognize and identify with. But just how “American” is Zarefsky’s original text? One immediate indication is the pictures that accompany the textual material. There are 54 photos in the text; of these, only four feature non-Americans, and none of those shown is Canadian. For example, Nelson Mandela is shown twice; the Dalai Lama and Yassar Arafat each appear once. Fourteen of the photos show immediately recognizable Americans such as Ronald Reagan, Jesse Jackson, Elizabeth Taylor, and Magic Johnson; 15 feature American flags or other easily identifiable national symbols; in 13 the word “American” or closely associated language is visible. In the 54 photos, then, there are 41 explicit American references; needless to say, no Canadians are featured in any example or photograph in the entire 500+ pages of the book. It is an excellent introduction to practical rhetoric and well-situated for its American readers, but, because it does not have a single application to Canadian contexts or situations, Zarefsky’s book, along with the discipline it introduces, remains “foreign” to a Canadian audience partly because they are utterly invisible in it.<sup>3</sup>

Photographs are not the only evidence of the “Americanness” of Zarefsky’s book. The extent to which American conventions and assumptions are conflated with the standards of the discipline is also shown in the textual material itself. For example, throughout this book, “public address” is always



assumed to mean *American* political discourse; “culture” always means *American* culture. All such examples are presented as a recognizable and accepted standard, and are never recognized or identified as specifically or exclusively American. For instance, in a discussion of speech genres, Zarefsky devotes two and a half pages of text to the nomination speech, a genre much used in American politics but entirely nonexistent in Canadian political campaigns. Here is how that section opens:

Every four years, each major political party holds a national convention to nominate its candidates for President and Vice President. Especially if there is a contest at the convention, the nominations are the centerpiece. (Zarefsky, 571)

Upon examination, this strictly American example reveals a number of embedded assumptions about the political process. First, of course, it takes for granted the American political structure, and in so doing, it assumes that the process for election within that structure is familiar to the audience; it presents nomination speeches as a significant genre of public address, which they are, once you have assumed an American system. It further takes for granted enough background information that the “major political parties” need not be identified; the reader is expected to know who and what these parties are. All of these are reasonable assumptions – so long as the readership remains American. However, they are completely foreign to a Canadian audience, not just because the examples are American, but because the political landscape that is taken for granted simply does not exist in Canada. The nomination speech, so central to the American electoral process, is nonexistent in Canadian politics; the electoral process is entirely different, and the “major parties” a Canadian would envision are not at all the same ones Americans would assume. My revision of this section therefore reads:

A speech of nomination is a highly conventionalized form combining ceremonial and deliberative purposes. Though they are used rarely in Canadian politics, you may have seen such speeches televised during American political campaigns, where they play an important role. Nomination speeches are also sometimes used within large organizations in which candidates for office are identified by deliberation and vote. (Zarefsky & MacLennan, 434)

Throughout the book, Zarefsky devotes much time to the analysis of and adaptation to audience, an important element of all effective rhetoric. Like Zarefsky, I urge my students to find and use the common ground between themselves and the audiences they address by attending to what their audience members value, what they celebrate, what they fear, what they take for granted, what moves them. In order to do this, these student speakers must learn to understand and draw upon shared elements of history, social structure, and culture. The audience Zarefsky addresses is evidently an exclusively American one. The background information he pro-

vides typically engages its audience by emphasizing an emotional connection with a specifically American cultural mind set. For instance, in the section on "Common Knowledge and Experience" Zarefsky has this to say:

Public opinion surveys frequently report the embarrassing result that a large percentage of Americans cannot name their Senator or Representative, do not know in what century the Civil War occurred, or cannot locate a particular country on the globe. (Zarefsky, p. 98)

This example provides an effective engagement strategy for an American audience, but may even have the opposite effect on a Canadian readership, who cannot share in the "embarrassment" Zarefsky expresses. As well, given the common "anti-language" already in wide use, Canadian readers may even delight in this evidence of American ignorance, since it reinforces one of the commonplaces of their cultural resistance. At the same time, they may wonder what a similar Canadian survey might show; needless to say, they are not told. Here is the parallel section, rewritten for the Canadian edition:

