

## Preface

The title of the interdisciplinary conference of the Centre for Canadian Studies at the University of Vienna on May 5, 2012 was less general than the title of the present volume as the conference dealt more specifically with the applicability of Canadian models of integration to the debate over Austria's role as a country of immigration. As some contributions include discussions of the USA and some European countries, an extension of the general theme seemed appropriate. Still, reflections on the model character of North America – and especially Canada – concerning the handling of problems of immigration and integration characterize the majority of the essays in this collection.

At first glance this notion of North American models of integration functioning as a potential blueprint for Austria seems to derive from knowledge of the history of the North American continent and of the original status of all North Americans as immigrants, with the exception of the "First Nations." If one ignores the drama of the conquest of the continent by European settlers, the history of migration comprises both periods of harmonious settlement and emotionally charged and highly conflicted phases. Over the centuries countless people who were impoverished, displaced and persecuted in Europe, and not only there, saw the promised land on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. It was not only for the survivors of the Holocaust that America provided a refuge in times of dire need and a location of hope, with their expectations occasionally coming true. Those already well-established, born in their new country, gained a rich hoard of experience from their interaction with the newcomers, making possible a remarkable educational process over time and offering strong incentives for democratic developments.

In Europe, the old, long-standing inhabitants had ample time over the centuries to develop their cultural standards in conformity with the shifting power-relations between groups and communities and to construct their collective identities. The awareness of real migrations and of processes of mixing and hybridization was temporarily overlaid with notions of ethnic purity and authenticity, until the naturally evolving cultures of the Old World were faced in the

late 20<sup>th</sup> century with migration on an unprecedented scale and their validity was thus challenged.

While the European nations had formerly looked down upon the heterogeneous societies in North America with their patchwork of groups from the perspectives of fully evolved high cultures, they now felt that their own special values were being threatened by the influx of foreigners. They reacted by demanding more or less radically that the minorities adapt to the linguistic and cultural standards of the majorities, especially if they had come from abroad. The memory of the murderous ethnocentricism practiced in Nazi Germany may have somewhat moderated this demand, as did a renaissance in the cultures of the autochthonous minorities in Europe from the 1960s on.

Here one needs to concede that the contrast between Europe with its ingrained nationalisms and the ostensibly hospitable continent of North America was not as great as it may appear to an observer relying on clichés. Both the USA and Canada have cultivated, on the basis of their historical experiences, their patriotic *memoria* and have developed myths of collective identities, which they presented to generations of later arrivals as more or less obligatory patterns to follow. In this context coercion and the potential marginalization of those who were different occurred from time to time, as had earlier been the case with the treatment of the indigenous population.

Even though there are dark chapters in the history of US American and Canadian immigration, it is an indisputable fact that the protracted confrontation with ever new waves of immigrants, which shaped the collective consciousness in these countries, and the rich crop of experiences resulting from these confrontations may thus be of considerable interest to European countries.

This is all the more the case as Canada, in particular, has demonstrated during the last few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century its ability to learn and has improved its immigration policy in many significant respects. Austria, in contrast, has seemed unprepared for dealing with increasing waves of immigration since the time of the regional economic miracle, and sometimes unable to cope with them and the guest-workers, who had been expected to return to their native countries as soon as they were no longer needed.

Austria, with its predominantly German-speaking population, was in the past – over several centuries – a country of immigration, especially in and around the capital Vienna. The nationalisms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a lost war in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century terminated the alternation between ‘rivalry’ and ‘accommodation’ in a multi-ethnic country, and the collapse of the Monarchy led to the denial of its former traditional diversity. This process culminated in the annexation by Germany and in the catastrophes of the Third Reich. Both the Monarchy and Nazism failed, and are of very little significance in the political and cultural life of Austria today. Nevertheless, the legacy of the conflict between

actual diversity and desired homogeneity survives. It feeds conflicts and requires solutions. The aftereffects of these antagonisms – only seemingly overcome – continue to shape public life, are manifested in political discourse as well as in the media, and represent a permanent challenge for research in cultural studies.

The contributions collected in this volume accept this challenge to the extent that they look for aspects of the issue of integration in Canada – while also paying some attention to the situation in the USA and in France – which merit discussion in connection with the pertinent issues in Austria. In accordance with the interdisciplinary nature of this venture, questions are raised which concern the spheres of history, politics, and social reality. The emphasis is on analyses of fiction which allow insights into the psychological stimuli and complexes which play a role in the relationships between long-time residents and newcomers.

