

# “El verdadero nombre de Mozino Point”: Translingual Poetics and Politics in Alejandro Saravia’s *Lettres de Nootka*

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**Abstract:** The article defends the thesis that Alejandro Saravia’s trilingual collection of poetry proposes a tentative reterritorialization of Spanish in Canada by evoking the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish Enlightenment, as well as the collision of the Spanish and British Empires at Nootka Sound. Saravia’s “weak” reterritorialization of Spanish serves to expose the precariousness of white-settler claims to the land, whose Aboriginal inhabitants figure largely in Saravia’s poetics and politics. The metaphor of Spanish as the “new bride on the Pacific northern shores” vis-à-vis the Native languages is glossed in relation to the Chinook Jargon, the *lingua franca* developed on the west coast for purposes of trade among Europeans and Aboriginal peoples.

**Key words:** poetics; politics; Canada; reterritorialization; Spanish; Nootka Sound; Chinook Jargon; trilingualism; José Mariano Moziño; Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra

**Résumé :** Cet article défend la thèse selon laquelle le livre d’Alejandro Saravia, composé de poèmes en trois langues, est un essai de reterritorialisation de l’espagnol au Canada en évoquant l’élucidation espagnole du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle, ainsi que la collision entre les empires britannique et espagnol à Nootka Sound. La reterritorialisation « faible » de l’espagnol proposée par Saravia sert à mettre à nu la précarité du titre des colons blancs à la terre, dont les habitants autochtones s’imposent dans la poétique et la politique de Saravia. La métaphore de l’espagnol comme la « *new bride of the Pacific northern shores* » vis-à-vis les langues autochtones est considérée en relation avec le chinook, cette *lingua franca* développée sur la côte ouest pour faciliter le commerce entre Européens et Autochtones.

**Mots-clés :** poétique; politique; Canada; reterritorialisation; espagnol; Nootka Sound; jargon chinook; trilinguisme; José Mariano Moziño; Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra

Territory, one might say, is land appropriated by the symbolic, by the act of naming<sup>1</sup>. Land becomes territory either when it is occupied and defended physically, in the manner of all animals including humans, or when it is claimed and “occupied” by a performative speech act: this is mine or ours or the Sovereign’s, and I or we or s/he shall call it X or Y, Tenochtitlán or México, Fort Rouge or Winnipeg, las islas Malvinas or the Falkland Islands, the Queen Charlotte Islands or Haida Guaii. Clearly, then, the language (*langue*) used to name/claim a given territory carries important cultural and political implications. If the act of naming creates territory, then the language used to name it colours and mediates a given territory.

The great French critic Valéry Larbaud liked to theorize about the various “language domains” composing an intellectual map of the world and a corresponding “interlinguistic politics”<sup>2</sup>, though his interest was limited to European imperial languages only. Larbaud, who took a keen interest in the Americas and our literatures, wrote that the Spanish language, thanks to its beauty and its “structural solidity” – superior to that of English, in his view –, was destined to endure on this side of the Atlantic longer than all other imperial European languages<sup>3</sup>. Larbaud’s enthusiastic hispanophilia aside, Spanish is indeed a language whose domain, by papal decree<sup>4</sup>, once

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<sup>1</sup> The Latin etymon *territorium* denotes “the land under the jurisdiction of a town” or other human entity (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

<sup>2</sup> Valéry Larbaud, “Carta a dos amigos”, Trans. Adelina del Carril, *Proa*, March 1925, p. 7. Original: “Lettre à deux amis”, *Commerce*, 2, Fall 1924, p. 57-88.

<sup>3</sup> Valéry Larbaud, “Una obra americana”, *Sur*, 13, 1935, p. 108-109.

<sup>4</sup> The *Tratado de Tordesillas* of 1494, negotiated under the aegis of Pope Alexander VI and confirmed in a 1506 papal bull by Julian II, established a “line of demarcation” 370 leagues west of Cabo Verde which was to separate the Western hemisphere’s Portuguese territories from those of the Spanish, when Spain and Portugal were as yet the only declared imperial contenders for the hemisphere.

included the lands of the northwest coast of North America, from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska, and indeed all lands bordering on what the early Spanish mapmakers in the Americas called the “Southern Sea”, now known as the Pacific Ocean. Spanish names abound in the toponymy of British Columbia, especially in its marine charts. Now anglicized in pronunciation, those names stand as a sort of cartographic fossil record, the remaining evidence of our culturally suppressed historical memory of the Spanish presence on that coast. It is this memory that Bolivian-Canadian Alejandro Saravia poetically resuscitates in his book of poems *Lettres de Nootka*<sup>5</sup>. This paper will offer a reading of the “interlinguistic politics” of Saravia’s book, whose poetics open up perspectives on the brief but incisive incursion of the Spanish language in Canada, including its interaction with Aboriginal languages of the Pacific west coast, as well as on the tentative future of Spanish in this nation-state.

Alejandro Saravia, one of the most talented writers of what Hugh Hazelton has called *Latinocanadá*<sup>6</sup>, is remarkable not only for his intertextual engagement with Canada’s Anglophone and Francophone literatures, but also because he writes in three languages (Spanish, French, and English). The title poem of his book *Lettres de Nootka*, its French title notwithstanding, is written first in an English version, then re-written and enhanced in Spanish as “Cartas de Nootka”, the book’s final poem. On one level, the Spanish title alludes to the book *Noticias de Nutka* (first published 1803-1804), by José Mariano Moziño<sup>7</sup>,

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<sup>5</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres de Nootka*, Toronto and Montreal, Art-Fact Press/Las Ediciones de la Enana Blanca, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Hazelton, *Latinocanadá: A Critical Study of Ten Latin American Writers of Canada*, Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792*, Trans. Iris Higbie Wilson, Toronto and Montreal, McClelland and Stewart, 1970.

the 18<sup>th</sup>-century naturalist from New Spain (present-day Mexico) who, at the behest of the Spanish Crown, investigated not only the flora and fauna, but also the people and language of Nootka. Moziño's surname, properly spelt, never actually appears in the book, except in its anglicized version; and this, in the title poem's last line, where the reader is invited to ponder what might be "el verdadero nombre" of Mozino Point, its "true" name alluded to only in the poem's final version in Spanish:

|                                       |                                            |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| under the Pacific waters              | <i>bajo las aguas del océano Pacífico</i>  |
| only gorgonian corals                 | <i>sólo los corales de Gorgona</i>         |
| still keep in silence                 | <i>todavía guardan en silencio</i>         |
| the name of Mozino Point <sup>8</sup> | <i>el verdadero nombre</i>                 |
|                                       | <i>de <b>Mozino Point</b></i> <sup>9</sup> |

My thesis is that, by evoking the historical presence of the Spanish Empire on Canada's Northwest Pacific coast, Saravia establishes a beachhead for a certain "reterritorialization" of the Spanish language in Canada.

