Constructing a *Canadian* Narrative: Conditions for Critique in the Multicultural Nation

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 2006

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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In Canada, 'official multiculturalism' is often viewed as working against historical exclusions by actively promoting a national culture of openness and diversity, and fostering a community of communities, united by mutual recognition and the celebration of differences. Through this characterization, the Canadian nation narrative has shifted to accommodate formerly excluded stories so that it is now the space of *all* stories. I argue that it is in these unity-seeking discourses that so inflect discussions of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada that critique is co-opted and, in the guise of inclusion, it exists in a weakened and static iteration. I outline a theoretical framework by working through texts that broadly link the study of nation-building with the construction of nation narratives or national histories and contextualize this through an examination of critical theories about nation-building in Canada.

I apply this theoretical framework to two sites: statistics and literature. More specifically, I look at how census 'identity' ('ethnic origins' and 'visible minority') categories are constructed as more or less neutral statistical measurement tools used to further and legitimate multicultural narratives of the nation. For example, I examine Michael Adams' *Unlikely Utopia* in order to show how the findings of censuses and public opinion polls are integrated into a multicultural nation narrative. The fiction I discuss – Joy Kogawa's *Obasan,* Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* and David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* – illuminates how narrative practices can work to reinforce nation-building practices or critique them, and, at times, serve to illustrate how critique itself can work to reinforce the relationships it analyses. I suggest that reading Canadian immigrant narratives as political texts can work to reinforce and/or disrupt the imagined coherence of the multicultural nation narrative by resisting closures and domains of acceptable speech, as well as disrupting the imposed linearity of nation narratives. By reading performances of nationhood as processes of narrativization, it is possible to critically examine the exclusions, implicit and explicit, of the construction of an intelligible nation.

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Dedication

For my family

Introduction

Narrative, critique, nation

This study critically analyses a politics of narrative and narrativization in the context of 'nation' and 'nation-building' in Canada. Specifically, I argue that Canadian multiculturalism is a coherence-seeking nation-building practice that works by co-opting critical narratives into a unitary nation narrative built on diversity. I begin from the assertion that a nation cannot be separated from a narrative; that is, the concept of 'nation' needs a narrative in order to exist. I understand narrative as a method of putting ideas, events or concepts in relation to each other. Narrative is a way of both organizing the world and offering a reference for where one is located and how one might act. In this way, a narrative is always to some extent coherence-seeking, though not necessarily coherent; a narrative is always shifting and adapting. It is not necessarily linear or progressive. That said, one function of a *nation*'s narrative is often linear and progressive, working to cohere the space (territory) and time (history) of the perceived nation and to make its citizens intelligible to one another as having the nation in common, forging a sense of 'belonging', 'home,' 'community.'

In the past thirty years, much scholarship has offered insight on how, and by whom, the narrative of a 'nation' is constructed, but there is agreement that a common narrative is necessary for the possibility of a national imaginary. This narrative is usually singular, and functions to clarify potential ambiguities about a nation's 'people,' acting as the story to refer to in questions considering the nation. It includes many stories that work towards securing the nation-state and changes, as is necessary to maintain the security

and sovereignty of the nation-state. These changes to the nation's narrative, I argue, often take place through the co-optation of critique.

Before turning to the central role the co-optation of critique plays in this, I want to first work through the relationship between 'narrative' and 'nation,' as mediated and reproduced by the state. It's difficult to talk about the nation without talking about the nation-state construction; that is, the state as the means through which the nation expresses and advances its identity, an identity that is constructed and reconstructed through narrative. If nations have narratives that are necessary to their self-description, self-understanding, or self-identification, the state too, through its institutions, furthers certain narratives, co-opts others and excludes still others (that it might also ultimately co-opt). My focus in this thesis is on co-optation based around a national imperative, where a 'nation' is, after Benedict Anderson, "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1991, 6). The nation as community is held in common through a common imagining of this community – as limited in scope (not everyone is a member) and as self-determining (sovereign). Here, I stress the ways national community is maintained through the process of the continual construction of common narratives and the co-optation of critical or excluded narratives.