It is appropriate that the opening contribution by an eminently qualified Canadian scholar underlines the positive aspects of Canadian immigration policy. David Staines uses literary history to provide a sketch of the evolution of Canada from being an English colony to that of an independent nation as fostered by literary work and shows how those born in the country and those naturalized there have since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century established a unique cultural synthesis. The basis for this fruitful development has been provided since 1971 by Pierre Trudeau's concept of "multiculturalism." It was finally given legal form under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Reminders of racism exist, as Staines concedes, but are gradually disappearing, a situation quite different from that in the USA, where in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 chauvinism and paranoia have plagued society.

The first of two essays by Waldemar Zacharasiewicz also offers a broad survey of immigration as a source of inspiration for Canadian fiction. Apart from dealing with the cultural and political climate and its literary reflection in Canada, the experiences of three children of immigrants from the margins of Europe (from Iceland, southern Italy and Ukraine) serve as illustrations of the difficulties faced by individuals from these ethnic groups before the adoption of the principle of multiculturalism, welcomed by these authors, signaled the end of discrimination and marginalization in Canadian society. The essay stresses the remarkable quality of the autobiographies of the three authors selected and of similar life writings originating in Asian ethnicities in Canada; it underlines their power in rendering the psychological tensions of the protagonists. The very term "challenge" in the title of the contribution points to a willingness to give expression to the negative aspects of the lives of immigrants. Tensions and conflicts are thus more clearly apparent than in the essay by David Staines.

Martin Löschnigg links issues of migration with a concept of translation, which is also applied beyond the realm of language, drawing up a balance sheet which reveals a fundamental aspect of the condition of migrants: any person

who “transfers” from one culture to another enters a space of uncertainty and ambivalence. This not only provides the artist with a large creative potential, but also produces a desire for stability which is difficult to satisfy.

Carmen Birkle, focusing on immigration from the Caribbean, after a detailed review of research, describes the interconnection between inter- and transculturality as an unending process, which, in the texts analyzed, may end with the collapse and death of the individual, but, under favorable circumstances, may lead to the “third space” of hybridity. This contrasts with the orientation of the essay by Ursula Mathis-Moser on the Haitian-Canadian writer Dany Laferrière, which similarly underlines the dynamic nature of the development of the immigrants’ sense of identity, and demonstrates the desire of this author to feel at home in two places, and thus not to have recourse to hybridity.

The last four contributions turn to socio-cultural problems resulting from historical circumstances which are treated less directly in literature. The writers of these essays introduce Austrian perspectives, and yet never lose sight of the psychograms of immigration. First, Andrea Strutz offers a broad survey of the different waves of Austrian emigration to North America against the background of changes in the history of Austria and Canada and relations between them. There were significant restrictions and strict selection of immigrants from different countries at different times. Africans, Jews and Asians tended to be among the unwelcome migrants, which was even the case with refugees fleeing from the Holocaust. Emigrants from the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy (Cisleithanien) never ranked among those highly welcome in Canada, in contrast to candidates from allegedly ideally suited countries, such as Britain and Scandinavia. Andrea Strutz argues that the doctrine of multiculturalism has fostered the acceptance of ethnic diversity in Canada, thus making it appear a potential model for Austria.

A study by Waldemar Zacharasiewicz takes its departure from the reflection of the increased waves of immigration and the recognition of their cultural integration in recently published histories of literature of the USA and Canada, which appeared both in Europe and in North America. The contribution also deals with the undeniable discrimination of East Asian immigrants in the USA until after World War Two, and even longer in Canada, and considers the fate of the numerous immigrants from Mexico and the Caribbean, whose presence as millions of “Undocumented Immigrants” represents a central political problem in the USA. The solution of this serious challenge, which is the concern of a bipartisan initiative in Congress intended to develop a humane regulation for the children of such migrants who are to be given the hope of eventually gaining American citizenship, relates to a topical problem in Austrian internal politics.

Dirk Hoerder offers a very critical assessment of European migration policies on the basis of empirical research concerning the life writings of fairly large

numbers of immigrants in Canada as well as of interviews with students in France. He arrives at a largely negative evaluation of the conditions in France, which has not yet overcome its traditional centralism, and also in Austria, which still seems to be partly influenced by xenophobia. A core statement of this contribution affirms that Canada may serve as an example, but France should not.

The concluding commentary by Fritz Peter Kirsch on the report by Charles Taylor and Gérard Bouchard on the issue of immigration and integration in Quebec (2008) differs in two respects from the other contributions to this volume. The essay, on the one hand, presents the concept of interculturalism which this report placed centre stage, a concept with which the francophone province contributed an independent idea differing from the concept of multiculturalism adopted by the federal authorities. On the other hand, this contribution offers against this theoretical background a recommendation to the responsible academics and politicians in Austria to initiate an analogous report on the development of Austria as a country of immigration and on the future perspectives of this evolution.