On another level, however, the title *Lettres de Nootka* appears to allude to the genre of the epistolary novel initiated by Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721). The intertextual web grows denser when we consider the Spanish title, "Cartas de Nootka", and its evocation of José Cadalso's *Cartas marruecas*<sup>10</sup>, whose publication in Spain was contemporaneous

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119; my emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> José Cadalso, *Cartas marruecas* and *Noches lúgubres*, in Joaquín Arce (ed.), Madrid, Cátedra, 1985.

with the writing of *Noticias de Nutka*<sup>11</sup>. Both Montesquieu and Cadalso used the literary device of inventing foreign characters who visit the author's native country (Montesquieu's France, Cadalso's Spain) and who then write letters home (to Persia, to Morocco, respectively) with their impressions of the European nations<sup>12</sup>. This fictional device allows the author to posit a speculative "outside" from which to gain a different critical perspective on their own countries. Saravia's apparently deliberate evocation of this epistolary genre suggests a second, complementary thesis: that the poet posits a dual insider/outsider perspective on Canada. Unlike his literary forbears of the European Enlightenment, however, Saravia's viewpoint-from-without is produced not by an exercise in speculative projection but rather by the embodied memory of a lived reality: the Bolivian-Canadian is both exotic outsider and Canadian citizen, a duality thematized throughout the book. With his doubled self, Saravia explores a new way of "writing in Canadian", a theme introduced in the forty-first poem of the collection ("The Man Who Pretended to Write in Canadian"). If the recollection of the Spanish presence on Canada's west coast re-opens and destabilizes this new nation-state's colonial narrative, it follows that what it means to "write in Canadian" will in turn be affected.

<sup>11</sup> Moziño wrote his *Noticias de Nutka* in 1793, the same year that Cadalso's *Cartas marruecas* were being published serially in the *Correo de Madrid*. See Iris Higbie Wilson, "Introduction", in José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka*, *op. cit.*, p. xi; and José Cadalso, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> Cadalso is critically aware of the exotic epistolary genre, alluding to Montesquieu and his French epigones in the introduction to his *Cartas marruecas*: "*Esta ficción no es tan natural en España, por ser menos el número de los viajeros a quienes atribuir semejante obra. Sería increíble el título de Cartas Persianas, Turcas o Chinescas, escritas de este lado de los Pirineos*" (José Cadalso, *op. cit.*, p. 78). Alluding to Montesquieu's work, as well as to *Lettres d'une turque à Paris* (1731) by Poullain de Saint-Foix and to *Lettres chinoises* (1739-40) by Jean Baptiste d'Argens, Cadalso subtly mocks their lack of verisimilitude and corrects their extravagance by choosing the neighbouring country of Morocco as the origin of his own characters. See also Joaquín Arce's note (José Cadalso, *op. cit.*, p. 78n).

## Trilingual structure

Of the 56 poems (not numbered) comprising the collection *Lettres de Nootka*, ten are written in French, nineteen in Spanish, and twenty-seven in English. The ordering of these poems according to language is anything but arbitrary. Though no rubric indicates this structure, it is clearly observable that the book is divided into two halves. The first half comprises 27 poems, which can be subdivided into three sequences of nine poems, each sequence in turn being constituted by three consecutive groups: three poems in French, followed by three in Spanish, followed by three in English, always in that order. Mathematically, the sequence can be represented thus: (3 French + 3 Spanish + 3 English) X 3 = 27 poems. It is noteworthy that the integrity of each linguistic code is respected; there is no linguistic miscegenation, no Spanglish, nor even any code-switching<sup>13</sup>. The second half of the book (poems 28 to 56) is sequenced quite differently: 1 French + 18 English + 10 Spanish. The French-language poems cease, English comes on strong, but a series of ten powerful poems in Spanish sweeps the collection to its finish.

The moment of rupture separating the first and second halves occurs between the twenty-eighth poem “Le chien d’ailleurs” and the twenty-ninth titled “The Fall”; respectively, they are the last poem in French and the first in the lengthy English-only series. In the former, the poet declares himself the proverbial dog – the outsider, the come-from-away – that bites the hand that feeds it. He asserts, however, that “*ce métier est nécessaire / il faut mordre, mordre / la main de Blanche-Neige / mordre avec rage / mordre avec amour / jusqu’à ce qu’une autre*

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<sup>13</sup> The partial exception is the prose-poem “Don Quijote en la maleta”, which stages a dialogue between a Spanish-language instructor and his anglophone student (Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 67-68).

*main / bourgeonne du moignon sanglant // une autre main / pour écrire / une nouvelle journée*<sup>14</sup>. Blanche-Neige refers back to the tenth poem “Blanche Neige sur la rue Laval” and symbolizes a certain complacent and outmoded Quebecois cultural nationalism still haunted by a colonial mentality. From the bloody stump of Blanche Neige’s hand, according to the poem’s vatic prophecy, will grow a new writing hand. But in what language will that new hand write?

