

## The Canadian Identity

National identity is the quintessential Canadian issue. Almost alone among modern developed countries, Canada has continued to debate its self-conception to the present day. One of its leading historians notes that it

has suffered for more than a century from a somewhat more orthodox and less titillating version of Portnoy's complaint: the inability to develop a secure and unique identity. And so...intellectuals and politicians have attempted to play psychiatrist to the Canadian Portnoy, hoping to discover a national identity.<sup>1</sup>

As if to illustrate his point, Margaret Atwood comments ironically, "If the national mental illness of the United States is megalomania, that of Canada is paranoid schizophrenia."<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for this uncertainty are clear. Canada is a residual country. It is that part of British North America that did not support the Revolution. Before 1776, Anglophone Canadians possessed the same traits that distinguished other American colonists from the British. Then, as noted in the preceding chapter, the new nation to the south developed a political identity formulated around the values set out in the Declaration of Independence. Americanism became and has remained a political ideology.<sup>3</sup> There is no ideology of Canadianism, although Canada has a Tory tradition derived from Britain and is, like the United States, descended from a North American settler and frontier society.

The country gradually evolved as an independent nation, but the unification of the provinces of British North America into the Dominion of Canada in 1867 was not an act in defiance of the British Crown. Rather, it reflected the fact that Britain had sought for some decades to give up much of its responsibility for the territories and wanted their people to take political responsibility for their own domestic governments while remaining part of the British Empire. The provinces united after the American Civil War, under Tory leadership, in large part because they feared they would be easy targets for takeover or absorption by the massive, war-trained army of the United States if they remained separate. Many people, especially in the Maritime provinces, wanted to remain more closely linked to Britain, but representatives of London urged them to join the new Confederation.

Opposing the democratic efforts of reformers within the autonomous provinces, the Tories favored a strong federal state that could help develop British North America economically by providing capital.<sup>4</sup> "Canadian confederation was expressive of Tory values"; it was designed to "counteract democracy and ensure constitutional liberty" and was resisted by the liberal and continentalist elements.<sup>5</sup>

The leaders of the Confederation movement were monarchists who favored a strong state. During the Confederation debates of 1865, "[w]henver one of the Fathers of Confederation called upon *authority* he called upon the Crown, what was called the 'monarchical principle.' Devotion to the Crown was the one element that all the Fathers of Confederation shared."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, as one of them, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, declared,

Unlike our neighbors [the American Constitutional Fathers], we had no questions of sovereignty to raise. We have been saved from all embarrassment on the subject of sovereignty by simply recognizing it as it already exists, in the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>7</sup>

As the historian William Stahl emphasizes:

It is clear why the Fathers of Confederation spoke of "peace, order, and good government" rather than "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The virtues of monarchy subordinate the individual to the community. Instead of liberty and

happiness, loyalty and responsibility are stressed. Freedom may be a watchword, but equality is not, and freedom is always tempered and circumscribed by obligations and the rights of others. But if subordination is preached, subser-vience is not....The individual curbs his or her egoism because not to do so would make life in family and community intolerable. And over all is emphasized the personal nature of social and political relationships. Monarchy is but the family writ large.<sup>8</sup>

The emphasis on order in Canada and on liberty in the United States has had consequences for each. As one Canadian popular writer, Pierre Berton, points out:

The other side of the coin of order and security is authority. We've always accepted more governmental control over our lives than...[Americans] have — and fewer civil liberties...[But] the other side of the coin of liberty is license, sometimes anarchy. It seems to us that...Americans have been more willing to suffer violence in...[their] lives than we have for the sake of individual freedom.<sup>9</sup>

Americans, from the days of the Revolution on, have resisted authority, demanded their rights, and preferred weak government, while Canadians have complained less, been less aggressive, and desired a strong paternalistic government. Berton believes it significant that as a soldier he "asked for 'leave,' a word that suggests permission....[while American] G.I.s were granted 'liberty,' a word that implies escape."<sup>10</sup> A summary of Berton's conclusions notes, Canadians "are law-abiding, deferential toward authority, cautious, prudent, elitist, moralistic, tolerant (of ethnic differences), cool, unemotional and solemn."<sup>11</sup>

Similar statements have been made by literally hundreds of Canadian writers, journalists, and social scientists in differentiating their country from its neighbor. Many of their assumptions can be validated statistically, as will be shown later. What is equally relevant is the extent to which Canadians are steadily exposed to this self-image, the extent to which it forms a set of organizing principles to which they are socialized.