A nation-state, as understood through the context of the construction and protection of a common narrative, then, is a mutually-sustaining relationship that is in tension with the possibility of multiple 'nations' (and their disparate narratives) or even the presence of those not defined (and not defining themselves) as part of a nation, but who nonetheless inhabit claimed 'national' spaces. The practices of the mutually-sustaining relationship I've identified as the nation-state, based around containing and

furthering a common narrative (in effect, 'policing' the borders of a nation narrative) as a means of containing and defining a community or group can also be described as 'nationalism.' Here, nationalism is an integrative practice of co-optation (but also assimilation and exclusion). The 'nation-state' and 'nationalism' relationships form the basis of this study and the basis for an examination of a relationship between *a* state (in multiple iterations, through multiple practices and multiple means and avenues of action, but nonetheless still inhabiting *a* dominant position) and those outside of the nation(s) associated with that state. The emphasis is on engaging various kinds of narratives as critical of dominant or totalizing stories, and examining the means through which these dominant stories adapt to and absorb critique.

These disparate, counter-, or 'other' narratives, narratives produced and/or reiterated by those outside the dominant national imaginary who nonetheless reside within the claimed space of the nation-state, pose a problem for the maintenance of the national imaginary. These narratives not only represent conflicting stories of experience in the space of the nation-state, but also bring in alternative understandings of both space and time from outside the claimed sovereign space of the nation-state and the narrative processes functioning to secure the time framing of the nation-state, that is, the nation-state's historical location. Functioning as critical narratives, counternational narratives do not fall in with unity-seeking national imperatives. These narratives do not cohere to the nation narrative and are sublimated within it in order to maintain the narrative coherence of the nation-state. For example, in Canada, the historically excluded stories of immigrants are becoming 'national' stories, as I will demonstrate below.

In this way, nation narratives shift, incorporating critique. For this reason, counternational narratives - in order to remain 'counter' - must also shift, and be repeated in their shifting iterations. Furthermore, counternational narratives foster links and relationships *between* and *within* critical narratives themselves, subverting the reproduction of the one/many, state/other binaries.

Reading political relationships through the lens of narrative construction allows for a narrativization of relationships not considered overtly political. This kind of reading also sustains continuous possibilities for critique not foregrounded by more prescriptive studies of the uses of narrative in the construction of identity. Studying nationalism through the lens of narrative is particularly compelling because of the way in which a method based on narrative practice can be both critical and/or illuminating and insidious. My aim is not to reproduce the ways narrative practice can be directed towards a *use* of narrative or story as justificatory of the practices of a nation-state or towards the co-optation of critical narratives but rather to show that the distinction between these kinds of practices is quite tenuous, as processes of narrativization easily lend themselves to co-optation. I study narrative precisely because narratives are so often co-opted. As narratives are mobilized for a particular purpose, they are co-opted as justificatory mechanisms.

It is therefore the ambiguous juncture between critical and co-optive practice that I seek to explore here. Here it is necessary to clarify what I mean by both critical practice and co-optive practice, as I navigate the juncture between them in discussing the co-optation of critique. I am not offering static definitions. Instead, I am offering a dynamic description of the structural relationship between critique and co-optation. While the

definitions of these terms may change, the relation between them remains the same. To be critical, a practice must be ongoing. Critique does not seek ends or solutions, but continually questions the premises and logics in addition to the contents of a system. As I elaborate in Chapter 1, co-optation is built into critique. That is to say, as critique is an ongoing practice, there is an expectation that critical arguments will be eventually incorporated into the system that is being critiqued.

The nation is, by the descriptions outlined thus far, an integrative system based on co-optation, where co-optation not only becomes part of a progressive national story, but is perceived as a better option for the group whose story is being co-opted as well as a means of marginalizing further critique. If a critical narrative represents a different possible imagining of space and history than a nation narrative, co-optation is a shift in both the location and temporality of the critical narrative. When a critical narrative becomes a national narrative, it is implicated in the securing of a national space and a national time that is focused on the present and directed towards the future, as a past is secured specifically *as* and *in* a past.

While this text specifically addresses the political relationship between 'nation' and 'narrative' (and nation-building as specifically co-optive), it has broader applications and implications. The understanding pursued here is that the political implications of narrative practice extend beyond and are not exclusive to nation-building practices and identity (re)affirming stories. It is my sense, and my hope, that narrative and narrativizing practices can be deployed to critique universalizing and/or exclusionary or diversionary nation-building practices in addition to shoring up a 'nation' and a 'people.' While the use of narrative has been deployed to universalize, it can also be used to disrupt. While

some narratives work to bind together, make intelligible and foster communal

understanding, there are narratives that can be read differently, as those that do not seek,

but explore and critique. A narrative need not work entirely as a reference point or as a