The violence of the rancorous dog-that-bites-the-hand seems to provoke the rupture between the regular and cyclical order of the book’s first half and its second half, the first poem of which is titled “The Fall”: the fall of the angel into alienation, but also the fall from the Symbolic into a Real sustained by soil, mud, and earth, the timeless Pachamama whose embrace integrates the Canadian prairies (where the fallen poet awakes) into the telluric entirety of the Americas. A Canadian version of the Nerudian canto to the grandeur of the landmass extending from the Canadian Arctic to Tierra del Fuego, which runs like a *basso continuo* in all three languages throughout the collection, is sustained even in this long English-only section, in spite of its preponderance of minor poems with themes tending toward sadness: death (“The Man Who’s Always Late”), suicide (“To Read on the Bus”), estrangement (“The Spider”), and especially social and political injustice (“Eat Your Homemade Soup”; “A Nobel in Economics”; “On the Subway to Jane Station”).

The notable exception in this long series of poems in English is “The Man Who Pretended to Write in Canadian”, a multi-thematic poem in four parts, written in both prose and verse, ranging in tone from ironical to lyrical. In Part IV of the poem, the man pretending to “write in Canadian” recounts an erotic dream of utopian redemption; the

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

bed of his amorous reverie becomes a “boat [that] moves through the quiet sea of time”:

The wood of this boat holds the memory of the first fallen  
angels.

“we live in a beautiful world”

says a voice that comes from a

remote invisible island

[...]

Oblivion is the name of the enemy.

Oblivion sinks its teeth deep into their flesh<sup>15</sup>.

The timeless universality of this final part of the poem must be understood as inflected by the theme of Canada and its language(s). The “remote invisible island” is a polyvalent figure evoking such associations as the island of Utopia, Cuba (in the poem “La Habana”), but especially the island of Nootka, the setting of the book’s title poem. “Lettres de Nootka” is the seventh poem of the collection and the first poem written in English; “Cartas de Nootka”, its more beautiful and nuanced re-writing in Spanish that brings the book to a close. Just as the book’s second half consists in a long wave of English countered by a final wave of Spanish, so will the final Spanish-language poem give new depth and meaning to its first draft written in English-language. Between the two versions mediates a title in French, just as a poem in French (“Le chien d’ailleurs”) mediates between the book’s first and second halves; and just as in the Nootka Sound Incident, to which we shall return shortly, Captains George Vancouver and Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra negotiated the future of the Pacific coast in that European language of diplomacy.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88-89.

The “oblivion” of the poem’s last two lines presents a paradox, being at once the panacea of the lovers’ embrace and, in the context of the book as a whole, the “enemy” that has swallowed the “true name of Mozino Point<sup>16</sup>”. The now phantasmal Spanish presence on Canada’s Pacific coast – though “the maps / the history books / keep a faint record of Santa Cruz de Nucta [*sic*]<sup>17</sup>” – has effectively been swallowed by the sea of time and oblivion.

## Doubled vision

Perspectival doubleness is given metaphorical expression early in the book; in its first Spanish-language poem, titled “La nueva tierra” [The New Land], we read: “*Ante el espejo de los días, una pupila pregunta a la otra: ¿fuiste otra?, ¿eres el mismo ojo de esta mañana?, ¿adónde nos lleva este camino de tanta distancia?*”<sup>18</sup> [Before the mirror of days, one eye asks the other: were you another? are you the same eye as this morning? where is this long road leading us?]. The poet interpellates himself in the second person, his two eyes questioning one another. One eye is on the past, the other on the future. A doubled self is in dialogue: on the one hand, a Bolivian self, whose land of birth “*ya casi no es tuya*”<sup>19</sup>; [is barely yours anymore], having evanesced, as the Canadian-Bolivian protagonist of Saravia’s novel *Rojo, amarillo y verde* puts it, into a “*patria imaginaria*”, a place that does not exist beyond a tormented, labyrinthine geography<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, there is a new Canadian

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28. In the final Spanish version: “*sin embargo los mapas / los libros de historia / apenas guardan la frágil memoria de Santa Cruz de Nutka*” (*Ibid.*, p. 118).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Rojo, amarillo y verde*, Toronto and Montreal, Art-Fact Press/Las Ediciones de la Enana Blanca, 2003, p. 39.

self, curious, exploring, travelling, following a vast map of Canada “inscribed in the palm of his hand<sup>21</sup>”. Many of the poems are like news-filled letters, *noticias de Canadá* bearing witness to the cultures of Francophone, Anglophone, and Aboriginal Canada.

In another dimension, the doubling is epistemological, between two modalities of knowing: the poet as navigator/explorer and the poet as scientist-ethnographer. Both modalities are figured in the two main historical personages of the eighteenth-century Spanish Enlightenment who are referenced in the title poem. At the height of his career as navigator and cartographer, Captain Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra led the scientific expedition to Nootka in 1792; an entire stanza of “Lettres de Nootka”/ “Cartas de Nootka” is dedicated to him:

|                                             |                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| by night on the bridge                      | <i>por la noche en el puente</i>                 |
| under a swaying oil lamp                    | <i>bajo la lámpara de aceite que la mar mece</i> |
| the seafarer from Lima                      | <i>el navegante del Alto Perú</i>                |
| slowly dissects on paper                    | <i>diseca lentamente en el papel</i>             |
| the secret veins of the ocean <sup>22</sup> | <i>las secretas del océano<sup>23</sup></i>      |

Another stanza recalls the naturalist José Mariano Moziño:

|                           |                                       |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| by day                    | <i>de día</i>                         |
| under the tall red cedars | <i>bajo los altos cedros rojos</i>    |
| the Mexican José Mariano  | <i>el mexicano José Mariano</i>       |
| draws, ink on paper       | <i>dibuja con papel y tinta china</i> |

<sup>21</sup> “De Whitehorse a Charlottetown hay inscrito un vasto mapa en la palma de tu mano” (Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 18). [From Whitehorse to Charlottetown, there’s a vast map inscribed in the palm of your hand.]

