

Review Essay

Multiculturalism and Integration: Canadian and Irish Experiences

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Vera Regan, Isabelle Lemée, and Maeve Conrick (eds), *Multiculturalism and Integration: Canadian and Irish Experiences*, University of Ottawa Press, 2010.

According to the editors, *Multiculturalism and Integration* presents issues of diversity, integration, and identity that are characteristic of any multicultural society, but are particularly evident in Ireland and Canada. The essays presented in this book were developed from proceedings of the 2008 Association for Canadian Studies in Ireland conference. As stated in the introduction, “Multicultural and multilingual diversity are relatively recent phenomena in contemporary Ireland, whereas Canada’s policies and practices addressing cultural and linguistic diversity are several decades old and have been the object of internal and external scrutiny for some time” (1). Read as a whole, these essays, gleaned from fields such as politics, history, linguistics, and education, explore the ways in which Canada and Ireland are both similar and different in their responses to multicultural issues. Although a better understanding of how Canada and Ireland are similar merits the comparison, the reader is still left wondering “Why Canadian and Irish experiences in the same book?” The book is divided into four parts; each part as a whole will be reviewed with more attention given to chapters that the reviewer found particularly insightful.

Part I: Multiculturalism, Integration and Linguistic Diversity: Canadian and Irish Models of Experience

The four chapters comprising Part I focus on linguistic diversity and some of the models used to promote linguistic diversity in Canada and Ireland. In Chapter I, “Immigration, langue et diversité ethnoculturelle en Ontario,” authors Linda Cardinal, Nathalie Plante and Anik Sauvé explore the role Ontario plays in immigrant experiences with a specific focus on the Francophone-Canadian experience. The authors provide new insights into the experience of

Francophone immigrants in Canada in contrast to the historical focus on Quebec. The authors raise questions concerning the merits or downfalls of integrationist or multiculturalist approaches to immigration and the social and political effects said approaches have on immigrants. The remaining three chapters in Part I focus on the status of French and Irish in Canada and Ireland and on the teaching of these languages. Chapter II, by Conrick and Regan, provides a good historical overview of the status of and attitudes towards the French language in Quebec but also in the rest of Canada. In Chapter III, Caitríona Ní Chasaide and Regan discuss immersion education in Ireland and Canada; in both countries, English is the dominant language and the goal of Canadian and Irish governments is to “foster additive bilingualisms, where the acquisition of French or Irish will be in addition to and not in lieu of, the ability to speak English” (67). The status and treatment of minority languages in both countries are also discussed by Lemée in Chapter IV. Lemée explores the role target-language (French) learning in the forms of immersion learning and study abroad has on students. Lemée, and Chasaide and Regan all ask how the approach to language learning impacts the ultimate mastery and use of target languages. Though written with educators in mind, these three authors analyze the effects of the various approaches to target-language learning outside the classroom, for example in terms of social and economic situations and opportunities.

Part II: Multiculturalism and Identity: Cultural Representations

The four chapters in Part II discuss cultural representation and raise questions regarding the construction and articulation of cultural identities through a variety of media, i.e. writing or visual performance. Several overarching questions raised by the authors include: How “readable” or relatable are these cultural representations? and, Which Canadians and which Irish are being represented? These issues are particularly evident in Jane Koustas’s study of Robert Lepage’s *Lipsynch*, which literally acts out the interactions of voice, speech, and language. Lepage’s work stresses the importance of recognizing different languages and their contributions to both individual and collective identities. Koustas uses Lepage’s work to demonstrate how the loss of speech can be indicative of a loss of identity. Lepage’s work can be seen as an acting out of the effects of educational, political measures, for example those discussed in Part I that either promote or restrict minority language use. Other essays explore the contributions of authors such as Francine Noël, Gabrielle Roy, Yolande Geadah, and Boucar Diouf.