The process was evident in the content of a television documentary produced in 1986 by Marshall McLuhan's daughter, Stephanie.<sup>12</sup> It included a variety of statements by leading

Canadians, as well as expatriates, elaborating on the characteristics of their people in terms corresponding closely to the social science generalizations. They illustrate how a society tells its people what they are supposed to be like. Novelist Margaret Atwood commented, "Americans love success, worship success," while "Canadians are suspicious of success." Journalist Peter Newman emphasized that "Canadians defer to authority," that "we are more laid back up here," there is not the "push and drive you see down in the States." Sidney Gruson of the *New York Times* told the audience, "My Canadian background made me look on crises with less heat than if I were an American." Sondra Gottlieb, wife of the then ambassador to the United States, noted, "Canadians have an image of moderateness....They are solid, reliable, decent...[but] a little bit dull." And, Pierre Berton said to the viewers, "We don't have the superpatriotism you see south of the border. We don't express ourselves emotionally. We are more phlegmatic than the Americans."

Canadians repeatedly remind themselves that they are and should be the quiet North Americans. On April 7, 1989, Ottawa experienced a dramatic hostage-taking event: a passenger-laden bus was seized on the highway and the hijacker (whose motives remain unclear) had it driven to Parliament Hill, where it remained for several hours until he was convinced to surrender. A few days later, Charles Gordon, a leading journalist, devoted a page-long column in *Maclean's*, the country's largest-circulation weekly newsmagazine, to a discussion of how the reaction to the occurrence "could only have happened in Canada." No one panicked, no guns were fired, no business or government offices in the area were shut down. A press conference for the president of Costa Rica continued in a nearby building. Evening social events were not postponed. Television news did not show "what TV audiences the world over have come to expect whenever a crisis occurs — fire trucks whizzing around with sirens blaring, helicopters whirring overhead." Gordon proudly told his fellow citizens how symbolic of the country's character it all was:

Pictures not showing helicopters were Canadian pictures, for certain. It is difficult, in the modern world, to picture a similar scene in any other world capital — and particularly



Washington — without helicopters. But we were helicopter-less.<sup>13</sup>

## Canadian Independence

The continuing linkage of Canada to the mother country is strikingly revealed by the most significant action a nation can take: the declaration of war. It has been understood that when the British Parliament voted for war, Canada would follow suit. Thus, Canada sent troops to fight at Britain's side during the Boer War. It entered both World War I and World War II on the heels of the mother country (although Prime Minister Mackenzie King postponed the 1939 vote in Parliament for a week, so as to emphasize Canada's independence).<sup>14</sup>

Until recently, the constitution of the Canadian confederation was the *British North America Act*, proclaimed by Queen Victoria in 1867. Only in 1982 did Canada request the British Parliament to give up formal control (something it had wanted to do since at least the early 1930s). Not until 1947 did Canadians even secure a separate status as citizens of their own country, as distinct from British subjects. Before 1949, their ultimate court of appeal was the Privy Council of Great Britain. Canadian lawyers had to go to London to argue constitutional cases, as well as other kinds of appeals. Prior to 1975, British citizens living in Canada could vote in national elections without filing for Canadian citizenship, and they did not lose their automatic right to enter Canada until the passage of the *Immigration Act* of 1978. The Maple Leaf became the national flag in 1965, and "O Canada" was approved as the national anthem — replacing "God Save the Queen" — only in 1967 and was not officially so designated until 1980. But, of course, as one British magazine notes, unlike Americans, "Canadians do not chant an oath of allegiance or salute the flag."<sup>15</sup>

## The Counterrevolution Continued

Although the content and extent of the differences between Canada and the United States have changed in the course of time, many present-day variations still reflect the impact of the Am-

erican Revolution. Much of the writing on comparative aspects of culture, politics, economy, religion, law, and literature in North America emphasizes the causal importance of the different origins of the two nations. As noted earlier, Canadian historians point out that in their country the democratic or populist elements lost their battle on many occasions. Some stress the significance of the failure of the 1837 rebellions, which, according to political scientist Philip Resnick, might have "fostered a liberal state, possibly a cross between American presidential and English parliamentary in form" and, more important, "would have entailed, as revolutions have elsewhere, a politicization that we rarely experience and seldom imagine in this country."<sup>16</sup> One of Canada's ablest historians, Frank Underhill, says of the long-term conservatism and resistance to Americanism of his country's history: "It would be hard to overestimate the amount of energy we have devoted to this cause."<sup>17</sup>

