

Chazan, May; Lisa Helps, Anna Stanley and Sonali Thakkar, eds. 2011. *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*. Toronto: Between the Lines. ISBN 978-1-897071-61-8. Paperback: 29.95 CAD. Pages: 243.

Reviewed by Tania Das Gupta
York University

This anthology of 11 chapters originates from a 2007 Conference, “From Multicultural Rhetoric to Anti-Racist Action,” held at the University of Toronto. Although contextualized in the post-9-11 attacks, the discussion of multiculturalism is not restricted to that event. The authors contest the discourse of multiculturalism as a failed or dying project.

Their starting point is that state multiculturalism has become “discursively saturated,” or in other words, has seeped into every aspect of political life, including immigration, labour, Aboriginal land claims and poverty. They succeed in unsettling the sedimented policy. This objective is in line with critical scholarship around multiculturalism, pointing to its utility in managing racialized immigrants and maintaining colonialism.

“Unsettling” in the title carries a clever double meaning pointing to the fundamental link between multiculturalism policy and colonial settlement. The exploration of this link is a strength. There are 4 chapters that explicitly address this aspect, those authored by Glen S. Coulthard, Brian Egan, Emilie Cameron and Laurie K. Bertram, while other chapters, such as Nandita Sharma’s, mention it in the context of related subjects such as migration and Canadian nationalism.

Admittedly, the chapters do not provide a “thoroughgoing critique or analysis of Canadian multiculturalism policy” per se. Rather, they show the policy’s influence in the state’s management of Aboriginal land claims discussions, the regulation of migration and immigration policies, concomitant labour policies and the racialization of poverty. Chapters are organized under 4 parts, namely Unsettling Multiculturalism, Labours, Lands and Bodies. A few chapters are mentioned below to give readers a flavour of the interdisciplinary, theoretically and methodologically diverse nature of the volume.

In Part 1 (Unsettling Multiculturalism), Rinaldo Walcott’s chapter continues a tradition of literary critique by focusing on examples of contemporary literature on multiculturalism, such as the works of Janice Stein, Cecil Foster, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and film maker, David Cronenberg. He sees their varied discourses as indicative of the limits of

European modernity, liberal democracies originating in it, and white anxieties in the post-9-11 period and he challenges us “to engage critically with new imaginative worlds...or to imagine worlds other than those we have experienced” (26).

Glen S. Coulthard powerfully demonstrates how Charles Taylor’s “politics of recognition” so fundamental in multiculturalism has seeped into demands for Aboriginal sovereignty. Referring to Aboriginal declarations and statements to this effect, he utilizes Frantz Fanon’s discussion of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic and the need for revolutionary change. He asserts that demands for colonial state recognition develops a dependence on the colonial master for one’s own identity and ultimately does not lead to freedom and liberation of the colonized. He proposes the alternative of self-affirmation and anti-colonial empowerment.

Grace-Edward Galabuzi argues that multiculturalism and the Canadian state are indeed in crisis as white anxieties become reflected in demands against “reasonable accommodations” for religious and cultural minorities, increasing racial profiling due to the “war on terror” and the racialization of poverty. However, he argues that this crisis has opened up the space for counter-hegemonic intervention by progressive forces organizing around the deepening of poverty and the violation of human rights.

In Part 2 (Labours), Nandita Sharma and Margaret Walton-Roberts are thought provoking, throwing new light on the discourse of multiculturalism. Sharma argues that Canadian multiculturalism policy has been influenced by the “we are all immigrants” discourse prevalent in the United States which has served to deny the existence of racism and to develop a divided consciousness. First, it has obfuscated the hierarchical power relations between colonizing immigrants and those who came as a result of forced migration. In this process, racism has been swept under the rug. Secondly, it has developed struggles for rights that is based on citizenship, thus externalizing both migrant workers as well as Aboriginal Peoples. Thirdly, the de-racialized discourse in multiculturalism has even seeped into some claims for Indigenous sovereignty that have bracketed all non-Natives as immigrants and thus colonizers.

Walton-Roberts questions the limited notion of “participation” within national boundaries as an indication of one’s citizenship. Drawing on her research on Sikh Punjabi immigrants in Canada, she argues for an “unbounded” approach to participatory citizenship as well as of multiculturalism through the assertion of rights in the transnational space. This she argues is particularly justified within the context of transnational engagements under globalized economies.

In Part 3 (Lands), Brian Egan and Emilie Cameron discuss how multiculturalism discourse has served to maintain colonial relations in Canada. Cameron suggests that “liberal multicultural understandings of difference, inclusion, and citizenship have come to inform responses to the specific claims of Indigenous Peoples” (143). Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples are reduced to haunting figures from the past in “postcolonial ghost stories.” Referring to the *Recognition and Reconciliation Act* in British Columbia and its

aftermath, Egan argues similarly that projects of recognition and reconciliation do not deal with colonialism and Aboriginal land rights.

In Part 4 (Bodies), Laurie K. Bertram uses historical and archival research to describe the role of migrant European settlers in colonial land encroachment and settlement in North-Western Canada and the displacement, surveillance and deaths of Aboriginal Nations in the process. Migrant narratives have represented Aboriginal presence as racially threatening while depicting themselves as traumatized and in need of protection.

Uzma Shakir's chapter on the Colour of Poverty Campaign is written from the perspective of a front-line community activist. She writes very personally and tongue in cheek about her position as a "native informant" due to her colour and her linguistic skills. She writes about the limitation of community "service" and the need to engage at a more activist level. She makes an appeal for academic support of community campaigns.

Overall, I found this book to be very informative, current and intellectually creative in understanding state multiculturalism and its utility for colonialism and capitalism. I would recommend its use both in graduate and advanced undergraduate classes. The introduction is also an excellent synthesis of all these issues.

Landsberg, Michelle. 2011. *Writing the Revolution*. Toronto: Second Story Press. ISBN 978-1-897187-99-9. Paperback: 24.95 CAD. Pages: 335.

Reviewed by Ester Reiter
York University

Michelle Landsberg's book, part of the Feminist History Society series documenting the women's movement in Canada, is a selection of articles from the more than 30,000 she wrote between 1978 and 2003. Many of us were avid readers of Landsberg's columns written for the *Toronto Star*. The articles convey her passion for justice on many fronts – gender discrimination, class issues, racism, international and peace issues. One can't help but be impressed by her journalist's skill in making issues women activists cared about clearly articulated and accessible to a wider public. Because they reflect her response to issues when they were "news," the reader also has a wonderful entrée into the immediacy of her heartfelt response to injustices and sometimes the joy of challenges and victories. Landsberg's columns went beyond writing about issues – she herself was a force to be reckoned with and quite influential in the push for social and legal change.