means of constituting a 'people'.[1] These kinds of *uses* of narrative ignore or negate the

possibility of a wider array of narrative *practices* - non-linear understandings of time, of

community, of experience within the same space. Further, they take 'narrative' as

something to refer to rather than something that is always already in process that must be

considered in order to think about how political practices might be narrativized rather

than narratives politicized. That said, in this text, I seek not to outline these possibilities,

but rather to shed light on the processes through which nation narrative practices co-opt,

recuperate, and subsume critique. It is my hope that by doing this a different critical tactic

may eventually develop (and that perhaps my own critical practices in this thesis might

be such a tactic). This thesis is explanatory, but in its focus on narrative as a

methodology, it presents explanation as a kind of critique.

This way of examining narrative as political – a consideration of the ways certain

kinds of stories have made and could be encouraged to make certain kinds of

collectivities – is in the background of the narrative presented here. I posit both Michael

Shapiro's reading of narrative as explicitly critical[2] and my own move of thinking

through the co-optation of critical narratives to delineate more specifically the way I read

narrative as political *method* or *process* here. Shapiro calls the method of reading

narrative and narrative *as* method 'a literary reading.' In this thesis, I borrow and expand

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[1] For an example of the way 'people-constituting' narratives are and can be problematically *used* and reference points and adjudicated for their consistency with a universalizing norm, see Smith 2003.
[2] See Shapiro 2004, 2001, 1999, 1988.

on Shapiro's concept of a 'literary reading'. A literary reading reveals mythologizing and neutralizing stories. Shapiro writes that such a method "transforms an austerely written policy analysis into a legitimating pamphlet, a celebration of part of the existing order" (1984b, 246). The task in this thesis is to illuminate the functioning of this order and the way it forecloses critique by always already incorporating it. I like to think of my method as more specifically a narrative analysis that emphasizes affect through a politics of language and story, focusing on what the narrative *does* (both its affect and effects).

On reading, writing, discourse and possibility

I undertake this project by following Shapiro's method of breaking down disciplinary and representational boundaries by reading political, social, and literary acts and practices as working to construct a coherent nation narrative that foregrounds an idea of Canadian multiculturalism. My examination of the relationship between 'narrative' and 'nation' follows from Shapiro's articulation of counter(national)narratives. I will examine questions of narrative practice and community by foregrounding the imposition of coherence through the exclusion of certain narratives, in relation to the way coherence projects function as intelligibility projects that rely on performance. This focus on the varied ways in which nation narratives are both deployed as coherence building mechanisms and adapt to incorporate critical narratives can, I hope, itself work as a kind of critical narrative.

At the center of this study are contentions around possibilities of sustained critique and the necessity for comfort with discomfort; that is, against the imposition of coherence. At stake in reading a wide variety of texts as part of, in opposition to, or outside of, nation narrative constructions are possibilities for those implicated in these

narratives. These are possibilities to open up space, continually redefining questions of a

multicultural nation that seeks to construct inclusive conceptions of national subjects,

identifications that are not always reflective of the fluidity of the identities they seek to

describe.

In undertaking this project, the multiple uses of texts--especially literary texts—

are understood as modes of politically asserting national imaginaries, and as modes of

discussing and disrupting those imaginaries. Reading and writing are understood as

political acts where, in the words of Erin Manning,

> Reading is an interpretive gesture always to come that
> challenges my subjectivity-in-process. The margin opened
> by readability is the possibility of the rearticulation of the
> political. Tracing a path to an opening, reading can also be
> formulated as a proposal for an encounter with the
> other…The political is cast as this reading of the other that
> insists on the ultimate indecipherability of him or herself.
> Reading is not just a tranquil act of deciphering, but an
> exposition of the irreducibility of the other (as text, as
> world, as human being). *Reading is politics-in-the-making*
> (2003, 151, emphasis added).

Though this study appears to focus on the importance of writing in generating

counternarratives, it is important to stress that the process of reading is no less critical to

the assertion, articulation and proliferation of different kinds of narratives. I take reading

and writing to be in a constant relationship with the text that is produced, interpreted and

reproduced through these processes. Thus, for each practice of writing and each practice

of reading, a myriad of possible narratives are generated. Both reading and writing are

political processes in a way that resists final understandings in favour of a continued (and

continual) encounter.