The legitimization of conservatism in Canada flowed from the rejection of the American and French revolutions, and from patterns of emigration and immigration that reinforced right-wing trends. The latter, which began very early, included the departure of bourgeois and rationalist elements from Quebec in 1760 after the British conquest and, from 1789 on, the arrival there of conservative priests from France, who had a "notable role in developing the classical colleges and parish schools [and]...instilled a horror of the French Revolution."<sup>18</sup> After 1783, most Congregational pro-Revolution clergy moved from the English-speaking areas to New England, and an estimated 50,000 Loyalists, including many Anglican priests, crossed the new border in the opposite direction.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States remained the extreme example of a classically liberal or Lockean society, rejecting the assumptions of the alliance of throne and altar, of ascriptive elitism, of mercantilism, of noblesse oblige, of communitarianism. Canada was noticeably different. As we have seen, Friedrich Engels was among several 19th-century foreign visitors who noted that Canada preserved a more European society than the "purely bourgeois" United States.<sup>19</sup> More recently, the Canadian Marxist sociologist Arthur Davis observed:

[The] American colonies broke their ties with England, and the philosophy of laissez-faire Manchesterism could run wild until the rise of new internal oppositions late in the nineteenth century....In England, on the other hand, elements of pre-Industrial classes and values survived industrialization. The first reforms in the nineteenth century were sparked, not by the "new men of Manchester," but by Tories from the old landed classes motivated by feudal norms like noblesse oblige. Something of these restraining values seem to have carried over into English Canada.<sup>20</sup>

Another Canadian left-wing social scientist elaborates on the way that Toryism, which emphasizes "the need for more conscious control over the processes of a...society," took root, survived, and deeply influenced Canadian culture and politics.

[I]n the transfer of cultural and political baggage to the British North American colonies, Toryism found an environment in which, rather paradoxically considering the absence of a feudal past, it was to play a more important role as a legitimizing ideology of capitalist development than it ever did in its English homeland. In colonial Canada, both inherited Tory images and the learned experience of development in the peculiar circumstances of that time and place led to a domination of the Tory image of the state over the more liberal laissez-faire concept....The emphasis on control of the processes of national development, the element of the collective will of the dominant class expressed through the public institutions of the state, while seemingly anachronistic in an increasingly laissez-faire Britain, was crucially relevant to a thinly settled frontier colony struggling on the fringes of a growing economic and political power to the south.<sup>21</sup>

Ironically, other modern scholars who see Canada as a more British- or European-type conservative society emphasize that the values inherent in monarchically rooted Tory conservatism give rise in the modern world to support for social democratic redistributive and welfare policies.<sup>22</sup> The historian of Canadian socialism, Gad Horowitz, notes that "socialism has more in common with Toryism than with [classic] liberalism, for liberalism is possessive individualism, while socialism and Toryism are variants of collectivism."<sup>23</sup> Conversely, a dominant laissez-faire Lockean tradition is antithetical to such programs. Northrop Frye calls attention to this alliance of opposites: "The Canadian point

of view is at once more conservative and more radical than Whiggery [the liberal ideology of the American Revolution], closer both to aristocracy and to democracy [equality]."<sup>24</sup>

These ideological differences in the two countries have been reinforced by institutional factors, particularly religious and political ones.<sup>25</sup> The American tradition and law place more emphasis on separation of church and state than do the Canadian. Since pre-Revolutionary times, a large majority of Americans have adhered to the Protestant sects that opposed the established state church in England. For most of the 19th century, the majority of Canadians belonged to either the Roman Catholic or the Anglican Church. Both are hierarchically organized and were state-established in Europe. In this century, the Anglican Church has declined greatly in relative strength in Canada; today the United Church, a unification of a considerable majority of the Anglophone sectarians, is by far the largest Protestant denomination, currently including close to one-fifth of the population. Although efforts to sustain church establishment ultimately failed in Canada, some state support of religious institutions, particularly schools, exists today in all provinces.<sup>26</sup> Hence religion has contributed to anti-elitist and individualistic beliefs in the United States and has countered them in Canada.