<sup>22</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116-117.

the lines of Chief Maquinna's face    *el rostro del Jefe Maquinna*

the paths of sorrow to come<sup>24</sup>    *en su piel escritos*

*los senderos de dolor que vendrá*<sup>25</sup>

Bodega y Quadra, the mapmaking mariner who never ceased to explore, corresponds to the poet's experiential side, his "night eye". The Enlightenment scientist Moziño, who works by the light of day, documents the origins of the ethnographic drama that will produce Canada<sup>26</sup>. The poet, however, most closely identifies with the former, an identification revealed only in the Spanish version of the poem: *el Alto Perú* was the Spanish colonial name for present-day Bolivia, Saravia's native country. The historical Bodega y Quadra was in fact from the port city of Lima, not Upper Peru; and so *el navegante del Alto Perú* is the poet, figuring himself as the Peruvian seafarer reincarnate, come again to explore "the shores of this fragile fetal Canada<sup>27</sup>", "*las costas de esta frágil, fetal Canadá*<sup>28</sup>". The immigrant poet's forbears were there as witnesses, and even as participants, at the origins of this quite recent colonial invention, prior to the binational artifact created in 1867 by the act of Confederation.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>26</sup> The historical Moziño did not draw the very accomplished sketches illustrating his *Noticias de Nutka*; they are the work of the talented Atanasio Echeverría, whom the Mexican historian Xavier Lozoya likens to a photo-journalist of the time. (Xavier Lozoya, "José Mariano Mociño. Un naturalista mexicano que recorre Nutka, Canadá en el siglo XVIII, *Historia Mexicana*, 34.1, 1984, p. 120). Archibald Menzies, chief naturalist on George Vancouver's expedition who met Moziño and Echeverría at Nootka, expressed his admiration for Echeverría's work (Iris H.W. Engstrand, "José Moziño and Archibald Menzies: Crossroads of the Enlightenment in the Pacific Northwest", *Columbia*, 24.1, 2004, p. 26a).

<sup>27</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

## Aboriginal land and place

Among the many critics of the Eurocentric notion of a two-nation Canada, Robert Bringhurst brings to bear a perspective that is particularly apt here:

There are scholars who hold that Canada is the name of a human construct, empty of meaning until the dream of Confederation. Canadian writers and critics, on the other hand, have been saying for many years, with almost perfect unanimity, that Canadian literature speaks from the land, that its allegiance is to *place*. If we believe any of that, doesn't it follow that our literature, and our literary history, has to begin with the voices that spoke from this place first and have spoken from it longest and appear to know its deepest layers best?<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding Bringhurst's perhaps too hasty conflation of the concepts of "land" and "place", his case is eloquent for the authority of the voices and literature of the Aboriginal peoples of this land. Saravia, too, seems to want to deepen the notion of Canada and its literature by heeding those voices. His Nerudian cantos to the land are most often mediated through references to Aboriginal tradition. In Montreal, he hears the Inuit goddess Sedna in the throat singing of Tanya Tagak<sup>30</sup>. In the same city, and recently arrived in "La nueva tierra"<sup>31</sup>, the poet can hear "*los cantos del viento que recorre las catedrales de bosque y aullido de Thunder Bay*" [the wind singing across the cathedrals of forest and howl from Thunder Bay]; and he senses "*el olor ursino que flota sobre la vasta alfombra de musgo en las boscosas entrañas verdes de Waskiesu*" [the bearish odour floating over the

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *The Tree of Meaning: Language, Mind and Ecology*, Berkeley, Counterpoint, 2008, p. 32. Bringhurst's emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Letras...*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

vast carpet of moss in the wooded green insides of Waskiesu]: he at once renders the voice of the land in Spanish and brings Aboriginal place names into that language. In the same poem, he has already eaten the heart of a beaver, emblematic animal of Canada, in Kanesatake, as well as a bear hunted in Chibougamau cooked by an Montagnais woman “*que te mira como a un hijo perdido, el que recién regresa a casa. Ella sabe que los latinoamericanos son más indígenas que ingleses o franceses*” [who looks at you as though at a lost son, one who is just coming home. She knows that Latin Americans are more indigenous than English or French]<sup>32</sup>. These rhetorical moves have powerful implications. On the one hand, a pan-American Aboriginal community is implicitly posited. Latin Americans are the product of five centuries of *mestizaje* between Iberians and Aborigines; their Aboriginal blood makes them closer to the Natives of the northern zones of America than the English or the French, whom the poet implicitly identifies with more recent waves of colonization. On the other hand, the Spanish language, once upon a time the exclusive prerogative of the *conquistadores*, has been appropriated by the conquered peoples and naturalized by their *mestizo* progeny. The Latin American, *mestizo* by blood and culture, hears the Canadian land speak in Spanish.

The poet’s keen sympathy for and interest in the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, thematized throughout the book, is present in the book’s culminating title poem, even though its ostensible subject is the Spanish(-American) explorers of Canada’s Pacific coast. The indigenous perspective provides a counterpoint to the viewpoint of the Spanish imperial outrunners; in the English version, “the inhabitants” on land watch “the strange and silent light” of the Spanish ships at anchor

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

on the water<sup>33</sup>; in Spanish, the inhabitants are called *los indígenas* ['indigenous' in the plural]<sup>34</sup>. Nootka is called the "land of the Nuuchahnulth", its contemporary name since 1979<sup>35</sup>. And the poet recalls the striking face of Chief Maquinna, as sketched by the Mexican artist Atanasio Echeverría, Moziño's illustrator at Nootka<sup>36</sup>.

### *Hispanocanáda* and Nootka

Hugh Hazelton's book *Latinocanáda* might well have been titled *Hispanocanáda*, for it collects the work of ten *Spanish-American* writers who have lived and worked in this country. Unlike the much larger Hispanic community of the United States, which is "fragmented into large blocks of Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Cubans, Dominicans<sup>37</sup>" and so on, Spanish-American immigrants to Canada tend to transcend national boundaries and "define themselves linguistically<sup>38</sup>". *Latino-* or *Hispanocanáda* is a new imagined community whose social and cultural existence is anchored in the Spanish language. As with the various other competing versions of Canada *qua* national or notional entity, *Hispanocanáda* occupies *virtual* territory within the Canadian state's geopolitical frontiers as these are traced on official maps.