This study asserts that continual narrative practice enables an understanding of the common spaces in which political relations occur. As noted above, however, this process can be, and often is, co-opted by universalizing discourses that reduce the multiplicity of stories. What kinds of narratives work differently from conceptualizations of reductive, linear, nation narratives? Rather than aiming to include all stories in a singular narrative, it is necessary instead to allow ourselves to be comfortable with our discomfort around ambivalence and fragmentation.

Canadian multicultural nationalism

The Canadian context exemplifies this approach to narrative practice, offering an example of the co-optation of critical narratives that I aim to articulate. In Canada, the nation narrative has shifted to accommodate disparate, formerly critical and excluded stories. The nation narrative is now posited as the space of *all* stories. All historicized constructions are the histories of the nation. Because a story of a Canadian nation has, since prior to Confederation, integrated constantly changing conceptions of diversity into the national imaginary, the reworking of previously excluded narratives into a celebrated diversity is not a significant departure from previous ways of reading the nation narrative[3]. That is to say, this kind of coherence-seeking through an understanding of diversity is not new: the multicultural context is a more recent articulation. A conceptualization of the inclusion of all stories as national stories still poses a problem, however, when one asks how stories are related to each other in the construction of a (still singular) nation narrative. What happens to the previous nation narrative, the one

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[3] For similar arguments around both a history of Canadian diversity, and scholarship around Canadian diversity, see also Day 2000, Mackey 1999 and Kernerman 2005, also discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

that excluded certain 'other' stories? Is it discounted or disavowed? Does it continue to exist or fall away? How does this previously dominant nation narrative relate to other now included suddenly 'national' narratives? Most importantly, what happens to critique? If all narratives are suddenly nation narratives, are all narratives always already co-opted?

This is a theoretically oriented study with a practical focus, outlining first the theoretical, methodological and historical underpinning of the work and then contextualizing it through case studies around discourses of Canadian multiculturalism. These case studies shed light on the theoretical questions at play by both concretizing them and showing how nation narratives function in different sites. Through these studies I aim to demonstrate the methodology I set out as a means to deconstruct the constructions, workings, and uses of nation narratives.

Chapters 1 and 2 set out the theories, debates, and questions framing discourses of Canadian multiculturalism. In Chapter 3, I offer an exploration of the construction of 'identity categories' as statistical measurement tools. Identity categories used in statistics can further and legitimate nation narratives but can also be points of group coalescence and critique. I consider the way statistics, specifically census categories and statistics compiled around immigration, have contributed to and continue to contribute to, readings of insiders and outsiders in constructions and considerations of a Canadian nation and the interests at play in the construction of 'official' identity categories for statistics purposes. Here, I suggest that that the identity category 'multicultural' was constructed through a transformative reduction of multiple immigrant and outsider identities and mobilized as a central part of a corresponding multicultural nation narrative.

In the final chapter, I ask what serves as a 'nation narrative' in the case of critical narratives mobilized and popularly read as multicultural. I address the role of immigrant Canadian literatures as part of Canadian multiculturalism in relation to Shapiro's conception of 'cultural governance', which Shapiro describes as "state-sponsored and encouraged developments of the artistic forms through which they have sought to create the…coherent national cultures that are implied in the nation-state conjunction" (2004, xi). The argument is that reading literary narratives as political texts can work to reinforce and/or disrupt the imagined coherence of the multicultural nation narrative by resisting closures and domains of acceptable speech, as well as disrupting the linearity of nation narratives. I examine Joy Kogawa's *Obasan,* Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* and David Chariandy's *Soucouyant*, suggesting the fluidity of critical narratives as working within and/or outside questions of nation-building. Each of these novels presents a different kind of critique of a Canadian nation narrative, but, to some extent, each of these critical stances is always already incorporated into a multicultural Canadian nation narrative

It is in the unity-seeking discourses that so inflect discussions of diversity and multiculturalism in Canada that a critique of a 'multicultural as national' imaginary is subsumed and, in the guise of inclusion, permitted to exist in a weakened and static iteration. My sense is that it is necessary to re-imagine and re-conceive of the relationships between the way people perceive the space they inhabit, to other ways of perceiving, and to ways of reading and writing narratives (and histories *as* narratives). In this sense, the space called Canada could be, simply, "a shared space of encounter" (Shapiro 2000, 82), where there is an acknowledgment of ambiguity through myriad

means of considering and living in a shared space permeated by many different

narratives. The concept of 'encounter' is particularly important to this idea. An encounter

signifies a meeting, but does not insist on a sustained interaction or a static or completed

relation; rather, there is an emphasis on chance, on the fleeting character of the relation,

what Manning calls its 'ephemerality.' Drawing from the work of Jean-Luc Nancy,

Shapiro writes that through the articulation of "a shared space of encounter", Nancy seeks

> a politics sensitive to the temporal junctures and
> disjunctures that every political collective encompasses…
> [and] want[s] to figure the structure of the social bond as a
> 'community of literature', an uneasy and conflictual
> articulation… of writing performances that challenge the
> state's autobiographical attempts to perform historical
> coherence (2000, 82).