Analyzing Canadian politics in the 1980s, political scientists William Christian and Colin Campbell emphasize the continuing impact of political institutions that reflect Tory values. They call attention to the historically conditioned greater role of government in Canadian society and the economy, emphasizing that

political institutions themselves embody and reflect political ideas, and perpetuate them as they accustom participants in the institutions to the values that are implicit in the system they represent....The successful operation in Canada of a Tory/collectivist constitution for well over a century gives us considerable grounds for the belief that such values are acceptable and legitimate to large numbers of Canadians.<sup>27</sup>

## Structural Influences

As noted in Chapter 1, most analysts agree that Canadian values and behavior are different from American, but some also



point to the causal impact of the variations in the government, ecology, demography, and economy of the two nations. It can be argued that any one of a number of factors would have produced similar results, particularly the greater emphases on the state and communitarianism in the north and on individualism and laissez faire in the south. Values derived from the different founding ethos helped to establish these, but they have been reinforced by the contrasts in the political systems, geography, and population base.

The most obvious difference between the countries is in their governments: a parliamentary system with an executive (cabinet) that can have its way with the House of Commons, and a presidential, divided-powers system in which the executive does not control and must negotiate with both houses of Congress. In Canada, the source of authority (the Queen) and the agency of authority (the elected government) are separate: they are one in the United States, where the president, a politician, is also the head of state. The former makes for more deference and respect for government and the state than the latter.

The American Constitution with its Bill of Rights emphasizes due-process guarantees for the individual and limits on state power. Until 1982, there were few limits on the power of the Canadian Parliament and cabinet, not even on their ability to suspend the rights of free speech and assembly. The inclusion of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the constitution of 1982 has moved Canada a long way in the direction of American due process, but the new constitution still maintains parliamentary supremacy and does not offer many of the protections in the Bill of Rights, as will be made evident in Chapter 6.

Demographics and the environment also differ between the two countries. The harsh climate of the northern latitudes forced most Canadian settlement as far south as possible. Even today, its relatively small population (about one-tenth of the United States) is strung out in a belt reaching only about 150 miles north of the border but with an east-west span greater than the American. The results of developing and maintaining a country in this huge, sparsely populated span have been many. As S.D. Clark, the doyen of the cultural interpretation of North American comparative sociology, notes:

[G]eography, which favoured individual enterprise and limited political interference in the conduct of economic, social and religious affairs over a large part of the continent [the United States], favoured on this part of the continent [Canada] large-scale bureaucratic forms of organization and widespread intervention by the state.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the presence of a larger, more powerful neighbor to the south has encouraged Canadians to call on the state to protect the nation's economic independence.

Other analysts, such as Richard Gwyn, a distinguished Canadian journalist, stress other ecological factors, including Canada's "northernness" and its pattern of urbanization, which is more extensive than that south of the border. He points to traits held in common with other northern countries: "reticence, pragmatism, wariness of public display" and social democratic liberalism.<sup>29</sup>

The urban factor may not appear unique, but, as Gwyn emphasizes, there

is nothing like...[Canadian cities] in the United States. Most Canadians live in them, while the dominant American pattern is the suburb.... Canadians have figured out how to make their cities work for them; Americans work in their cities and live outside them.<sup>30</sup>

This thesis has been elaborated and documented by two urbanologists, Michael Goldberg and John Mercer, who stress the many differences between cities north and south of the border — for example, crime rates, the incidence of slums, and cleanliness — that reflect variations in national "values and attitudes."<sup>31</sup>

Comparison of the frontier experiences of the two countries encapsulates the ways in which values and structural factors interact to produce different outcomes. Inasmuch as Canada had to be on guard against the United States' expansionist tendencies, it could not leave its frontier communities unprotected or autonomous. Moreover, "it was in the established tradition of British North America that the power of the civil authority should operate well in advance of the spread of settlement."<sup>32</sup>

Law and order, in the form of the centrally controlled North-West Mounted Police, moved into the Canadian west before and

along with the settlers. This contributed to a deeper respect for the institutions of law and order on the Canadian frontier than on the American, thus undermining the development of individualism and disrespect for authority that has been more characteristic of the United States. (These phenomena are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.)

