

Compte rendu

Ouvrage recensé :

The Canadianization Movement. Emergence, Survival, and Success. By Jeffrey Cormier. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. 234 p., ill. Fig., bibl., ann. ISBN 0-8020-8815-5 65 \$)

par Jean-Philippe Warren

Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine / Scientia

Canadensis : revue canadienne d'histoire des sciences, des techniques et de la médecine, vol. 30, n° 2, 2007, p. 136-139.

Pour citer ce compte rendu, utiliser l'adresse suivante :

URI: <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/800554ar>

DOI: 10.7202/800554ar

Note : les règles d'écriture des références bibliographiques peuvent varier selon les différents domaines du savoir.

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter à l'URI <https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche. Érudit offre des services d'édition numérique de documents scientifiques depuis 1998.

Pour communiquer avec les responsables d'Érudit : info@erudit.org

***The Canadianization Movement. Emergence, Survival, and Success.* By Jeffrey Cormier.** (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. 234 p., ill. Fig., bibl., ann. ISBN 0-8020-8815-5 65 \$)

Jeffrey Cormier's book will be most certainly welcomed by anyone who has the history of Canadian sociology at heart. For the Canadianization movement certainly constituted along with feminism the most important ideological endeavour to change the discipline from within in the 1970's (it is worth mentioning that francophone Quebec was almost completely immune to such a struggle, for self-evident reasons). In providing the first thorough attempt to mark the multifaceted causes, the various struggles, and the long-sought achievements of such a high-profile and controversial movement, J. Cormier enlightens the connection of the social sciences with the social climate and the intellectual spirit of the times.

Starting at the end of the 1960's, when the fear of the academic takeover of English Canadian universities by American scholars began to pervade both the media and the professorial body, the Canadianization movement faded away some time before the adoption, by the Liberal government in 1982, of a Canadian-first policy aimed at fostering the hiring of Canadian citizens over foreigners, and most specifically candidates coming south of the border, in institutions of higher learning.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Canada was moving toward complete autonomy from the British Empire, severing the last remnants of colonial ties. But many Canadian intellectuals were appalled to witness what appeared to them as the replacement of one Empire's yoke for another. In their opinion, the rising domination of the American empire was threatening the country's survival. Certainly, the labour market of a future 'branch plant' nation was at stake, but also the very identity of the people, who would be slowly brainwashed by the invasion of products, ideas, values, norms, and beliefs manufactured by a Hollywood-like culture industry. Some critics, among which was the great prophet of the North George Grant, went so far as to proclaim the country's agony and death.

Surfing on this wave of national anxiety, a handful of scholars began trumpeting the need to screen the hiring of foreign scholars who were hastily appointed in academic departments to respond to the stellar growth of student enrolment. Through their relentless speeches and letters, Robin Mathews and James Steele, two Carleton professors, were instrumental, according to Cormier, in progressively shaping a more favourable opinion toward their cherished cause. They spoke in alarming terms of 'the extinction of the Canadian university' and evoked the menace of the country's progressive obliteration. They immediately encountered strong resistance from people who believed in the universality of academic knowledge, resisted the chauvinistic temptation to discriminate on the

basis of race or nationality, and advocated that the system would correct itself when universities would find themselves in a position to train suitable candidates to fill the advertised positions. Accusing the Canadianization movement leaders of putting forth 'Nazi tactics and procedures', they debunked their parochial approach.

Confronted with such harsh criticisms, Mathews and Steele used every means at their disposal and stroked every chord of the collective consciousness to convince their opponents. According to them, time was of the essence when it came to developing an educational system adapted to the needs and the values of the Canadian nation. If, they asked, state intervention and legislation were considered indispensable to prevent the complete take-over of Canadian industries by American interests, why would the same kind of state action not be adopted to defend strategic cultural institutions? In their seminal edited book *The Struggle for Canadian Universities* (1969), they emphasised a global action to halt and eventually reverse the rising tide of American influence.

