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## **Shifting Perspectives: A Response to Donald Goellnicht\***

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In his discussion of “Asian Canadian perspectives,” Donald Goellnicht has carefully mapped out some of the conditions in Canada in the 1970s and beyond that have helped to make Canadian culture distinct. These conditions include the adaptation in Canada of “multiculturalism in a bilingual frame”—a mode of governance in which we might say (paraphrasing George Orwell) that all cultures are considered equal, but some are considered more equal than others. More specifically, Goellnicht has drawn attention to the importance of how multiculturalism was adopted as a federal government policy in 1971 and eventually enacted as law in 1988. He contends that “[o]fficial Canadian multiculturalism has been very effective in producing [what Smaro Kamboureli has called] a ‘sedative politics’ . . . that successfully manages difference across the broad field of culture in Canada” (84)—even as cracks in such modes of management have become increasingly visible. As we think through the role of such “sedative politics,” we would do well to ask: what would it mean for us to become awake?

This question is never far from the surface in Goellnicht’s paper, in which he expresses his fears that “endless navel-gazing and self-questioning” (85) can simply lead to paralysis. I understand his concern here, especially given the

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