## National Images

Given the contrasts between the Canadian historical experience and the American one, it is not surprising that the peoples of the two countries have formed their self-conceptions in disparate ways. The United States, as we have seen, was organized around what Abraham Lincoln called a "political religion." As a result, as Sacvan Bercovitch notes, both left and right take sustenance from the American creed. Canada never developed its own universalistic ideology.<sup>33</sup>

Comparing political science textbooks north and south of the border, Alan Cairns emphasizes:

There is no Canadian creed against which a Canadian text could judge the system's performance and find it lacking. Had Gunnar Myrdal written of Canada he could not have contradicted prevailing inequalities with an official creed of equality. The Anglophone political scientists of a country endowed with a counter-revolutionary tradition have felt minimal compulsion to explore the meaning and development of Canadianism.<sup>34</sup>

Analysts of literature draw similar conclusions. Thus, A.J.M. Smith suggests that the emphasis on a national creed has made American writing "critical and profoundly subversive," while in Canada, without an ideal to contrast with the country's reality, literature has been more conservative.<sup>35</sup> Margaret Atwood notes that, unlike Canada, the United States "holds out a hope, never fulfilled but always promised, of a Utopia, the perfect human society." She points out that most 20th-century American literature is about the "gap between the promise and the actuality, between the imagined ideal...and the actual squalid materialistic dotty small town, nasty city, or redneck-filled outback."<sup>36</sup>

In an analysis of fiction in English Canada and the United States, the literary critic Stanley Fogel emphasizes the same distinctions:

A comparison of contemporary literature in English Canada and the United States reveals a startling disparity in the two perceptions of here. Here for American writers is a monolith, often named, which must be combatted, reviled, or exorcised. The American here comes with a clearly formed set of characteristics and an apparently universally grasped ideology. Canada's here is rarely named in the pages of contemporary Canadian writers; it cannot be named....[T]he ideological baggage, which goes with the United States, does not encumber Canada. The latter country, therefore, is not the object of writers' thrusts or assaults.<sup>37</sup>

As we have seen, the ideology of the American Revolution provides a *raison d'être* for the Republic — it explains why the United States came into being and what it means to be American. But Canada "arrived at freedom through evolution in allegiance and not by revolutionary compact." Hence, its "final governing force...is tradition and convention."<sup>38</sup> The country could not offer its citizens "the prospect of a fresh start...because (as the Canadian poet Douglas Le Pan put it) Canada is 'a country without a mythology.'<sup>39</sup> To justify separate national existence, Canadians have deprecated American values and institutions, mainly those seen as derived from an excessive emphasis on competition, which they once identified as an outgrowth of mass democracy and equalitarianism but which in recent years are explained by their intellectuals as endemic in the hegemonic capitalist values and institutions.

Canadians have tended to define themselves not in terms of their own national history and traditions but by reference to what they are *not*: Americans. Canadians are the world's oldest and most continuing un-Americans.<sup>40</sup> "Without at least a touch of anti-Americanism, Canada would have no reason to exist."<sup>41</sup> Evidence drawn from "popular fiction, westerns, science and spy thrillers" documents "persistent...Canadian fears" about the United States.<sup>42</sup> Until fairly recently, the predominant form that negation took was conservative, monarchical, and ecclesiastical.



Formative national events and images — revolution and counterrevolution, rebels and Loyalists — continued to affect the way the two countries regarded themselves from the 19th century into the pre-World War II era.<sup>43</sup> A student of Canadian writings on America calls attention to various comments in the 1920s by Canadian observers who "discern and condemn an excessive egalitarian quality derived from notions of independence and democracy which have been set free during the Revolution."<sup>44</sup>

In a comparative study of modern democracies published in the early 1920s, James Bryce also noted such persistent differences flowing from divergent histories.<sup>45</sup> Like many Canadian and British writers, Bryce viewed most dissimilarities between the two North American democracies as reflecting credit on Canada. It did not exhibit the "spirit of license, the contempt of authority, the negligence in enforcing the laws" found in the United States and other populist countries. He stressed the enduring adherence of both Canadian language groups to prerevolutionary values.<sup>46</sup> Their concern with "order and harmony" reflected "the ideals of authority and natural hierarchy."<sup>47</sup>

A summary of Canadians' beliefs about Americans and themselves as reported in sociological surveys taken among Anglophones in the 1930s points up the way the northerners justified themselves:

The typical American, in Canadian eyes at least, was brash and arrogant, with little respect for law and order and even less respect for the sanctity of marriage. This tells us little of what Americans were really like but it tells us a great deal of what Canadians thought of themselves....