American public opinion surveys frequently report that a large percentage of Americans cannot name their Senator or Representative, do not know in what century the Civil War occurred, or cannot locate a particular country on the globe. Canadians generally are better informed about global political issues, but often lack knowledge of other regions of their own country. (Zarefsky & MacLennan, p. 90)

Even in instances where the text's assertions could equally apply to a Canadian context, the potential for engaging the interest of Canadian readers is hampered by the exclusively American examples – not because they are not understandable, but because they are presented as a universally familiar standard:

In the late twentieth century, popular culture, especially television, occupies the role formerly held by the Bible and the classics as the source of a culture's common allusions. The administration of President John F. Kennedy was fondly remembered by his supporters by reference to the popular musical *Camelot*. During the 1984 Presidential campaign, Democratic candidate Walter Mondale dismissed the argument of one of his primary opponents by asking, "Where's the beef?" in reference to a popular advertisement for a chain of hamburger franchises. (Zarefsky, p. 99)

These assertions about popular culture as a source of shared examples are equally applicable to a Canadian audience, but the illustrations used here fail to establish the intended spark of identification for a Canadian readership. This lack of emotional connection renders this section ineffective in engaging their attention or convincing them of its relevance. In order to create common ground with a Canadian audience, the revision of this section reflects a distinctly Canadian experience by displaying features of public discourse with which my audience would readily identify:

In the late twentieth century, popular culture, especially television, occupies the role formerly held by the Bible and classics as the source of a culture's common allusions. In Canada, political satire is more popular than south of the border, where political figures seem to play a lesser role in popular culture. While television is certainly a source of common allusions for Canadians as well as Americans, our political life offers rich opportunities for familiar images and events, as does our preoccupation with issues such as unity, the constitution, and Canadian-American differences. Note, for instance, the number and popularity of Canadian satirical programmes which are aimed at the political life of the country: on television, the *Royal Canadian Air Farce* and *This Hour has 22 Minutes* regularly lampoon our politicians and other icons of popular culture such as Rita MacNeil, Pamela Wallin, and the Royal Family; on radio, *Double Exposure* joins *Air Farce* in satirizing current events. Our cultural knowledge is also shaped to a large extent by artifacts of popular culture from the US. (Zarefsky & MacLennan, p. 92)

Some values, Zarefsky points out, are universal, and "may well transcend the limits of any particular culture" (p. 102). Such universalizing is, of course, possible, especially when cultures share much in common, as Canadians and Americans do. But universalizing also poses some dangers when subtle, but important, cultural differences are overlooked. The values a society embraces may appear universal because they seem like "common sense" within that society, but that does not mean that they will be experienced as "natural" for others. After all, as Fairclough points out, "where there is a sufficiently large social or cultural divide between participants in . . . an exchange, . . . the arbitrariness and social relativity of the common sense of one [will become] evident to the other" (1989, p. 106). When speaking of "universal" values, we must be sure that the values we take for granted are grounded in a foundation of experience and "common sense assumptions" that our audience really does share.

As well, even shared values do not always manifest themselves in the same way in the daily life of different cultures. For this reason, an American example cannot simply be "borrowed" into a Canadian context. One context in which differences between Canadian and American society are highly visible is in the incidence of violent crime. Like Americans, Canadians fear crime and lawlessness. However, our attitude to violent crime, our perception of its causes, and our notion of appropriate solutions to the problem differ significantly, as does our direct experience of crime.<sup>4</sup> With a murder rate well under one quarter that of the US, Canadians are likely to perceive violent crime, especially involving firearms, as an aberration rather than as a cultural pattern (Chisholm et al., 1999; Phillips, 1999a and 1999b; Stevens, 1993) and even – a fact that may surprise Americans – as an unwanted side-effect of American cultural influences (Gordon, 1999; Levin, 1999; Kerans, 1993, p. 220-222; Malcolm, 1985, p. 78-9). In light of real cultural differences in the tolerance of violence as part of urban life (Levin,