This is the kind of performance that this thesis attempts by juxtaposing the theoretical

arguments in the first and second chapters with the case studies of statistical

methodologies and the positioning and repositioning of a variety of literary narratives

beside each other. Put simply, one aim is to disrupt the nation-state's coherence-seeking

performances by pointing to incoherences and other possible means of seeking coherence

and understandings of coherence in the space of the nation-state. Further, however, the

reiteration and absorption of these incoherences *into* a narrative of the nation-state

maintains the need to generate repeatedly these kinds of disruptions and rearticulate them

in different ways, through different means. This is the work of critique, under the

assumption of co-optation.

However, there is a tension between the necessary disruption of dominant

narratives and a possible unintelligibility implicit in calling for this kind of move – a risk

that disruption will be incoherent. Theoretical work at times risks constructing critical

spaces that alienate in their abstraction, and, rather than working towards maintaining

relation, risk unintelligibility, and the severing of the link between the objects of critique

and the critical discourse. To this end, Shapiro writes that "one cannot be wholly

unintelligible while exposing the practices of intelligibility; analysis and criticism of this

kind must push off from shore but keep the land in sight" (1988, xiii). Direct engagement

is necessary and Shapiro underscores the importance of "provok[ing] encounter rather

than counselling estrangement" (1999, 71). Thus, the emphasis on 'encounter' is not only

in an abstract context of possible modes of relation, but also in the relation between the

identification of questions in a concrete realm and their elaboration in the theoretical.

This is the context from which this study is oriented.

Chapter 1: Theories of narrative, theories of nations

The much rehearsed contention in the background of this study is that the coherence or unity of a state is often secured through narrativized performances of nationhood. What I call 'narrativization' is a process through which events and ideas are placed in relation to each other through the continual construction of a coherence-seeking and constantly repeated narrative. By reading different kinds of nation narrative performances as texts, as events and processes that are written and constructed and thus can be read critically, it is possible to illuminate the continued exclusions, implicit and explicit, of the construction of an intelligible nation(-state). This illumination of exclusions, in turn, opens up additional questions around the co-optation, recuperation and re-iteration of critical discourses into nation narratives. As well, it suggests the necessity of sustained critical discourse and the positing of critical narratives.

A narrative is implied in any form of collectivity, community, being-in-common, or sharing of a space. Is it possible to consider a collective, community, nation without a common story? That is to say, can disparate accounts of collectivity share a space that maintains a kind of coherence? This chapter responds to and follows from the work of Michael Shapiro who works as a kind of 'counternational' storyteller, examining specific narratives and narrative practices as a means to not only critique, but also to illuminate possibilities. Reading all texts as stories, Shapiro introduces all stories as political, stressing that some narratives are normalized and centered in accordance with dominant viewpoints. In this way, Shapiro both denaturalizes the stated objectivity of social scientific writing and dominant narratives around conceptions of nation – by reading

them *as narratives* rather than as 'facts' or 'knowledge' – and introduces excluded narratives as speaking counter to that presented as given. There is a need to emphasize not only exclusions, those practices that render certain stories 'outside' and practices that work to construct an 'inside' (2004, 19), but also to interrogate the relationships between those 'outside' practices that are re-iterated as 'inside' and the singularities and pluralities that exist in both 'inside' and 'outside.' This method is one of continual disruption (what I call 'sustained critique' through most of this thesis and develop in greater detail in the conclusion) that adapts and continues as some critical narratives are recuperated into dominant stories.