It is noteworthy that the qualities which seemed to distinguish Canadians — and to reveal their superiority — were qualities which clearly reflected conservative attitudes. The emphasis was on respect for traditional institutions....Rugged individualism was not necessarily seen as a sin but it was closely tempered by the values associated with...social conformity....

The subject matter in Canadian schools...suggested a respect for inherited traditions....[T]he American myth of a new and unfettered society in the new world never appeared in the Canadian textbooks.<sup>48</sup>

Pre-World War II Canadians were not, of course, united in their view of themselves or their neighbor. During the 1920s, judgments varied along political lines. Conservatives stressed the Tory emphasis on the use of the state to foster noblesse-oblige objectives and were especially deprecating about egalitarianism and democracy in the United States.<sup>49</sup> They wished to maintain the British tie and even to strengthen the link to the Empire. In contrast, many Liberals were continentalists, adhering to traditions that were closer to those of the Americans. At the same time, radicals tended to be more nationalistic in their sentiments. Canadian leftists, then as later, worried about an American takeover of their country.

Whatever the motives of different groups, the conception Canadians had of what was good about Canada and bad about the United States influenced their values and behavior. Those who said that Canadians — by not being as materialistic, achievement-oriented and competitive as Americans — were morally superior taught their children not to be as competitive or aggressive. The stress in Canadian schooling on the value of high culture, as distinct from functionally practical subjects, both described and influenced the content of education.

Values and structures change. Canada and the United States have both followed the general tendencies of most western nations toward greater acceptance of communitarian welfare and egalitarian objectives, a decline in religious commitment, smaller nuclear families, an increase in educational attainment, a greater role for government, continued economic growth, a higher standard of living, more leisure, increased longevity, growing urbanization, and a shift in the composition of the economy from primary and secondary industries toward tertiary and high-tech and information-based ones. With these developments has come the decline of many cultural traits associated with pre-industrial society, particularly with respect to emphasis on stratification differences associated with religion and inherited social status, gender, race, or ethnicity. These changes have not, however, led to a falloff in national or group consciousness, particularly among ethnic or linguistic minorities, whose self-awareness and political organization have frequently increased; the behavior of the Québécois in Canada and the blacks and Hispanics in the United

States provides examples (which will be dealt with in subsequent chapters).

The cultural and structural differences among western countries generally and between Canada and the United States in particular have declined in some respects. The diffusion of values, the comparable economic changes, and the development of rapid transportation and almost instantaneous communication seem to be producing a common western culture. Yet, many traditional national differences persist, some in weaker form, and new ones emerge (an example is the rate of unionization, which is now much higher in Canada than in the United States). As Gwyn notes, Canadians have become

a quite distinct kind of North American...utterly unlike [those in the United States] in their political cultures so that they are as distinct from each other as are the Germans from the French, say, even though both are European just as Canadians and Americans are both North Americans.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, in Prime Minister Mackenzie King's words, "if some countries have too much history, [Canada] has too much geography."<sup>51</sup> Unlike the United States, it finds little to celebrate: no revolution, no declaration of independence, no civil war to free the slaves. Its first (1867) constitution was drawn up by conservatives who did not express themselves "in popular language. They did not speak the language of the Rights of Man or of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." That constitution, argues Philip Resnick, was the legitimating "document of the Canadian counter-revolution."<sup>52</sup>

This discussion continues in the next chapter with an analysis of the way the content and style of creative culture, particularly literature, in Canada has helped to form and distribute the country's image of itself. Since that identity has emerged in reaction to conceptions of the United States, Canadian literary critics have also commented about American writing and identity, about the American dream.