1999; Lipset, 1990 p. 94-97; Gwyn, 1985), consider the following scenario, offered by Zarefsky as a rhetorical context for a student assignment:

The mother of two young children, you have witnessed a drive-by shooting in a friend's neighbourhood across town. The attack was part of an ongoing turf war between two rival gangs. . . . In a citywide atmosphere of mounting violence you've been asked to give an account of the shooting at an emergency meeting sponsored by a group of concerned parents.... As you prepare to speak at the meeting, you keep seeing the young girl falling to the pavement and lying unconscious, and you vividly remember hearing gunshots and a car speeding away. (Zarefsky, p. 456)

To a Canadian reader, this hypothetical example is obviously, and typically, American, and remains so even if the setting were declared to be Vancouver or Toronto. Although such acts of violence are not entirely unknown in Canada, incidents such as these remain sufficiently atypical that such a scenario could never be accepted as a plausible reflection of ordinary Canadian experience, even in our larger cities. This is just one of many instances in which a mere "change of venue" is insufficient to render the example culturally appropriate. For this speech situation to be believable for a Canadian readership, it had to be rewritten significantly:

The mother of two young children, you have witnessed a pedestrian fatality at a dangerous intersection near a schoolyard. The same uncontrolled intersection has been the scene of several near-misses and one other serious accident in the past five years. This one, a hit-and-run, was the first fatality. . . . As a witness, and a local activist, you've been asked to give an account of the accident at an emergency meeting sponsored by a group of concerned parents. . . . As you prepare to speak at the meeting, you keep seeing the young girl falling to the pavement and lying unconscious, and you vividly remember hearing the car speeding away. (Zarefsky & MacLennan, p. 456)

Relative crime rates are a highly visible indicator of cultural difference, and provide a point of access to the cultural values that underlie them. Other cultural differences are far more subtle, but they do form a pattern of difference that must be recognized if a "Canadianized" text is to adapt effectively to its new cultural context. Many of the changes I made in the process of adapting Zarefsky's book for its new market were far more complex than those already discussed. For example, one of the things that distinguishes the American mindset from the Canadian is the nature and flavour of our cultural mythologies. As a culture, Americans have a greater tendency to celebrate individual public figures and significant historical events. Examples of this cultural phenomenon are visible throughout Zarefsky's text, and are easy to spot: from George Washington to John Kennedy, from Abraham Lincoln to Ronald Reagan, from the Civil War to the Vietnam War, the American cultural machinery makes icons of them all (Lipset, 1990, p. 57-73; Atwood, 1985 and 1982a; Frye, 1972).

There is no parallel situation in the Canadian ethos, and the first way in which this fact is evident is in the scarcity of available examples of Canadian public speeches. When I began researching suitable speeches to include in the new Canadian edition of *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success*, I discovered that the real challenge was not to find comparable texts, but to find texts of any speeches at all. Although the internet and cable broadcasts such as the Canadian Parliamentary Channel have made *contemporary* speeches more available, older texts of significant Canadian speeches, particularly historical ones, have until recently been difficult to come by.<sup>5</sup> In spite of a parliamentary tradition that relies heavily on oratory and the large number of Canadians known for their skill as speakers, Canadians have little history of celebrating political events and the speeches that arise from them, and virtually no tradition of rhetorical study of prominent public discourses. Consider for a moment that any American (and a good many Canadians) can easily name and even quote snippets of several significant American political speeches. Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream*, John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, or Ronald Reagan's "Touch the Face of God" speech on the Challenger disaster are good examples, all cited by Zarefsky. Few Canadians, however, (and even fewer Americans) can name a single significant Canadian speech (Luciani, 1990), and few if any can quote one. I did eventually locate historically and culturally significant works to include in the book, among them former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's 1970 *October Crisis Proclamation*, former Governor General Vincent Massey's 1959 speech to the Canadian Club of Montreal; Rene Levesque's "We are Quebecers" (1977); and Margaret Atwood's "Canadian-American Relations: Surviving the Eighties" (1981); but I was able to do so only after extensive research.<sup>6</sup>