I begin by recalling and critically examining two of the most powerful theories of nationalism: those developed by Benedict Anderson (1991) and Ernest Gellner (1983). While their respective foci are on the proliferation of ideas as national through media and education (for the particular functional purpose of industrial progress in Gellner's case), both present nation-building as necessarily co-optive. My interest in these ideas is in how they underpin later examinations explicitly focused on reading nations as narratives that construct temporal coherence as a means of securing state territory. Walter Benjamin's discussion of the ambivalent relationship between narrative and history is instructive here. Benjamin refers to a relationship that is always already in flux, based on the oscillation between thinking historical time in fragments and seeking to link these fragments. I turn to Homi Bhabha's theorization of the relationship between the pedagogical and performative imperatives of national identity in order to show both how a nation narrative is reinforced and how it shifts through repeated performance. Taking up Shapiro's considerations of multiplicities and counternarratives in national spaces, I

gesture towards the kinds of ideas about nation and nationalism at play in attempts to secure a nation as a particular kind of coherent community. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to put forward a conception of a relationship between narrative and community that does not rely on ideas about nation.[4] Here, I proceed by thinking of community, like narrative, as an ongoing process that should not be thought of in terms of finalities as, in the words of Shapiro, "community or nationhood… require 'endless work,' a process of negotiation and contestation rather than mythologizing" (2004, 67).

Nationalism, time and history

Two of the most influential theorizations of the development of the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' in the 20th century are those of Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner. While the methodology this study follows stems from and can be linked to Anderson's approach in its focus on common imaginaries and shifting conceptions of thinking, writing and constructing historical nation narratives, I contend that it is a Gellnerian mode of thought that animates the conceptualization of multiculturalism as a 'high culture' that seeks to unify fragmented collectivities in Canada.

In theorizing the 'nation' concept and its securitization through practices of nationalism, neither Anderson nor Gellner places any particular stress on the nation *as such*. Rather, their emphases are on the processes through which 'nationness' develops and is reified and, for Gellner, the reasons why (which are not posited in terms of valuation). These methods have the effect of naturalizing the nation as both the object of study and a unit of organization. Here, I take up Anderson and Gellner's theorizations as a way to work through how the nation as 'official' unit of organization justifies itself

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[4] For one articulation of what this kind of thinking about community might look like, see Nancy 1991.

through not only narrative, but also through the co-optation and exclusion of incompatible critical narratives. There is, I contend, a distinction between co-optation and assimilation in particular that is difficult to square in the context of the relationship between nation narratives and counternational narratives. While co-optation requires that the system doing the co-opting *shift*, by taking up the narrative that is being co-opted, assimilation simply *incorporates* –in effect, erases or neutralizes – that which is assimilated. The system doing the assimilating doesn't change. In that sense, it is uncertain that the *assimilation* of a critical or counternational narrative is possible. When counternational or critical narratives are taken up by a system that is forwarding a dominant narrative, they are either co-opted or excluded. It is in this sense that I read the context of nationalism as co-optive, while Anderson and Gellner focus much more on the assimilative and exclusionary aspects of nationalism, as they do not emphasize the way the *contents* of nation narratives work towards building national imaginaries.

Benedict Anderson's celebrated study of the fomentation of a national imaginary is rooted in a conception of the imagined community as both "inherently limited and sovereign" (1991, 6). Anderson posits that it is through print languages that a national consciousness is possible. National consciousness is conceived and developed specifically through the forms of the novel and the newspaper, "[f]or these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation" (25). The nation is thus imagined as a community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7), a relationship fostered through the mass proliferation of common, national texts that bring together the members of a 'nation' who

will never know each other, yet maintain a 'national camaraderie' by imagining themselves and each other as co-nationals.

Canadian histories of diversity, multiculturalism and immigration, as facilitated both by popular media and official state publications reflect the sense of commonality at the centre of Anderson's account of nation-building. From Historica's popular series of "Heritage Minutes"[5] to CBC Radio's 2010 summer series "Promised Land"[6] to the ways community diversity events are categorized and represented as national community events that extend to a long, continuous history (Edmonton's and other cities' Heritage festivals are examples[7]), to the kinds of literary texts foregrounded as multicultural (as discussed in Chapter 4), and the identifying categories constructed for those of 'diverse heritage' (as discussed in Chapter 3), positive stories about the existence and celebration of diversity are posited as national, unity-seeking stories.

However, the Canadian case is also closely linked to the kind of nationalism Anderson terms 'official nationalism.' Anderson suggests that a top-down 'official nationalism' emerged in reaction to the kinds of 'organic' nationalisms he describes –

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[5] Rukszto (2005) critically examines how "Heritage Minutes" present the limits of the presentation of dominant narratives of the Canadian nation by comparing 'Heritage Minutes' with satirical representations of nation. Historica's "Heritage Minutes" videos are available to view online at
<http://www.histori.ca/minutes/section.do?className=ca.histori.minutes.entity.ClassicMinute>.