## 4

### Literature and Myths: Canadian Perspectives

Canada, as we have seen, lacks an ideology, but a strong identity, one that is reflected in its increasingly important literature and other creative arts. And these have helped to form and to reflect the national self-image. As Ronald Suart, a Canadian literary critic, emphasizes, "[t]he greatest test of a nation...respond to the forces that condition a national philosophy of life, and they in turn condition that philosophy." A striking example of the way novelists reinforce national conceptions can be found in *The Lyre of Orpheus*, the first novel by Robertson Davies. He gives voice to Canadians' sense that they lack a capacity for excellence and achievement; they value mediocrity. Non-Canadian characters in the novel are described as "possessed by ambition," as seeking "glory and culture." But in referring to "the Canadians," he notes:

[T]hey closed up at any imputation of high motives, of grand did intention, of association with what might be great and therefore dangerous. They were not wholly of the great majority of their people; they lived in a larger world than that, but they wore the greyiness as a protective outer garment. They did not murmur the national prayer: "O God, grant me mediocrity and comfort; protect me from the radiance of light." Nevertheless, they knew how difficult and disquieting too bold a spirit might be. They settled to their plates and made small talk.<sup>2</sup>



55. Martin Dooley, "Demography of Child Poverty in Canada: 1873-1986" (paper presented to the Population Association of America, Baltimore, Md., March 28-April 1, 1989), tables 18 and 19.

56. Quoted in Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Rites of Assent: Rhetoric, Ritual, and the Ideology of American Consensus," in Sam B. Girgus, ed., *The American Self: Myth, Ideology and Popular Culture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), p. 21.; see also *idem*, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 140-152, 176.

57. Bercovitch, "Rites of Assent," pp. 5-6.

58. *Ibid.* (italics in original).

59. Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 21-22, 272, 318.

60. See Seymour Martin Lipset, *Consensus and Conflict: Essays in Political Sociology* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1985), pp. 187-217; and *idem*, "American Exceptionalism Reaffirmed," in Byron Shafer, ed., *Is America Different?: A New Look at American Exceptionalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

### 3 The Canadian Identity

1. Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977), pp. 188-189.

2. Margaret Atwood, *The Journals of Suzanna Moodie: Poems* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 62.

3. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Why No Socialism in the United States?" in S. Bialer and S. Sluzar, eds., *Sources of Contemporary Radicalism*, vol. 1 (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1977), pp. 74-79, 81-83, for other references.

4. See Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 396.

5. Peter J. Smith, "The Ideological Origins of Canadian Confederation," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 20 (March 1987): 25, 27.

6. William A. Stahl, "May He Have Dominion...": Civil Religion and the Legitimation of Canadian Confederation" (Luther College, University of Regina, 1986), p. 4 (italics in original).

7. Quoted in *ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

9. Pierre Berton, *Why We Act Like Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), pp. 16-17.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

11. Alan F.J. Artibise, "Exploring the North American West: A Comparative Urban Perspective," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 14 (Spring 1984): 32.

12. "O Canada Eh!" prepared by McLuhan Productions, Toronto, 1986.

13. Charles Gordon, "No One Called In the Helicopters," *Maclean's*, May 1, 1989, p. 35.

14. There were, of course, opponents of these actions, especially among French Canadians. Not enamored with the British tie (although they preferred an Anglican monarchy to absorption into a Protestant sectarian republic), Francophones argued that Canada had become a North American nation and that the decision on whether or not to go to war should depend on its interests as an independent state. Pointing to the fact that the United States did not enter either world war at its beginning, they contended that if Canada were truly independent, it too would stay out of wars unless and until it was felt necessary to enter for Canadian reasons. At times, this opposition became vehement. The imposition of conscription evoked riots and public disobedience in Quebec during both world wars.

15. "Bleeding-Heart Conservatives," Canada survey, *The Economist*, October 8, 1988, p. 4.

16. Philip Resnick, *Parliament vs. People: An Essay on Democracy and Canadian Political Culture* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984), p. 13.

17. Frank Underhill, *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1960) p. 222.

18. Mason Wade, "Quebec and the French Revolution of 1789," in J.M. Bumsted, ed., *Canadian History before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations* (Georgetown, Ont.: Irwin-Dorsey, 1972), p. 252.

19. "Engels to Sorge," February 8, 1890, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 467; and "Engels to Sorge," September 10, 1888, in *idem*, *Letters to Americans* (New York: International Publishers, 1953), p. 204.

20. Arthur K. Davis, "Canadian Society and History as Hinterland versus Metropolis," in Richard J. Ossenbarg, ed., *Canadian Society: Pluralism, Change and Conflict* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1971), pp. 22-29.

