

Promoting Canadian Studies Abroad. Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy,

Brooks, Stephen (Ed.), New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 250 p.

This book, edited by Stephen Brooks, retraces the history of the Canadian studies programs at the international level and the current state of these programs around the world since the ‘abrupt termination’ of the federal financing in 2012. From the 1980s until 2012, Canadian studies was defined by the federal State as an important tool of cultural diplomacy in order to spread a greater and better knowledge of the *Unknown Country* as defined by journalist Bruce Hutchison in 1942 (p. 6). For many observers, these programs, although designed at the beginning for Canadians themselves who were often ignorant of the history of their own institutions, were very useful for a ‘soft’ power like Canada, particularly in the context of having to negotiate its international presence in the constant shadow of a powerful international neighbor like the US.

The ‘abrupt termination’ in 2012 of the Canadian government's financial support for these programs left many, in Canada and around the world, very perplexed as for the reasons why such a drastic measure was taken, particularly when many cost-efficiency studies have shown that the programs were working despite the fact they were not expensive. Many, and certainly the contributors to this volume, are still wondering why the decision has not been reversed. The contributing authors mainly reflect on the different processes that led to the institutionalization of Canadian studies in different countries. These authors, and Stephen Brooks in particular, have some interesting thoughts on the dynamics of Canadian studies both as an intellectual paradigm and ‘a deliberate instrument of cultural diplomacy’. They seem to believe that the occasional clash between these two different dynamics might have contributed to the 2012 demise.

There are 10 chapters in the book: a first introductory chapter by Stephen Brooks on the history of the Canadian Studies programs until today (p. 1-37), a second chapter on Canadian Studies in the US also written by Brooks himself (p. 37-72); a third chapter on Canadian Studies in the UK written by Alan Hallsworth and Susan Hodgett (p. 73-96) and a fourth chapter on France written by Jean-Michel Lacroix (p. 97-128). The other chapters on Canadian Studies programs in China (p.129-146), Japan (p. 147-164), Russia, including the Soviet Union period (p. 165-198), German speaking countries (p. 199-224) and finally Nordic countries of Europe (mainly Denmark and Finland, p. 225-238) were respectively written by: Jeremy Paltiel, Masako Iino, Yuriy G. Akimov and Kristina Minkova, Wolfgang Klooss, Robert C.Thomsen and Janne Korkka. The last chapter/conclusion is also written by Stephen Brooks (p. 239-249).

Stephen Brooks reminds us in the first chapter that Canada was certainly not the only country using cultural diplomacy. *L'Alliance française*, for example, was created in 1883, the British Council in 1934, the German Goethe Institute in 1951 (p. 3). In the US, the Fulbright Program, named after senator J. William Fulbright, was created by an act of Congress in 1946 (p. 4). The Japan Foundation was created in 1972, while the Korean Foundation was established in 1992 (p. 5). In Canada, the Massey Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1949-1951) and the 1975 Symons report *To Know Ourselves*, (named after Trent University president Tom Symons who chaired the Canadian Studies Commission from 1972 to 1975) paved the way to the federal founding of Canadian studies programs in the 1970s. The establishment of networks such as the Association for Canadian Studies in the 1970s and the International Council for Canadian Studies in 1981 certainly reflected some of the recommendations of the Symons report (p. 11). Brooks observes, however, that despite the involvement of the Department of External Affairs (eventually renamed as Foreign Affairs and

International Trade, or DEFAIT), the level of financing in Canada for cultural diplomacy was always behind the level of financing in other countries (p. 13). He adds that in the 1990s, for example, at the peak perhaps of the financial support by the Federal state for Canadian studies and cultural exports in general, ‘ (it) was estimated that the Canadian Government spent \$4.90 per person (for cultural exports), compared to \$26.58 in the case of France, \$18.00 in the case of West Germany and \$16 in the case of the UK’ (p. 15).

Despite this limited financial support, from the 1980s to the early years of the 2000s, ICCS, as illustrated in the chapters on national associations and networks of national associations, went from a handful of member countries to 25-member countries and 5 multinational associations (p. 21). By 2005, however, it seemed that the Paul Martin government was already considering some serious restructuring following a review process that was ‘fulsome in its praise for cultural diplomacy initiatives’ but ‘somewhat reserved in the specific case of the Canadian Studies Abroad Program and the Scholarship Program’ (p. 19). The clouds of 2005 became a devastating storm in 2006 (p. 23). The conservatives took power, forming minority governments in 2006 and 2008 and finally gaining a majority in 2011. In 2012 they basically cut all funding for ICCS.

At first glance, it seems that Stephen Harper did not believe in cultural diplomacy. In fact, more fundamentally perhaps, he did not believe in the importance of the Social Sciences and the Humanities and did not trust the community of scholars involved in the Canadian studies network, nor did he trust the artistic community. Between 2008 and 2015, it is worth noticing that the Harper government also eliminated the Prom Art Program, which allowed Canadian artists to promote their work abroad, as well as the National Program for Education in Film and Video, the Canadian Independent Film and Video Fund, and the Trust for the Preservation of Music, among others.