Perhaps in homage to his poetic alter ego, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century cartographer Bodega y Quadra, maps are a recurring metaphor in Saravia's *Lettres*

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>35</sup> The site of Santa Cruz de Nutka at Yuquot (or Friendly Cove) in Nootka Sound is actually located in the tribal territory of Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, which in turn forms part of the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, an alliance of 14 First Nations on the west coast of Vancouver Island. "Nuuchahnulth" means "along the mountains and sea" (Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, n.p., [www.nuuchahnulth.org/tribal-council/welcome.html](http://www.nuuchahnulth.org/tribal-council/welcome.html), Retrieved July 10 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 27, 117.

<sup>37</sup> Hugh Hazelton, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

*de Nootka*. Antonio Giménez Micó felicitously introduces the collection as a series of maps comprising “an atlas of Nootka<sup>39</sup>”, thus effectively linking the book’s first Spanish-language poem, “La nueva tierra”, with the book’s closing poem, “Cartas de Nootka”. With this linkage, he has put his finger on an important key to Saravia’s poetic vision. Nootka becomes a synecdoche for *Hispanocanáda*; it is the part that stands for the whole. The reasons behind this figurative manoeuvre are both poetic and political. Let us begin with the poetic.

“*Ahora eres de aquí*”, reads the first line of the poem “La nueva tierra”, the book’s opening poem. “*Aquí estás en Nootka*”, we suddenly read a hundred odd pages later, in the midst of the final poem “Cartas de Nootka”. In translation, these two lines read: “Now you are from here; here you are in Nootka”; as though Northrop Frye were silently egging him on, the poet first affirms the new “here-ness” on the island of Montreal, but “here” immediately thereafter includes Thunder Bay and Waskiesu, and in later poems, Peggy’s Cove, Saskatoon, Calgary, Nunavut, Whitehorse, and finally Nootka. Where is here? Here, finally, is in Nootka. Nootka is at once the terminus of the poet’s mapmaking travels throughout Canada and the historical beginning of *Hispanocanáda* – the Spanish fort at San Lorenzo de Nutka was built in 1789, decades before Canada’s official birth, when the paternity of our future nation’s as yet foetal existence was still at issue among rival imperial suitors – Britain, Russia, Spain, as well as the recently independent United States of America.

The Spaniards had been the first Europeans to explore the Pacific Northwest. Juan de Fuca, after whom is named the strait separating the state of Washington from Vancouver Island, arrived that far north

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<sup>39</sup> Antonio Giménez Micó, “A manero de prólogo”, in Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres de Nootka*, Toronto and Montreal, Art-Fact Press/Las Ediciones de la Enana Blanca, 2008, p. 9.

in 1592. Only in the mid-1700s, however, did the Spanish seriously set about solidifying their historic claim to the northwest coast in response to increasing Russian, British, and American interest in the area and its lucrative fur trade. Nootka, already an important centre of trade in pre-colonial times, came to be a focus for all these competing imperial and commercial interests. The Russians never actually made a move on Nootka, establishing instead a settlement in Sitka, Alaska; and the newly independent Americans were not yet an important imperial player. The many-sided conflict boiled down to a confrontation between two traditional enemies, Britain and Spanish, specifically over possession of Nootka. The Spaniard Juan Pérez, who sailed as far the Queen Charlotte Islands, claimed to have anchored at Nootka in 1774, not long before James Cook did the same in 1778. Ten years later, the two imperial powers were on the brink of war over the rights to Nootka and, by extension, to the rich fur trade. The first Nootka Convention forestalled war in 1790, but the details of the agreement had yet to be negotiated. The Captain Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra, heading up the royal *Expedición de los Límites*, a dual diplomatic and scientific mission, met Captain George Vancouver at Nootka in 1792 to negotiate the details of a definitive resolution of the crisis. According to one historian, the gracious and sophisticated Spanish captain “seduced” and outmanoeuvred his English counterpart<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, so charmed was the normally dour Vancouver by Bodega’s wining and dining, with whom he exchanged cartographic and navigational information, that he magnanimously

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<sup>40</sup> Janet Fireman concludes that “[Juan Francisco] Bodega [y Quadra], whom the Englishman [George Vancouver] characterized as full of ‘mildness and lenity’ [*sic*] and ‘*too good* a man,” showed himself to be more the hunter than the hunted. His cunning was charm, his bait was hospitality, and his strategy was persistence. Bodega’s seduction was successful: Vancouver tripped the tender trap”. Janet R. Fireman, “The Seduction of George Vancouver: A Nootka Affair”, *Pacific Historical Review*, 56.3, 1987, p. 443.

proposed the name Island of Quadra and Vancouver, whose circumnavigation had just been realized. A third important player was the Nootkan Chief Maquinna (Ma-kwee-na). As Christon Archer observes, in the course of the Spanish-British diplomatic controversy, “Maquinna became adept at extracting every possible advantage and in the process became a consummate diplomat in his own right – often outfoxing Spaniards, British, and Americans<sup>41</sup>”. In her article “Dangerous Liaisons: Maquinna, Quadra, and Vancouver in Nootka Sound”, Yvonne Marshall shows how Maquinna was using the Europeans in his struggle for prestige vis-à-vis his rivals Wickaninish and Tatoosh in a bid to maintain his position as sort of “umbrella chief<sup>42</sup>” in the loose cultural-economic federation of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the west coast of Vancouver Island<sup>43</sup>. Eventually, after signing the final Nootka Convention in 1794, the Spanish did definitively withdraw – much to the chagrin of Bodega y Quadra – from Nootka and what later came to be named British Columbia.

The Nootka Sound incident, or Nootka Controversy, as historians sometimes refer to it, condenses in a single episode the grand geopolitical drama that marks the beginning of the emergence of a new world order marked by the independence of the Americas. At Nootka, two imperialisms collided head to head, the aggressive “free-trade” imperialism of Britain, and the Spanish imperialism predicated on crown monopoly. The result of this collision has been interpreted

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<sup>41</sup> Christon I. Archer, “The Making of Spanish Indian Policy on the Northwest Coast”, *The New Mexico Historical Review*, 52.1, 1977, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Yvonne Marshall, “Dangerous Liaisons: Maquinna, Quadra, and Vancouver in Nootka Sound, 1790-5”, in Robin Fisher (ed.), *From Maps to Metaphors: The Pacific World of George Vancouver*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 1993, p. 163.