21. Reg Whitaker, "Images of the State in Canada," in Leo Panitch, ed., *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 34, 39 (italics in original). See also Gordon T. Stewart, *The Origins of Canadian Politics: A Comparative Approach* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), pp. 92-93, 96-99.

22. See, for example, Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955); and Gad Horowitz, "Notes on 'Con-

servatism, Liberalism and Socialism in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 11 (June 1978): 390.

23. Gad Horowitz, "Red Tory," in William Kilbourn, ed., *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 255 (emphasis in original). See also idem, *Canadian Labour in Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 1-52.

24. Northrop Frye, "Letters in Canada: 1952, Part I: Publications in English," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 22 (April 1953): 273.

25. See S.D. Clark, *Church and Sect in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948).

26. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 461.

27. William Christian and Colin Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1983), p. 29, 31.

28. S.D. Clark, *The Developing Canadian Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), p. 232. See also Harold A. Innis, *Essays in Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), pp. 62-77, 78-96, 97-107, 156-175, 200-210; idem, *The Fur Trade in Canada*; and Donald G. Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Houghton Mifflin, 1958). For an evaluation of the literature, see J.T. McLeod, "The Free Enterprise Dodo Is No Phoenix," *The Canadian Forum* 56 (August 1976): 6-13.

29. Richard Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox: Canada in North America* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 11. For a critique of the geographic argument about Canadian character, see Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in Peter Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 3-26.

30. Gwyn, *The 49th Paradox*, pp. 185-187. See also Alan F.J. Artibise, "Canada as an Urban Nation," *Daedalus* 117 (Fall 1988): 237-239.

31. Michael A. Goldberg and John Mercer, *The Myth of the North American City: Continentalism Challenged* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986), p. 116.

32. Edgar W. McInnis, *The Unguarded Frontier* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1942), pp. 306-307. See also Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes 1849-1969* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1989).

33. Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Rites of Assent: Rhetoric, Ritual, and the Ideology of American Consensus," in Sam B. Girgus, ed., *The American Self: Myth, Ideology and Popular Culture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), pp. 5-6.

34. Alan C. Cairns, "Political Science in Canada and the Americanization Issue," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 8 (June 1975): 217.

35. A.J.M. Smith, "Evolution and Revolution as Aspects of English-Canadian and American Literature," in R.A. Preston, ed., *Perspectives on Revolution and Evolution* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1979), p. 234.

36. Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), pp. 31-32.

37. Stanley Fogel, *A Tale of Two Countries: Contemporary Fiction in English Canada and the United States* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1984), p. 19. For a discussion of the impact of the American myth on writers, see pp. 14-18.

38. W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 86.

39. Bercovitch, "The Rites of Assent," p. 24.

40. Underhill, *In Search of Canadian Liberalism*, p. 222.

41. Blair Fraser, *The Search for Identity: Canada, 1945-67* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), p. 301. See also S.D. Clark, in H.F. Angus, ed., *Canada and Her Great Neighbor: Sociological Surveys of Opinions and Attitudes in Canada Concerning the United States* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1938), pp. 243, 245.

42. Robin Winks, "Whodunit?: Canadian Society as Reflected in Its Detective Fiction," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 17 (Winter 1987-88): 377.

43. David M. Potter, "Canadian Views of the United States as a Reflex of Canadian Values: A Commentary," in S.F. Wise and R.C. Brown, *Canada Views the United States: Nineteenth-Century Political Attitudes* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), pp. 127-129.

44. John Charles Weaver, "Imperiled Dreams: Canadian Opposition to the American Empire, 1918-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Department of History, Duke University, 1973), pp. 78-79.

45. James Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 495-496.

46. Ibid., pp. 467, 501-502.

47. Weaver, "Imperiled Dreams," pp. 159-160.

48. H. Blair Neatby, *The Politics of Chaos: Canada in the Thirties* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), pp. 10-14. He summarizes research reported in Angus, ed., *Canada and Her Great Neighbor*, especially the section by S.D. Clark, pp. 392-438.

49. For a statement by Canada's foremost contemporary conservative philosopher on the differences between American and Canadian conservatism, see George Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1965), pp. 64-65, 70-71. See also Charles Taylor, *Radical Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982).