

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS — “A LAND OF OPEN DOORS”

My outside view as someone not socialized into Canadian culture in childhood permits a distance to received Canadian discourses, but also exposes me to the threat of errors and misunderstandings. Jean Burnet and Richard Cavell kindly agreed to read parts of the manuscript both for errors and for stringency of argument. I am deeply indebted to them. I discussed the revised draft in a research seminar in spring term of 2003 with my German students, and their thoughtful comments permitted me to make the book more readable to non-specialists. Like many researchers, I was often impressed by vivid detail; Annegret Kuhlmann, as assistant, helped me to pare down the text. When my own institution drowned me in work, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft provided a sabbatical during which I could complete the final version.

I have incurred many debts in the process of coming to terms with the development of Canadian Studies. As for many newcomers and observers, Canada was a society of “open doors” for me. While doing research in Toronto, the home of Franca Iacovetta and Ian Radforth provided an agreeable space to work and to discuss ideas in. Many other colleagues from York University and the University of Toronto need to be named: Wsevolod Isajiw, Valerie Preston, Wenona Giles, Michael Lanphier, and Yves Frenette among them. My friends in Quebec, Danielle Juteau and Anne Laperrière among many others, provided a running critique when they felt that my views became Anglo-centric. Friends at universities in the Prairie provinces—Jim Frideres, Tamara Seiler, Tony Rasporich, Yvonne Hébert, Gerald Friesen—helped to overcome the Central-Canada bias or, more exactly, a Montreal- and Toronto-centeredness. They also pointed to Quebec-centredness in some of my perspectives on francophone Canada. To counter the “old metropolitan” bias, I lived for a couple of months in Vancouver where Richard Cavell, Allan Smith, Veronica Strong-Boag, Julie Cruikshank, and many others were accommodating and stimulating hosts. I am also most grateful to the colleagues who provided advice and possibilities to visit in all other Canadian provinces and I have come to cherish regional distinctiveness. Those whom I interviewed are listed in the Bibliographic Note. Annegret Kuhlmann, Bremen, meticulously proofed the manuscript. My “home” organization, the Association for Canadian Studies in German-language Countries, does its best to treat English, French, First Peoples, and immigrant Canadian cultures equally. I made an effort to do so.

While writing this preface in Winnipeg at the turn from 2004 to 2005, I heard a radio announcer in the background call Canada a “beautiful and complicated country.” For me, the beauty includes skaters from many cultures in the bright sunshine on the Assiniboine River at 20 degrees below. Elegant (feminine?) skating is an image different from a frozen North and hardy masculine explorers. Complications arise when I—a non-skater—pass by wanting to greet them: “Season’s greetings” or “happy holidays” have replaced the once common but now excluding “Merry Christmas.”

To redirect this greeting to the potential audience of this study: “Happy reading” (provided the cultural background and the language fits) or, to paraphrase “as Canadian as possible under the circumstances”: “happy reading of a text as informative as possible under the circumstances.”

DHo.
January 2005