Stephen Brooks is totally right when he explains that these cuts ‘were never about saving money’ (p. 23). For him, ‘a much more likely explanation is that the decision was driven principally by ideology and mistrust of the academic community, in Canada and abroad, and of their patrons in the federal bureaucracy. The same mistrust and unacknowledged ideological reasons that resulted in the elimination of Statistics Canada’s long-form census also doomed the Understanding Canada Program’ (p. 23). The conservatives had declared war on any ‘celebration of a sort of multicultural and post-colonial understanding of Canada and its history’, and war on any ‘aid and comfort to the enemy. The enemy were those who shared a particular world view that tended to be unsympathetic and even hostile to conservative ideology...’ (p. 24). Let’s recall here that the conservatives in 2012, the very same year that they terminated the Understanding Canada Program, decided to celebrate grandiosely the 200th anniversary of the war of 1812 instead of celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ‘liberal’ constitution of 1982.

Well written and documented with precision, each contribution provides a clear understanding of the history of the programs in the countries, or the group of countries under investigation. Stephen Brooks’ chapters provide the reader with lucid analyses of the topic. This book will undoubtedly contribute to a better assessment of what was done by ICCS since the 1980s and, hopefully, incite a reconsideration of the decision to terminate what was an ingenious way of spreading critical knowledge about Canada. As noted by the authors of the book, strong Canadian studies programs, for example in the US, France, the UK, Germany, India, China, and Austria, among several others, have maintained their activity, despite the end of the cultural diplomacy efforts. The few millions of dollars cut here and there were in fact very modest sums of money and a very small portion of DEFAIT’s budget. Even though many countries have continued with their activities, the financial support for the dissemination of Canadian artistic and intellectual work

around the world is however still needed. Such dissemination appears to be even more important today, in a time of right-wing populism in the US, Canada and Europe. It is so far disappointing that the Liberal government, in theory more sympathetic to a cosmopolitan vision of the cultural product, has not, yet, reconsidered or reversed the Conservative government's decision regarding Canadian studies programs abroad.

Overall, this volume of essays provides a timely contribution to the field and deserves a lot of praise for its scholarship. I would like to conclude with four brief observations. Although the selection of countries represented in the book is perfectly explained by Stephen Brooks, I think it would have been appropriate, nevertheless, to include more chapters and a wider sample of countries. Separate chapters on Canadian studies associations from Mexico, India, Belgium, Brazil, Australia should have been included considering the importance of Canadian studies in these countries and the significance of the diplomatic links that Canada has with these countries. I also find it surprising that the case of Canadian Studies in Austria has been integrated into a chapter on German speaking countries despite its unique contributions to the field. Keeping in mind the potential of this book to launch an important debate on the reconsideration of the 2012 decision, a greater individual representation of these countries would have been important, even if it would have meant reducing the number of pages per contribution.

My second observation relates to the book's representation of the involvement of women in Canadian Studies. Since the very beginning of the establishment of Canadian Studies as a discipline in the 1980s, the contribution of women to the field has been paramount. Karen Gould (US), Ursula Moser (Austria), Zilá Bernd (Brazil), Maria Teresa Gutierrez-Haces (Mexico), Christl Verduyn (Canada), Maeve Conrick (Ireland), Caroline Andrew (Canada), Coral Ann

Howells (UK), Miléna Santoro (US), to name only a few, have played outstanding roles in the shaping of the field. Yet, out of the 24 winners of the Governor General's International Award for Canadian Studies since 1995, only 6 have been women, and only one in the last ten years. The tendency to inadequately represent the extent of the rich contribution of women to Canadian studies is unfortunately reflected in the composition of this volume where out of the eleven contributions, only three chapters have been authored or co-authored by women.

Thirdly, the infighting among Canadian Canadianists themselves, the rebellion of a significant group among them against CSA in the mid-2000s and the subsequent creation of the Canadian Studies Network at the end of the decade, as well as CSA withdrawal from ICCS during the same period, all of this, of course, came at an inauspicious moment and probably deserved further development by the authors of the volume.

Finally, at the very last page of the book (p. 247), in footnote 1, Stephen Brooks writes that: 'In January **2017 (my emphasis)** the Québec village of Hérouxville went from obscurity to worldwide coverage on the BBC, CNN International, *The Guardian*, and much of the world's media. The cause of this unexpected publicity was a municipal council resolution that was widely perceived to be egregiously Islamophobic'. This is very interesting because the Hérouxville moment happened in fact in January **2007** not 2017. Why was this printing mistake left uncorrected? From my own experience in Canadian studies in the last 30 years, I would say that such an apparently insignificant mistake is nonetheless revealing of one of the greatest intellectual disappointments of the field of Canadian Studies-its incapacity to deconstruct the stereotypes applied to Québec and French Canadians in general, systematically described in the media within the category of 'ethnic' nationalism. In this context, one recalls several articles published in the

magazine *Maclean's* in the last decades. Specially the most recent one by Andrew Potter, a former director of the Canadian Studies program at McGill university, in March 2017, ten years after Hérrouxville. This seemingly unimportant typographical error, from my point of view, reveals a certain state of mind: the incapacity, in general, among many British Canadian intellectuals to deal with expressions of ethnic nationalism overtly expressed in white, Christian, English-speaking British and North American societies and the tendency to project on to Québec, the supposedly non-civic entity of Canadian society. How is it possible to miss what is behind Brexit, Trump, Doug Ford, Harper ...? This will always puzzle me.