Cormier underscores two levels of frustrations; a congested job market and, to a lesser extent, courses and scientific research predominantly focused on American society. He spends many pages investigating the struggle to make room for (English) Canadian students seeking employment in (English) Canadian universities. But there is a third level of contention, which is the epistemological perspective adopted by those practising within the academic walls. Forgetting to mention the work of Harry H. Hiller on the subject (and several others, such as John R. Hofley, Robert J. Brym, etc.), J. Cormier does not consider it necessary to refer to other possible forms of colonialism besides academic migration from the USA. His appreciation of the apparent 'success' (p. 193) of the Canadianization movement must therefore be qualified. If, indeed, less than a third of full time Canadian sociologists had received their highest degree in an American university in 2005, as compared to around two thirds in 1970,¹ Canadian sociologists continue to collaborate predominantly with American scholars and to publish the majority of their international work in American publications. The influence of American science remains strong. In 2004, 69% of the journals cited by Canadian sociologists were American.²

Cormier fails to distinguish between the nationalisation and the indigenisation of a discipline. The former involves the development of national institutions (universities, research centers, prizes, journals, etc.). The latter defines the production of a specific and genuine knowledge. The

1. Yves Gingras and Jean-Philippe Warren, « A British Connection? A Quantitative Analysis of the Changing Relations Between American, British and Canadian Sociologists », *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 31, 4 (2006): 509-522.

2. Ibid.

history of the social sciences in the second half of the 20th century may correspond to the nationalization of the scientific field but such a trend did not generally lead to indigenous theories and epistemologies. On the contrary, Canadian science (although social sciences less so than natural and empirical sciences) has never been more 'universalized' in its concepts and methods.

Perhaps the limitation of J. Cormier's investigation comes from the fact that his book might not appear very sociological to some readers. The narrative is chronological and the main protagonists play a romanticised and heroic role in a three chapter story: the first chapter concentrates on the adventure of individual trailblazers (Mathews and Steele); the second chapter analyses the leading role of an association (CSAA), and the final chapter concludes with the endorsement by the federal State of the Canadianization movement's objectives. This three-step approach (individuals, association, State) gives an air of idealism to the historical description.

Perhaps an example of this bias is the attempt to show Mathews's far-flung influence in a speech he gave before a 'large audience' at North Bay and which was 'well-publicised' in the North Bay Nugget (p. 46). Such an anecdote seems better suited to convince the reader of the excessively minor impact the two Carleton professors had as individuals than of the mystical grandeur of their militancy. But in J. Cormier's mind, it confirms the possibility for people to make history and act upon flexible social structures. "Certainly a unique constellation of social, political, and economic conditions needed to be present before the Canadianization action frame could resonate with the public, the media, and politicians. But it was the diligent and at times aggressive work of constructing, amplifying, extending, bridging, and transforming the Canadianization action frame that made the difference" (p. 55). The reader is therefore not surprised to learn that for Cormier, "Mathews's ability to appeal directly to the emotions of the audience was the movement's strongest asset" (p.78). Having personalized the whole movement, Cormier can find its strengths and weaknesses in individual skills and flaws (delivering vivid public lectures, building networks, articulating a convincing rhetoric, busy schedules, lack of organisational talents, etc.).

While acknowledging the relevancy of Cormier's approach, we think that it cannot yield completely convincing sociological results. Because we accept Marx's old saying that 'men make history, but not of their will', we believe that research should also focus on the logic of the educational system and not exclusively on the actors' discourses and self-proclaimed achievements. Beyond the rhetoric of Mathews and Steele's and beyond their tireless activism, there is a process that was utterly determinant in Canadianizing the teaching staff, and it is precisely this process that J. Cormier does not talk about. Namely: the growth of Canadian graduate

studies. Obviously, departments that did not offer graduate programs could not hire their alumni. With the progression of sociological doctorate studies, Canadian trained professors eventually formed a majority, outgrowing their British and American trained colleagues. Such a tendency was written in the stars. In Quebec, where the American influence was never very strong, the same movement was at work, and the proportion of professors who received their diploma in Europe followed a steadily declining curb in the last forty years.

Take another example, the progressive transformation of dual anthropology and sociology departments into separate entities. Cormier explains this trend toward greater autonomy on the basis of a better acknowledgment of the disciplines' distinct interests and concerns. That may have been a necessary factor, but certainly not a sufficient one. A look at the teaching staff at the time of the separation shows that the split always happened after anthropologists composed a substantial community of professors. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Concordia University corroborates this trend by offering a counter example, for anthropology always constituted a very marginal sector at Concordia, and the professors have only recently begun to tackle the possibility of organizing themselves separately, now that they form a 'viable' group. Such tendencies serve as a reminder that the success of a movement may spring not only from a conscious decision of the actors but from the anonymous development of social structures.

These criticisms aside, Cormier's book offers a rich account of a not so well-known movement. It draws the portrait of an epoch of strong nationalism. It defines some of the challenges facing Canadian universities in the 1970's. Reared by a lively narrative, the reader will find a lot of facts and events to reflect upon.

JEAN-PHILIPPE WARREN
Concordia University