A mythos without American-style heroes should be expected to produce a different kind of public discourse from that found in the US, and it does. One of the main distinctions between Canadian and American cultural mythologies shows up in their central metaphors. "The American Dream" is one example familiar to both Americans and Canadians, but one that would be impossible to simply transplant into the Canadian imagination. After all, who has ever heard of a "Canadian dream"? The idea alone is amusing to a Canadian reader, and it suggests once again the extent to which the ethos of a culture defies simple substitution. The American metaphor is rich with connotations, which, though certainly *recognizable* to a Canadian reader, are unavailable in a parallel Canadian context. For example, the "American dream" invites us to embrace a kind of utopian view, the fulfillment of the beatific vision of the country's founders, and in the idealistic American cultural context, Zarefsky's presentation of the utopian vision as a universally powerful concluding device seems entirely appropriate, even inevitable. Here is Zarefsky's treatment of Lincoln's use of the device of the utopian ideal in his First Inaugural Address:

Even in speeches on less momentous topics it is not uncommon to find a conclusion that tries to envision how things will be once a problem is solved or a goal achieved. The utopian vision is particularly effective when the speaker is calling on listeners to make sacrifices or to take risks to achieve a distant goal. By predicting the ultimate success of one's cause, the utopian vision assures the audience that the effort will be worth it. Abraham Lincoln often employed this type of conclusion. After warning of the perilous situation at the time of his first inaugural address, Lincoln confidently predicted in his conclusion that 'the mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.' Yes, dark clouds might be in the sky at the moment, but in the fullness of time a positive result definitely would be achieved. (Zarefsky, p. 271)

Unfortunately, utopian visions, with their connotation of "happy endings," don't play out the same way in the Canadian cultural ethos, where they are certainly not inevitable and where they may even feel inappropriate. They are thus unlikely to be employed with frequency or perceived as quite so universally satisfying. Indeed, visions of the future receive quite different treatment in Canadian discourse, where the dream is of tenacity and continued survival ("We're staggered, but we're not knocked down" [Walsh, 1993]) or where it may even turn into a *dystopia*. (See, for example, Atwood 1985a; 1982a; 1972). My choice for the corresponding passage from the Canadian edition is intended to highlight this significant difference in cultural pattern:

This vision of "the city on the hill" is a very American one. In Canadian hands, the utopian ideal is likely to be somewhat muted and qualified, as it is in Northrop Frye's 1967 Whidden Lecture: 'One of the derivations proposed for the word Canada is a Portuguese phrase meaning 'nobody here.' The etymology of the word Utopia is very similar, and perhaps the real Canada is an ideal with nobody in it. The Canada to which we really do owe loyalty is the Canada that we have failed to create. In a year bound to be full of discussions of our identity, I should like to suggest that our identity, like the real identity of all nations, is the one that we have failed to achieve. It is expressed in our culture, but not attained in our life. . . . The uncreated identity of Canada may be after all not so bad a heritage to take with us.' (Frye, 1991). (Zarefsky & MacLennan, p. 257)

A culture's distinctiveness is visible in its preoccupations as well as in its familiar metaphors. The precariousness of Canada's continued survival, both politically and culturally, is one of the features of the rhetoric of Canadian identity (Gordon, 1994; MacLennan, 1993-4; Newman, 1988; Atwood, 1982c & 1972). In turn, Canadian identity is one of the most productive topics in Canadian publishing: historians, poets and writers, cultural and literary critics, journalists, and commentators have devoted an enormous amount of attention to the subject; the possibility of breakup alone has generated a huge number of books, even a brief list of which

rapidly becomes unwieldy (for example, Lamont, 1995; Camp, 1995; Barrett et al., 1995; Gordon, 1994; Taras & Simpson, 1993; Rasporich & Mandel, 1993; Martin, 1993; Richler, 1992; Weaver, 1992; Nash, 1991; Rosenblum & Findlay, 1991; Braid & Sharpe, 1990; Matthews, 1988; Meisel, 1986; Gibbins, 1982; Rohmer, 1976; Hutchison, 1943). No wonder Northrop Frye characterized Canadians' obsession with national identity as "our famous problem" (Frye, 1971, p. 220).