<sup>43</sup> Marshall’s interesting thesis is that the events of the summer of 1792 at Nootka presaged the political unification of the present-day Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (*Ibid.*, p. 160).

in many ways, depending on the various nationally-conditioned points of view of British, Anglo-Canadian, Spanish, and American historians. Indeed, the meaning of the Nootka Sound incident seems to be a permanently open question. The British, and their colonial progeny such as Lennox Mills, see it as the event that terminated the Spanish presence in the Pacific Northwest and cleared the way for the expansion of *British* Columbia from the interior out to the west coast<sup>44</sup>. The Americans see in the stand-off a stalemate between two imperial powers, a deadlock that permitted U.S. territory to expand further northwest than it might otherwise have done<sup>45</sup>. A Spanish historian, writing in the Franco era in 1967, ends his account of the Nootka incident on a note of defiance: “*Nutka nunca quedó en manos inglesas*”<sup>46</sup> [Nootka never fell into English hands].

Such Spanish imperialist nostalgia, in Saravia’s reading of that fascinating historical drama, is referenced, but then as quickly deflected, right from the poem’s opening lines: “not all the sailors came from Cádiz, / La Mancha or some other parched and bitter land / for there were seafarers born in these Americas<sup>47</sup>”. His protagonists are pointedly not *peninsular* but *criollo*. First mentioned is the Peruvian Captain Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, who led the aforementioned *Expedición de los Límites* to Nootka in 1792, the poet’s alter ego. The naval career (1762-1794) of this seasoned captain and wise diplomat of the Empire,

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<sup>44</sup> “Indirectly, one result of the [Nootka] Convention [of 1795] was to secure British Columbia for the British Empire. Had it not been for [British Prime Minister William] Pitt’s action the overtures then in progress between Spain and Russia would probably have led to the division between them of the whole Pacific coast” (Lennox Mills, “The Real Significance of the Nootka Sound Incident”, *Canadian Historical Review*, 6, 1925, p. 121).

<sup>45</sup> Warren L. Cook, *Flood Tide of Empire: Spain and the Pacific Northwest, 1543-1819*, New Haven, Yale UP, 1973, p. ix.

<sup>46</sup> Luis Mariñas Otero, “El incidente de Nutka”, *Revista de Indias*, 27, 1967, p. 405.

<sup>47</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Letres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

who not surprisingly is the protagonist of a recent historical novel by the Spaniard Antonio Menchaca<sup>48</sup>, coincided with the apogee of Spanish *Marina Ilustrada* (the Enlightened Navy), modernized under the Bourbon kings Carlos II and III to rival those of England and France<sup>49</sup>. He was involved in all but two of the many Spanish exploratory voyages in the Pacific northwest sponsored by the Bourbons in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>50</sup>, though not with the first all-important voyage of 1774 commanded by Juan Pérez, the first Spaniard to anchor at Nootka in that year, anticipating by four years the visit of the Captain James Cook. Under Saravia's pen, as we have seen above, Bodega y Quadra becomes the diviner of secret marine currents; he is a *mama łni*, as the Nootkans called Europeans, a word usually translated as a "man who lives on the water"<sup>51</sup>, though linguist Ross Clark has recently glossed the term as 'dwell-moving-coming': *those who dwell in coming and going*<sup>52</sup>.

The other side of the poetic alter ego, diurnal and rational, is represented by José Mariano Moziño, the *novohispano* or Mexican man of Enlightenment science – botanist, zoologist, ethnographer – who works on land by the light of day. On the basis of his five-month stay with Bodega at Nootka in 1792, Moziño wrote his scientific work *Noticias de Nutka*, which, after an incredibly hazardous publication history, was finally

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<sup>48</sup> Antonio Menchaca, *La rosa de los vientos: venturas y desventuras del explorador y navegante, Capitán de Navío don Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra, 1744-1794*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Freeman M. Tovell, *At the Far Reaches of Empire: The Life of Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra*, Vancouver and Toronto, UBC Press, 2008, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Barbara S. Efrat, "Linguistic Acculturation on the West Coast of Vancouver Island", *Sound Heritage*, 7.1, 1978, p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in George Lang, *Making Wawa: The Genesis of Chinook Jargon*, Vancouver and Toronto, UBC Press, 2008, p. 23.

to become, and remain to this day, an important source for historians, ethnographers, anthropologists, and linguists<sup>53</sup>.

Both these *criollos*, the Peruvian captain and the Mexican man of science, suffered prejudice at the hands of their Peninsular masters<sup>54</sup>. Saravia's poetic self shares their *criolledad*, a condition not limited to this or that Spanish-American nation. The poem "Don Quijote en la maleta", moreover, has already rehearsed the traditional resentment of Spanish-Americans for the peninsular Spanish, a hostility exacerbated in the Canadian context where, in schools and universities in the 1970s, left-wing Latin American exiles ran into "a collection of pompous and highfalutin' teachers from Spain ... [who] kept acting like the lost children of Generalísimo Francisco Franco, ruling with the same zeal as the Caudillo himself over the frightened Spanish Departments with their moralizing tone, their idea they'd invented the language<sup>55</sup>". Nevertheless, the poet goes on to acknowledge that "they were right

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<sup>53</sup> The great Alexander Von Humboldt, rising above the anti-Spanish propaganda of the English and French that dismissed Spain as backward and obscurantist, praised the contributions of Spanish scientists in his *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*. He noted that Moziño in particular, "who carried out his laborious excursions from Guatemala to the Northwest Coast of America or Island of Vancouver and Cuadra [sic] ... [had occupied] a very distinguished place among the intellectuals [of Mexico]". Quoted in Iris H.W. Engstrand, "Of Fish and Men: Spanish Marine Science During the Late Eighteenth Century", *The Pacific Historical Review*, 69.1, 2000, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Bodega y Quadra carried on a life-long struggle for recognition by the Spanish authorities equal to his Peninsular colleagues. For example, on the 1774 voyage to the Northwest, he was placed second in command of the ship *Sonora*, despite being more qualified than the Peninsular captain (F.M. Tovell, *op. cit.*, p. 18). As for Moziño, Lozoya refers to his difficulties in getting the imperial authorities to name him to the scientific expedition (Xavier Lozoya, *op. cit.*, p. 120). However, as Lozoya shows, the "animadversión" (hostility) between *peninsulares* and *criollos* was complicated, within the scientific community, by different axis of tension between "enlightened" followers of Linnaeus and the traditionalists; the *criollos* tended to be more conservative, whereas Moziño was a thoroughly modern Linnaean, *Ibid.*, p. 118).

