« Le vert et le bleu: Identité québécoise et identité irlandaise au tournant du xxe siècle » (Simon Jolivet) et « Language and Conflict in Northern Ireland and Canada: A Silent War » (Janet Muller)

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Simon JOLIVET, *Le vert et le bleu: Identité québécoise et identité irlandaise au tournant du XX^e siècle*, Montréal, Presses Universitaires de Montréal, 2011, ISBN 978-2-7606-2223-4.

Janet MULLER, *Language and Conflict in Northern Ireland and Canada: A Silent War*, London, Palgrave, 2011, ISBN 9780230230651.

There is a spectre haunting Irish Studies in Canada: the spectre of comparison. All the powers of Canadian and Irish scholarship sometimes seem to be, if not exactly in a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre, then at least a bit reluctant to fully accept its presence and its value in moving Irish Studies forward. Two recent books illustrate this quandary. Both propose to engage with Quebec as some sort of analogue for Ireland, and thus offer the possibility of moving past the well-hewn scholarly fields of diaspora studies by looking at two “small countries” together and trying to discover insights that would be missing in more focussed studies. But neither of the books under review here are really comparisons. Simon Jolivet’s *Le vert et le bleu: Identité québécoise et identité irlandaise au tournant du XX^e siècle* does a great job of increasing our understanding of the role of Irish nationalism in the politics of Quebec towards the beginning of the 20th century. The book, though, is very clearly about *Quebec*, and is a work of Études québécoises that draws on a fair bit of Irish archival material. Janet Muller’s work *Language and Conflict in Northern Ireland and Canada: A Silent War* reverses this: it is a book about language policy in *Northern Ireland*, with some reference to Quebec, and is really a work of Irish Studies that draws upon a fair bit of Canadian and Québécois governmental material. What accounts for this widespread shyness towards actual comparison, a shyness that seems extra-puzzling inasmuch as we can see it in books that originate on both sides of the Atlantic and in different languages? The fact that neither Jolivet’s nor Muller’s book pose a simple answer to that question is a testament to their strengths, really; there’s a lot to recommend in both works, even if they don’t quite do what I might expect them to given their ostensible internationalism.

Simon Jolivet’s highly detailed and eminently readable study *Le vert et le bleu* makes a valuable contribution to “Études irlando-québécoises”. The second half of that formulation is much more central to his discussion than the first, however, even though Jolivet has done considerable work in Irish archives (both in the Republic and the North, as well as in London). The narrative he is unfolding, though, is both fascinating in its own right and, moreover, something of a problem in Irish Studies as it is practised in Canada. There has developed, over the course of several decades now, a consensus that the Irish have a special role in the development of Quebec society, one that for religious and often times linguistic reasons is quite different from that of their fellow migrants from the

British empire. But that has not, aside from a few rare exceptions, been met by a vigorous engagement with that history. Much work in Irish-Canadian Studies (like a worrying amount of Canadian Studies generally) gives the impression that Canada is basically an Anglophone country with some people who speak French, at whom one only needs to gesture occasionally and uncomfortably. In this way the field *strongly* resembles Irish Studies generally, which also gives the impression that Ireland is basically an Anglophone country with a few people who speak Irish, at whom one can simply gesture every now and again but with whom only experts need engage meaningfully. Jolivet's book would be welcome in any event, then, simply because it is a vigorous engagement with this essential part of Irish diaspora history, and one that is not only written in French but which draws upon significant amounts of French-language archival material.

It is a welcome contribution for other, more substantive reasons as well. One is the nuanced way in which Jolivet presents the understanding of how "La question irlandaise" has been understood in Quebec. He traces the relatively intuitive connections that were being made between anti-imperialist rhetoric, attempts at language revival or preservation, and Catholic-tinged nationalism, in both Ireland and Quebec. But he is also adamant that the picture was more complicated than two oppressed nations recognising each other's struggle. Writing about how the Quebec electorate rejected the federal Conservative party (1921) at about the same time that the Irish public overwhelmingly voted for Sinn Féin (1918), Jolivet writes that: "*Est-ce que cette situation implique que tous les Canadiens français favorisent maintenant l'approche du Sinn Féin en Irlande? Bien sûr que non. Certaines revues, comme La Vie canadienne, ne se cachent d'ailleurs pas pour dénoncer la lutte armée de l'Irish Republican Army ou pour faire des liens rapides entre le Sinn Féin et les 'bolchéviques'.*" (236)

Janet Muller's book on language in Northern Ireland and Canada could do with a little more of that kind of detailed attention to the sometimes contradictory political history of Quebec nationalism, but as an introduction to the fraught language politics of Northern Ireland it is hard to beat. The book actually pays relatively little attention to Quebec: it serves to bookend the argument, figuring centrally in the introduction and being the sole subject of the last chapter, and is basically absent otherwise. When she does engage with the new world Muller displays a detailed grasp of contemporary Canadian and Quebec politics, and is quite incisive at the end of her analysis about the prospects for French inside and outside of Quebec given the defacto privileging of bilingualism and the relatively dominant position of the Quebec Liberal Party (225). But reading this my mind began to wander towards the comparative: how do the ideological commitments the Quebec Liberals both differ from and synchronise with those of the DUP? Do Sinn Féin's efforts to be a left-leaning and a "big tent" nationalist party have

echoes in the efforts of the Parti Québécois to reconcile its historically social-democratic ethos with its separatist commitments? These kinds of questions dance around the edges of Muller's book. From her detailed analysis it's clear that she should have a lot to say about such matters, but when Quebec comes up Muller only briefly places it beside Northern Ireland explicitly. She is very good at analysing specific cases, but doesn't spend a lot of time putting them together to find a new synthesis not available from either case in isolation.

Being prescriptive is the cardinal sin of book reviewing, and I do not mean to say that the problem with these books is that they were not written along the lines that I would have written them. Indeed, the Jolivet book is a strong piece of scholarship, and the Muller book is a passionate and extremely thorough discussion of an infrequently discussed problem in sociolinguistics (almost all detailed discussions of Irish focus on the Republic). Putting these books together, though, does show us the degree to which genuinely comparative approaches seem, mysteriously, to elude Irish Studies practitioners, seemingly irrespective of mother tongue or of which side of the Atlantic they call home. Comparatists of all disciplines, unite! You have nothing to lose but your idées reçues!

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Pierre RANGER, *La France vue d'Irlande. L'histoire du mythe français de Parnell à l'État Libre*, préface de V. Comerford, Rennes, PUR, 2011, 344 p. ISBN : 978-2-7535-1426-3. 20 €.

Alors que plusieurs historiens se sont intéressés à la façon dont la question d'Irlande a été perçue en France (L. Colantonio, J. Julienne), Pierre Ranger propose une étude thématique et chronologique de la façon dont les nationalistes irlandais, surtout séparatistes mais aussi constitutionnels, ont construit et utilisé dans la presse et dans leurs discours, à des fins de propagande, une image mythique de la France. Cette image s'appuya sur des événements fondateurs tels que la création de brigades irlandaises à la fin du xvii^e siècle et les expéditions françaises de 1796 et 1798, destinées à servir de renfort à l'action des Irlandais Unis.

Ce sujet ne manque pas d'intérêt et ce, à plusieurs titres. La perspective choisie correspond d'abord aux préoccupations de l'historiographie contemporaine concernant l'Irlande puisqu'il s'agit de dépasser le cadre irlandais pour s'intéresser à la question des liens, idéologiques notamment, entre l'Irlande et la France