This sense of precariousness that infuses discussions of Canadian identity is frequently difficult for Americans as a culture to understand. By contrast with Canadian patterns of national self doubt, American identity is such a "sure thing" that it is even possible to speak of its opposite: being *un-American*. In the cultural mosaic that is Canada, identity is a much more tentative and elusive entity, perhaps because it is challenged from within by separatist aspirations, and from outside by the confident extroversion of our powerful neighbour (for example, Davies, 1989; Mowat, 1985; Berton, 1982; Atwood, 1982a). Whatever its cause, and however accurately it reflects the political reality, there is no doubt that this theme of cultural survival is played out again and again in Canadian public discourse, including an annual *Maclean's* poll (1983-1999); there is also no doubt that it stands in stark contrast to the way in which Americans talk about themselves.

It would thus be impossible to locate a Canadian "equivalent" to the Lincoln example employed by Zarefsky; such beatific visions are extremely rare within the Canadian ethos (see Walsh, 1993; Atwood 1972). Contrast Lincoln's heavenly dream of the future with what Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had to say about the Canadian character to members of the US National Press Club in 1969:

Canadians should never underestimate the constant pressure on Canada that the mere presence of the United States has produced. We're a different people from you and we're a different people partly because of you. . . . Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt. . . . It should not therefore be expected that this kind of a nation, this Canada should project itself. . . . as a mirror image of the United States." (Zarefsky & MacLennan, p. 305)

The further examples in the original text book that accompany the selection from Lincoln's First Inaugural speech show similar patterns of utopian idealism. As well, even within discourses surrounding the highly-charged issues of race relations and civil rights, the utopian vision is still in evidence. For instance, Zarefsky offers the following excerpt from Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream*:

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. (Zarefsky, p. 329)

In the Canadian edition, I chose to replace King's beatific vision with an example more typical of the famous Canadian *dystopian* mindset, a selection from Margaret Atwood's speech "Canadian-American Relations: Surviving the Eighties," given before the Harvard Consortium on Inter-American Relations in 1981. Unlike Martin Luther King, Atwood has no optimistic American-style vision to share, but what she does share is both typically Atwood and typically Canadian.

One of our politicians recently gave a speech entitled, 'In the Footsteps of the Giant.' The United States of course was the giant and Canada was in its footsteps, though some joker wondered whether Canada was in its footstep just before or just after the foot had descended. (Zarefsky & MacLennan, p. 304)

Could a Canadian student read and understand the American edition of Zarefsky's *Public Speaking: Strategies for Success*? Of course. It is unlikely that even such a preponderance of American examples would impede a Canadian reader's cognitive understanding; after all, Canadians are used to a steady diet of American culture from the popular media, including the Internet. But Canadian readers would not see themselves, or people very like themselves, in the book's examples. Though in many ways similar, the two cultures are different enough that the examples in Canadian texts need careful attention – not because the American examples hinder intellectual understanding, but because a textbook on public communication should situate itself in the cultural context of its audience if it is to achieve their emotional commitment and identification, and if it is to establish the credibility of its disciplinary principles.

That American values show up in texts designed by American authors and scholars is not surprising. When the audience envisioned is an American audience, and it is, these familiar examples and shared values actually assist the authors in achieving their purpose of naturalizing disciplinary assumptions for their intended readers. After all, a speaker who displays, through language and metaphor, a set of assumptions that coincide with those unconsciously embraced by the audience will more readily succeed in persuading them to accept the assertions put forward. However, if the unspoken assumptions of the text are at odds with the audience's cultural experience, the result may even be the opposite of what is intended. While most rhetoricians would recognize on this basis the folly of introducing American texts into an obviously "foreign" culture, there is far less recognition within the discipline of the subtle differences that make theory and practice modeled on American norms a poor "fit" for a Canadian audience.

Zarefsky's text advises students that "it takes a keen focus on the particular culture of your audience to plan an effective message" (Zarefsky, p. 93). This is a basic rhetorical principle, but it cannot help but ring false to a Canadian readership if the book is left as originally written. To introduce



the book unchanged into a Canadian context would be to introduce a serious mis-match between audience and message and to violate the very principles that our discipline attempts to teach.