Part III: Multiculturalism, Integration and Identity: The Irish-Canadian Experience

Pádraig Ó Gormaille's essay, "Moving to Canada: A Contemporary Irish-Canadian Perspective," raises questions such as: what happens to native culture and religion after moving? How do immigrants sound after they move? And, How is their identity redefined? Ó Gormaille uses the works of contemporary Irish-Canadian author Pádraig Ó Siadhail to answer these questions. Ó Gormaille reaches the conclusion that many Irish-Canadian immigrants feel torn between their two cultures and that they often feel trapped between two countries and two cultures. Katrin Urschel traces the evolution of Irish-Canadian literature and the portrayal of identity in said literature in her essay entitled, "From Assimilation to Diversity: Ethnic Identity in Irish-Canadian Literature." Urschel's essay presents a good overview of the past 150 years of Irish-Canadian literature. As the title of her essay implies, assimilation and diversity have been the two main models of expressing one's identity. Urschel's essay also explores how Irish-Canadian immigrants helped shape not only their own immigrant identity, but also contributed to shaping Canadian identity and how other immigrant groups were viewed in Canada. Finally, Michael Peterman discusses the writings of James McCarroll in Pre-Confederation Canada (prior to 1867).

Part IV: Multiculturalism, Integration and Diversity and Limitations

Unfortunately, the content of the chapters belies the editors' principle goal of providing insights into multiculturalism and integration in Canadian and Irish experiences. With two exceptions, Chapter XIII in which Al Valleau discusses Chinese-Canadian experiences and Chapter VIII in which Olaya González Dopazo explores Inuit culture in the works of Gabrielle Roy, all of the chapters focus on Francophone Canadians or Irish experiences in Ireland or Canada. Read as a whole, the book essentially reduces multiculturalism to three linguistic groups: Francophone, Anglophone and Gaelic at the expense of other immigrant groups in Canada. However, individual chapters explore the nuances and divergent experiences across and within immigrant groups. For instance Chapter I by Cardinal, Plante and Sauvé highlights the diverse geographic and cultural origins of Francophone immigrants in Canada and the authors provide key insights into differences among immigrant and native Francophone-Canadians. Again, read as a whole, the book contributes to our understanding of what it means to be Canadian or Irish, but content-wise, the

boundaries of these definitions could have been pushed further. Ironically, these narrow definitions of Canadian and Irish identity result in the textual marginalization of the two essays that comprise Part IV.

Part IV is shorter than the other sections and the two essays in this Part could have been incorporated into other sections. For example, Diana Yankova's "Reconciling Conceptual and Terminological Issues in Legal Texts: The Canadian Model" could have been put in "Part I: Multiculturalism, Integration and Linguistic Diversity: Canadian and Irish Models of Experience." Yankova discusses the difficulties that arise from the co-existence of Canada's two legal models, French civil law and English common law systems. In terms of content, the issues of translating legal documents are related to the other administrative and policy issues discussed in Part I. Similarly, Al Valteau's "Moving to Canada: Chinese-Canadian Perspectives" could have been placed in "Part II: Multiculturalism and Identity: Cultural Representations." Although Chapter IX in Part III discusses the experiences of moving to Canada from Ireland, Part III is specifically about Irish-Canadian experiences, whereas Part II of the book is not limited to one particular ethnic or linguistic group. On reading these essays, Valteau's seemed completely out of place and the connections between Chinese and Francophone and Irish immigration experiences were unclear. By being placed at the end, almost as an afterthought, Valteau's essay emerged as the linguistic reduction of Canadian and Irish identity to include French, Gaelic and English, not Chinese. Regan, Lemée and Conrick write, "Valteau finds much common ground with the other contributors to the volume; like Ó Gormaille he refers to a hybridized identity, which is no longer that of the ancestral culture" (9); the ideological connections between Valteau's essay and others are harder to make because of the textual distance placed between them.

Another potential limitation is linguistic; essays are written either in French or in English. While it is not necessary to read every essay in the collection, in order to do so, readers have to be bilingual. Again, the essays can stand alone, but they are in dialogue with each other. For the monolingual reader, this inter-essay dialogue is lost and the reader is left with a less-than-complete understanding of the issues the authors present. Despite a few potential conceptual and stylistic limitations, this book is highly informative and thought-provoking. This book is most appropriate for students and would be useful in any Francophone studies program, any Irish or Canadian Studies program, or other International and Cultural Studies Programs.