<sup>55</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 67-68.

in some instances... It's language that carries us on. (*No traje al Quijote en la maleta. Él me trajo en una frase*)<sup>56</sup> [I didn't bring Don Quixote in my suitcase. He brought me in a sentence]. After all, *criollos* and *peninsulares* do share a language.

Saravia's reading of the Nootka episode and its aftermath is framed by the politics of language. He does little to evoke the personal drama, the gripping tale of intrigue and *liaisons dangereuses* involving the Nootka chief Maquinna, the elegant and wily diplomat Bodega y Quadra, and the less wily, and rather ill-prepared, Captain George Vancouver, who was frankly bested in the diplomatic encounter with his Spanish counterpart and his equally cagey ally, Maquinna<sup>57</sup>. No, Saravia is not interested in the delicious details of the high-stakes game of imperial diplomacy played out by three remarkable historical personages. Rather than the flesh-and-blood English navigator who benefited and keenly appreciated the chart-making expertise of his Spanish counterparts and who happily let the name of his diplomatic rival but beloved colleague precede his own in the name of the Island of Quadra and Vancouver, the poet evokes instead the George Vancouver of the popular Anglo-colonial imaginary, the one figured in the statue of the imperial British Navy captain crowning the Parliament Buildings in Victoria, shouting the supremacy of the English language, along with French, Empress Victoria's recently acquired vassal language,

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>57</sup> See Janet R. Fireman's "The Seduction of George Vancouver: A Nootka Affair" (*op. cit.*) for an insightful reading of that personal drama. The phrase *liaisons dangereuses* belongs to Yvonne Marshall, who shows how Maquinna was using the Europeans in his struggle for prestige vis-a-vis his rivals Wickannish and Tatoosh in a bid to maintain his position as sort of "umbrella chief" (Yvonne Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 163) in the loose cultural-economic federation of the inhabitants of the west coast of Vancouver Island. Marshall's thesis is that the events of the summer of 1792 at Nootka presaged the political unification of the present-day Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council (*Ibid.*, p. 160).

its subject status dating from the Battle of the Plains of Abraham only three decades prior to the Nootka incident. In Saravia's historical reading, the Spanish language is henceforth symbolically banished by the gold-plated captain: he "conveys now that only English, perhaps French / were the sole languages / that arrived at the dawn of Canada // no longer is this island / called Cuadra y Vancouver<sup>58</sup>".

Herein lies Saravia's lament, his implicit protest, but also his subtle challenge to the Canadian reader. Who remembers the true name of *Punta de Moziño*, named after the great Mexican scientist? Or that coastal town of Tofino surely owes its name to Vicente Tofiño, Bodega's admired professor of astronomy and cartography in the Spanish Naval Academy at Cádiz<sup>59</sup>? Or that Caamano Sound was first charted by the navigator Jacinto Caamaño Moraleja? So many gelded tildes may be seen as the symptom of a sterilizing Anglophone linguistic imperialism. This collective loss of ours – yet another zone of Canada's suppressed memory – is what may be partially redeemed by rescuing from submarine silence *el verdadero nombre de Mozino Point*.

## Frustrated maternity of Castilian Spanish

But there is another aspect to this linguistic forgetfulness that may be inferred from marriage metaphor in Saravia's poem: "it was a time / when the sea / *was el mar* / and a tree was / *un árbol* // along with the native languages / Castilian was then / the new bride / on the Pacific shores<sup>60</sup>". The Spanish version of the latter stanza adds a further nuance:

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<sup>58</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> See Freeman M. Tovell, *op. cit.*, p. 8, 16, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Alejandro Saravia, *Lettres...*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

junto a las lenguas indígenas  
 el castellano era entonces  
 la más nueva, la **más fragante** novia  
 en las costas del norte del Pacífico<sup>61</sup>

If Castilian Spanish is “the newest and most fragrant bride”, the corresponding role of the bridegroom logically falls to the Native coastal languages. Did so fragrant a bride never bear her *marido* any linguistic offspring? The question leads directly to another controversy, the question of the so-called Chinook Jargon. A trading language cobbled together from both Native and European languages, the Chinook Jargon became the *lingua franca* of the Pacific Northwest.

Historians, anthropologists, and linguists have been divided over the question of whether or not a hybrid language existed on the Pacific coast before the arrival of Europeans. Barbara Harris, following up on William Samarin’s hypothesis in “Jargonization Before Chinook Jargon<sup>62</sup>” of an early “Nootka Jargon” pre-dating the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Chinook Jargon, argues a nuanced position inclusive of both sides of the debate; there was indeed a pre-contact jargon, Harris contends, but it underwent not only lexical but syntactical change during its 19<sup>th</sup>-century development into a stabilized pidgin or creole, the later development of which took place mainly through contact with French and English, after the Spanish had left the Pacific northwest. Besides linguistic evidence, Harris adduces what she calls sociological evidence:

The coastal native cultures had a very active trading system in place long before the white men ever set sail or foot on the Pacific Northwest coast, the Chinooks [who lived at the mouth of the Columbia River]

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118; my emphasis.

<sup>62</sup> William J. Samarin, “Jargonization Before Chinook Jargon”, *Northwest Anthropological Research Notes*, 22, 1988, p. 219-238.

being the most active middlemen in this commerce. In addition, one of the chief points of rendezvous was Nootka Sound... In fact, most of the coast Indians have it as a tradition that the Jargon existed before contact [with the Europeans]<sup>63</sup>.