Canadian students and their teachers, faced with exclusively American examples, may perceive speech communication as a “foreign” discipline with little to teach them about their own communication patterns, particularly in instances where cultural assumptions govern how communication may be carried out. Edwin Black reminds us that in all rhetorical discourse “we can find enticements not simply to believe something, but to *be* something. We are solicited by the discourse to fulfill its blandishments with our very selves” (Black, 1972, p.172). This is a powerful invitation, and one to which we can only respond if the text accommodates the cultural values and assumptions we take for granted. Though Canada and the US may look similar on the surface, what works “down there” is not automatically a good fit “up here.” Communication, in both practice and theoretical developments, is always carried out against a background of cultural values and assumptions – a background that in this instance differs significantly from the American context in which the discipline of speech communication normally operates. Scholars and teachers in the field, whether they are in the US or elsewhere, must learn to recognize and accommodate the subtle as well as the obvious ways in which American ideals and individualism have influenced the disciplinary culture. In doing so we may better identify and extract truly universal principles that underlie the study of human communication. The ability to do so will enrich the discipline with a fuller understanding of how individuals both define and are defined by their cultural ethos.

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#### NOTES

1. It should be said here that, although the differences are typically highly visible to Canadians and also a matter of much public discussion, they are not nearly so evident to Americans, as is indicated by several cross-border polls conducted by Maclean’s magazine (1986-1999) and by numerous other sources. While a Ph.D. candidate in a US Department of Speech Communication, I received numerous responses from US reviewers of articles on Canadian public address indicating that they perceived little or no significant difference between the two cultures and were therefore mystified at my insistence that the difference does, in fact, exist.
2. Some scholars have argued that the processing of figurative or metaphorical language is made up of a stimulus-response cycle that occurs in three main stages: error, or recognition that a literal interpretation is inadequate; puzzlement-recoil, or agitated uncertainty and motivation to solve the puzzle; and finally resolution, in which the puzzle of meaning is resolved. For more on the processing of figurative materials, see Osborn and Ehninger, 1962, pp. 223-234.
3. I should probably clarify that, though the teaching and practice of public speaking are well established in Canada, the academic discipline of rhetoric, and the broader departmental structure of speech communication, are virtually unknown. The only Ph.D. programme in rhetoric, for example, is offered by the English department at the University of Waterloo, and

it was not established until 1989. By contrast, departments of speech communication have been in existence in the US since at least 1914 (see Smith, 1954).

4. In 1995, the total number of homicides in Canada was 536; the crime rate for homicide stood at 1.8 per 100,000; the US figure for the same year was 8.7 homicides per 100,000. Statistics Canada, "Crimes by Type of Offense." On-line. <<http://www.statcan.ca/english/Pgdb/State/Justice/legal02.htm>> (1998); and US Department of Justice, "Homicide rates from the Vital Statistics." On-line. <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/hmrt.txt>> (November 22, 1998).

5. This fact of limited availability has been underscored by a recent exchange on CanRhet, an on-line discussion group for Canadian rhetoricians administered by Maurice Charland at Concordia University (see Charland, 2000).

6. I am indebted to John Robert Colombo, editor of the annual *Canadian Almanac* and the compiler of *Colombo's Canadian Quotations* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1974).

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**JENNIFER MACLENNAN** is the D.K. Seaman Chair in Technical and Professional Communication in the College of Engineering, University of Saskatchewan. She holds a Ph.D. in communication from the University of Washington, specializing in rhetoric, as well as degrees in English from McMaster and St. Francis Xavier Universities.

**JENNIFER MACLENNAN** est titulaire de la chaire D.K. Seaman de communication technique et professionnelle à la faculté de génie de l'Université de Saskatchewan. Elle est titulaire d'un doctorat en communication, avec spécialisation en rhétorique, de l'Université de Washington, et de grades universitaires en anglais des Universités McMaster et St. Francis Xavier.