

Creating Nations

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Mann, Jatinder. *The Search for a New National Identity: The Rise of Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia, 1890s-1970s*. Interdisciplinary Studies in Diasporas 2. New York: Peter Lang, 2016. 339 pages. ISBN 9781433133695. Hb. \$88.24.

The Search for a New National Identity: The Rise of Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia, 1890s-1970s is a serious study: densely set and hardback bound on 339 pages, out of which 236 are the text proper, with two appendices on historical immigration statistics, 40 pages of chapter-by-chapter notes, over 40 of bibliography assorted to categories, and just under 10 of a meticulous index. Such scholarly apparatus undeniably attests to the book originally having been written as a Ph.D. thesis.

The first part, “Canada,” is divided into three chapters, each of which deals with a period in the history of “official migrant policy” (Mann’s own term): assimilation, integration, and the introduction of multiculturalism in Canada. Numerous subchapters with intricate titles—which seem to function as if they were a compilation of keywords for easier searchability—vary and elaborate on these themes, that is, periods. The second part, “Australia,” repeats this pattern. After such parallel treatment of the two countries, the third, “Canada and Australia: Comparisons,” introduces a comparative approach, and assesses the respective policies, as well as the underlying ideologies, in three chapters again. The Introduction and Conclusion are both highly informative and read smoothly. Even the Acknowledgements section offers more than the usual list of gratitudes. Hidden in its lines is a reference to Mann’s exclusive access to restricted, rare sources: unpublished papers of Jerzy Zubryzcki, Arthur Calwell, and Pierre Elliott Trudeau—widely considered as the most important managers of Australia’s and Canada’s policies on diversity.

Mann’s approach is undoubtedly original: he derives Canada’s and Australia’s new multicultural national identity from the demise of British race nationalism, hence the book’s title, *The Search for a New National Identity*. Most literature on multiculturalism would connect this development primarily to the postwar diversification of immigration rather than to how Britain, off the Canadian and Australian shores, decided to position herself in global and European politics, for example, by joining the EEC. This approach also justifies why the historical scope of investigation finishes in the 1970s, even though multiculturalism as a policy did not exist before the 70s. I agree that

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one of the most powerful rationales for the introduction of multiculturalism was to create a sense of national belonging for these increasingly heterogeneous, deeply diverse societies. Governmental leadership in nation-formation seems inevitable even in early political rhetoric that emphasizes a community of “all Canadians” and “every Australian.” By the 1980s, a local Canadian and Australian version of multiculturalism would have become the new nationalism to replace British race nationalism, once Britain abandoned her major colonies and turned towards Europe.

The Introduction provides a thorough foundation for such an approach. Frequent in dissertations, unusual in monographs, Mann’s, or his editors’, choice to provide an annotated catalogue of who is who in this field of research will quickly introduce junior researchers to all the relevant names and concepts in a comprehensive list of required readings. Benedict Anderson’s conceptualization of the nation in terms of an imagined community forms the premise to Mann’s reading of political history as the story of nation formation and identity creation. Mann posits his own work in the matrix of studies by Duncan Bell, James Belich, Phillip Bruckner, Carl Bridge, Douglas Cole, Neville Meaney, Stuart Ward, and James Curran. More specifically, he relates to and provides critical comments on Jose Igartua, C. P. Champion, Louis-Jacques Dorais, Lois Foster, David Stockley, Freda Hawkins, Paul Bartrop, Mark Lopez, Anna Haebich, and Eric Rickards, who have examined aspects of Britishness, or multiculturalism, or the indigenous experience of race relations in either a Canadian, or an Australian context. Mann’s book, however, is unique in exploring the historical and political roots of diversity management in the two countries simultaneously, relying on a wide variety of sources, which are tackled with a rigor of methodology, and filtered through a contemporary insight into identity politics that the authors listed may not have had access to.

It is inherently difficult to compare any two countries, let alone Canada and Australia, that may share historical trends, but differ in all particulars: geopolitical location being one of the obvious variables, ethnoracial composition another. Mann’s way of handling this difficulty is more bureaucratically analytical than seamlessly coherent. Close reading and interpreting documents and events in the three plus three chapters exclusively devoted to Canada or Australia would not qualify his study as comparative—two thirds of the book are analytical, only providing comparison by implied assumptions through parallel reading. Had he not added a third, comparative set of chapters to bring the parallel stories of the two countries together, a synthetic treatise of parallel developments in the respective countries would not have been achieved. It is an asset of this book that it meets multiple

readerly expectations: those who want to learn about either of the countries may opt for consulting the relevant chapters, whereas those interested in general commonwealth developments may read the synthesis, which highlights national identity politics in the context of local multiculturalisms.

In one terminological aspect, though, I would require clarification. Multicultural policies (or multiculturalism policy) should have been more markedly distinguished from immigration policies. I assume that a lack of clarity in this respect follows from the fact that the book focuses not on multiculturalism itself but rather on the road leading to it; the way official policies were formed and evolved, as suggested by the “search for” and “rise of” in the title. This the author terms an “official migrant policy.” I would prefer to call it “population management policy,” which (as a term) fits better into the thread of historic practices of extermination, segregation, assimilation, integration policies to treat diversity in ethnoracially heterogeneous countries.

Timely and relevant, Mann’s book will provide a reliable source for higher education coursework on postcolonial identity politics. It targets researchers—including students—rather than the casual reader, although the latter may also benefit from its perspicuity regarding the phenomenon of national identity. It is indispensable for course development on comparative postcolonial politics, and will support studies of contemporary cultural phenomena too, by providing a parallel historical survey.

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