In his recent book on the genesis of Chinook Jargon or “Wawa”, George Lang amplifies this thought. Researchers, he notes, have long been struck by an apparent paradox of the Pacific coast peoples, consisting in their extensive cultural similarities, on the one hand, and the multitude of distinct and mutually unintelligible languages, on the other; moreover, multilingualism among Natives was common, as was marriage across linguistic lines; all of which “promote[s] the notion that one or several *lingua francas* preceded Wawa<sup>64</sup>”.

Lang devotes the first chapter of his book to the Nootka Jargon. The Nootkans, with their long experience of communicating across language barriers, were not speaking their own language in an unmediated form to the Spanish and English sailors and traders. Rather, they were “‘speaking down’ to their European interlocutors, possibly resorting to devices already known to them through a regional *lingua franca* or to registers parallel to the many ‘special speech types’ natural in Nootka, including baby talk<sup>65</sup>”. The resulting “Nootka lingo” even allowed monolingual British and Spanish ship-carpenters to communicate while at Nootka<sup>66</sup>. This ephemeral Nootka jargon eventually died out, but it left traces in the Chinook Jargon<sup>67</sup>, which is alive to this day.

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara P. Harris, “Chinook Jargon: Arguments for a Pre-Contact Origin”, *Pacific Coast Philology*, 29.1, 1994, p. 32.

<sup>64</sup> George Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Most dictionaries of Chinook Jargon trace its vocabulary back to English or French words. But what about the linguistic dowry of *la novia más nueva*? Her marriage to the coastal *lingua franca* was forcibly annulled when the Spanish withdrew definitively from Nootka and the Northwest coast in 1795. But was the brief marriage never consummated? Anecdotal evidence shows that the linguistically talented Nootkan people did indeed acquire Spanish vocabulary. Lang<sup>68</sup> quotes a remark by the French navigator Camille de Roquefeuil to that effect. In 1793 Pedro de Alberni had composed a song in the interest of establishing good relations with Chief or *Tais* Maquinna whose lyrics combine words in “Nootkan” (or at least Nootka Jargon) and Spanish:

*Macuina, Macuina, Macuina,*  
*Asco Tais hua-cás;*  
*España, España, España*  
*Hua-cás Macuina Nutka*<sup>69</sup>.

Iris H. Wilson translates: “Maquinna, Maquinna, Maquinna is a great prince and friend of ours; Spain, Spain, Spain is a friend of Maquinna and Nootka<sup>70</sup>”. Delighted with the ditty, Maquinna learned it by heart and a year later, when the great Alejandro Malaspina visited Nootka, the great *Tais* sang it for the Spanish captain<sup>71</sup>. In 1793 or 94, when Ramón Saavedra was in command at Nootka, he reported that Maquinna made a great show of his affections for the Spanish commander by repeating in Spanish “*te quiero, te quiero*”<sup>72</sup>. Our polymath Moziño observes in *Noticias de Nutka* that “[s]everal of the

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>69</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Freeman M. Tovell, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>72</sup> Christon I. Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

natives... learned to speak quite a bit of our language<sup>73</sup>". He also reports that the natives, though not too keen on a lot of European foods, were very fond of *frijoles*, which they renamed *Tais-frijoles*, the dish fit for a king<sup>74</sup>; Maquinna even named one of his servants *Frijoles*; another, he called Agustín<sup>75</sup>.

Could any of this or other Spanish vocabulary have filtered via the Nootka Jargon through to the Chinook Jargon, albeit in an altered form? Is there a Spanish substrate in this versatile West Coast lingua franca? Gilbert Malcom Sproat, after learning the language of the Nootkans near Port Alberni in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, thought that the Chinook jargon was "supplemented by French, English, Hawaiian, and, perhaps (but of these I am doubtful), Spanish words<sup>76</sup>". All subsequent students of the jargon seem to have considered the matter settled. To my knowledge, no linguist has thought it worthwhile to pose the question of whether Sproat's doubt was well-founded or not. Perhaps Saravia's poetic evocation of the Spanish presence on the Pacific coast of Canada will inspire such a search amid the "gorgonian corals", not the ones that today attract scuba divers to Mozino Point, but rather those of the Chinook Jargon.

## Conclusion

Alejandro Saravia's Hispanocanadian project attempts a sort of reterritorialization of the Spanish language to be anchored, synecdochally, in Nootka. This involves displacing somewhat the triumphalist British

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<sup>73</sup> José Mariano Moziño, *op. cit.*, p. 84-85.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>76</sup> Gilbert Malcom Sproat, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, in Charles Lillard (ed.), Victoria, Sono Nis Press, 1986 [1868], p. 94.

colonial claim over the place, as memorialized in the lyrics of “The Maple Leaf Forever” which, composed on the occasion of Canada’s confederation in 1867, became traditional English-Canada’s unofficial national anthem: “Our fair Dominion now extends / From Cape Race [Newfoundland] to Nootka Sound<sup>77</sup>”. Clearly, Nootka has stood in Anglo-Canadian historical memory as a key territorial marker. However, to wrest Nootka away from this *post-facto* ideological construct, to relocate it on *la isla de Quadra y Vancouver*, is not to vindicate the defunct Spanish imperial claim to the Pacific northwest. It is rather to re-open that territory culturally by recalling the status quo agreed upon in the (final) Third Nootka Convention of 1794 between the Spanish and British crowns, according to which both empires agreed to renounce sovereignty and territorial claims over Nootka<sup>78</sup>. The English language, one might say with tongue only slightly in cheek, has not observed the Nootka Convention. Saravia’s tentative reterritorialization of Spanish in Canada begins with a plea to redeem a suppressed zone of our historical memory as a first step toward making room for Hispanocaná within a non-imperialist Canada, one in which “writing in Canadian” would not be confined to French and English. The Spanish language, adopted by mestizo peoples over the better part of the Americas, might become, if not *la novia más fragante*, then perhaps a midwife to a Canada that is still fragile, still foetal, still struggling against enormous politico-economic forces to be properly born.

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<sup>77</sup> Helmut Kallman, “The Maple Leaf Forever”, *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*; [website] <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002201>, Retrieved August 19 2010.

<sup>78</sup> Warren Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 547.

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