

BOOK REVIEW/ COMPTE RENDU

Foster, Cecil, *Genuine Multiculturalism: The Tragedy and Comedy of Diversity*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014. 497 pp., \$34.95 paper (9780773542563)

Canada's multiculturalism is often presented, following Kymlicka, as an exportable model for managing diversity. Cecil Foster opposes Kymlicka, often explicitly, and in most conceivable manners. He recasts multiculturalism as specifically and exclusively suited to Canada, since it depends on its history and on the people who already form the country. He approaches it from the standpoint of a black Canadian born in Barbados and who, like other immigrants to Canada and members of visible minorities, wants both full participation in the state and its transformation. He (implicitly) rejects models of group-differentiated citizenship by (explicitly) claiming access for all to complete citizenship in the state and external recognition from current full citizens. He rejects accommodation, as a prison and a form of bondage, and exalts love (without expanding on its specific meaning), as allowing for true equality and freedom. He collapses the distinctions between members of visible minorities and immigrants. He pushes liberal democracy to its limits in order to suggest the need for a radical democracy. And he unveils "genuine multiculturalism" as a utopia already contained and announced in Canada's Citizenship Act and Multiculturalism Policy.

In doing so, Foster follows the spirit of Hegel, calling his study phenomenological and referencing Hegel throughout, with only few mentions of the authors belonging to phenomenological sociology or philosophy. And like the version of multiculturalism for which he argues, Foster presents us with a Canadian Hegel, the Hegel of Howard Adelman and John Burbridge. This Hegel speaks of bondage rather than servitude and of resurrection rather than struggle to the death. For him, all social actors are already in play and will remain on the scene rather than being replaced or annihilated. However, this book is not properly speaking philosophical; instead, it uses the registers of philosophy, sociology, literary criticism, postcolonial studies, and political science to offer a fuller portrait of the relationships and the country

that are promised by multiculturalism than a narrow study in any of these disciplines could ever produce.

Foster is thus able to suggest that recognition is only one step toward a necessary reconciliation with Canadians whose place in the country originated with immigration from non-European (and previously undesirable) countries. But reconciliation must begin within Canadians, who must compromise and transform themselves inwardly in order to be able to experience the joy that will come out of rebirth into a new, free, and equal state. Only then, once they have recognized themselves as the evil characters in the play, as the lords who keep those they misrecognize as newcomers even after generations, can they *truly* recognize others through love, instead of accommodating them (394). Accommodation, indeed, strips immigrants and members of visible minorities of who they are as persons and replaces it with an arbitrary form based on their biology (58), with the goal of maintaining inequality and limiting citizenship (55-7), imprisoning them in the process of creating fear so as to help them conform to this image that is imposed upon them (81-2).

Genuine Multiculturalism is above all a book about Pierre Elliot Trudeau, who is the most often mentioned person in the book, second only to Hegel: it presents and expands on the meaning of Trudeau's vision, his ideas, and the policies through which he attempted to begin to move Canada toward transforming itself and seeing itself differently. Indeed, beginning with Trudeau, multiculturalism has already been transforming who *the people* are, awoken the state and placed in on a new path, where justice is on the side of those who, until then, had not been included (105-6).

Seeing Canada for what it is and what it has always been, that is, an act of creation, a conscience seeking itself (185-6), will allow it to die as the colonial state that has dispossessed Indigenous peoples and rejected non-European immigrants and continues to do so with the false multiculturalism that is currently enacted in a racist manner. The Canadian state will then be able to be reborn under the guise of genuine multiculturalism, what it already purports to be: without nationalism, without patriarchy, without Eurocentrism, without Christian-centrism; finding universality through individuality and specificity; moving past the current tragedy and the suffering and helplessness it creates, toward comedy, where each receives what they know they deserve. In this manner, genuine multiculturalism is a state where freedom comes from "a radical democracy of liberal equality" (101); where a majority is possible that might leave out Anglophones *and* Francophones (156),

without the need to align with one or the other; where the privileged see that they need multicultural socialization *and* desire it for themselves (255); where multiculturalism is seen as worthwhile because of its parts and functioning and as producing good effects (309).

Genuine Multiculturalism shows how the implications of multiculturalism have been hidden, notably in Taylor's writing, by a focus on Quebec – "But times have changed, and open immigration since the 1960s – ironically, an attempt to preserve the country – changed the dynamics" (322). This same displacement of focus toward nationalisms seems to be reappearing today, with a focus on Indigenous peoples which overshadows the reality of immigrants (114, 118-9), perhaps (I would suggest) because it is they who are now threatening the Canadian constitutional order. While some Quebecers appear in this book as fiercely accommodating (but only "reasonably"), Indigenous peoples are presented as potentially benefitting from the same self-transformation multiculturalism demands of Euro-Canadians. After all, they too are made to be external to the state and denied full citizenship. While Foster points out that the theory of multiculturalism – of Kymlicka and Rawls – does not live up to the promise of multiculturalism (349-354), the book as a whole shows clearly what this promise is, against the threat it only appears to present to those who, for now, hold privilege.

The greatest strength of this book, which makes a close and patient reading worth the effort, is that it succeeds in accounting for and bringing together the views of those who continue, in spite of it all, to appear as "Canadians" and "immigrants." Multiculturalism is unveiled as taking place between people who have very different aims for Canada. The political vision, utopian in the best sense of the term, could be more precise as to practice, but Foster admits to this difficulty, and his picture remains clear theoretically. Since practice is tragedy and philosophy is comedy, it is the latter that will accomplish the necessary transformative work. Readers are thus left with this vision: (Canadian) individuals are sovereign and want to retain their independence – but this desire is transformed into a desire for tyranny over the others, who are turning his creation into something else. The state must consequently renew itself constantly, to ward off its own past: this Judeo-Christian pattern of death and resurrection (338, 417, 423-4), as an Arendtian political second birth, opens the way for its own end as Judeo-Christian. Once Euro-Canadians no longer see the state as something to be owned and protected and learn to let go of it,

they will find the freedom to transform themselves as well, as citizens reconciled with the future citizens of their common country.

Foster can then account for the perspective of immigrants and members of visible minorities, and argue for their full inclusion and embrace (287-8): they bring new life to Canada and they are able to end the duplication, separation, and segregation of the unhappy consciousness, split into two and forcing both halves to live in fear (108), by contributing to the state as full citizens, thus creating the unity, stability, and fraternity of a happy consciousness.

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