[6] "Promised Land" presents first person stories of escape that "start… anywhere" but "always end.. in Canada." Podcasts and descriptions of the program are available through the CBC website: http://www.cbc.ca/promisedland.

[7] The Edmonton Heritage Festival, celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2010, describes itself as a "premier three-day showcase of Canada's vibrant multicultural heritage" where visitors can "[s]ample culinary delicacies, see creative performances, shop for crafts, artwork, and clothing, or chat with people eager to tell you a little about their cultural roots and their present-day communities in Canada" (Edmonton Heritage Festival). More information about Edmonton's Heritage Festival is available through the festival website: http://www.heritage-festival.com/.

those related to national administrative systems and the rise of print capitalism. He writes

that "[official] nationalisms were historically 'impossible' until after the appearance of

popular linguistic-nationalisms, for, at bottom, they were *responses* by power-groups

…Such official nationalisms were conservative, not to say reactionary, *policies*, adapted

from the model of the largely spontaneous popular nationalisms that preceded them"

(109-10). It is in official nationalisms, particularly, that it is possible to locate the

workings of co-optive practices as the state system takes up popular ideas and transfers

them into policy "linked to the preservation of imperial-dynastic interests" (159). In

Canada, the threat to which official nationalisms respond is fragmentation that works

against conceptions of imagined community. The response of official nationalism is to

construct a 'mosaic' from the fragments *as* Canada's 'official nationalism,' thereby

constructing a national imaginary. This conception underscores an idea of a fragment as

always implying a seeking or an existence of a totality. It is *totality* that allows the shift

from *relation* to *collective*; there is a presumption that the relations must add up. The

problem, then, is how to think about relation without re-capturing it into a pre-conceived

understanding of a bigger whole. It is in this sense, that the co-optation of critical

narratives as always implicit in nation-building can be understood.

In the case of Canadian multicultural nationalism, there is a popular element to

the construction of policy: the need to concretize multiculturalism as a policy was at least

in part driven by popular lobbying.[8] Nonetheless, the reification of multiculturalism as

policy, while affirming for some groups an official place within the Canadian polity,

always runs the risk of foreclosing the possibilities of contesting and further engaging the

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[8] For critical historical overviews of the processes through which multiculturalism
became official policy in Canada, see Day 2002, Mackey 2002.

idea of a multicultural nation by defining precisely what multiculturalism is and is not (in policy)[9], and, at the same time, maintaining an open and vague *symbolic* definition so as to preclude possibilities for critique. Put simply, multiculturalism policy raises a risk of continued exclusions as the policy addresses those that have lobbied, while remaining broad enough to potentially address anyone.

Anderson argues that a shift in conceptions of time facilitates the possibility for a national imaginary. Time is important to discuss here because it is both a key context through which to understand the emergence of nationalism as an idea and a good example through which to think about how the co-optation and integration of critical narratives into nation narratives works. The idea of simultaneity as understood through what Walter Benjamin calls 'Messianic time' is unintelligible to contemporary understandings of time. Anderson, with Benjamin, describes this kind of simultaneity with reference to the way medieval Christians both understood themselves to be 'close' to Christ (depicting the Virgin Mary in 'modern dress', for example) and perceived a second coming as possible at any moment. In this sense, then, a present becomes no longer a link in a chain of events; rather, in being potentially a Messianic moment, the present is what Anderson, after Benjamin calls, "a simultaneity of past and future". Here, 'meanwhile' cannot *mean,* as all times and understandings are one.

By contrast, contemporary understandings of simultaneity are linked to a shift to what Benjamin calls, 'empty, homogenous time'. Here, "simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar" (Anderson 1991, 24). This kind of

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[9] The language and possible interpretations of the Multiculturalism Act are both explicit and vague: Canadian Multiculturalism Act. *RSC 1985*.

simultaneity underpins the idea of co-national moving together through empty, homogenous time, unaware of each other, just as the nation as a whole is "conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (1991, 26). In a way, this kind of understanding of time, as an emptiness to be filled in with history, enables the co-optation of time as the recuperation of critical narratives into a nation time.

This conception of time is exemplified in the modern nationalist novel, where the structure of the novel, much like the relationships between citizens in a nation, works within a conception of 'homogenous, empty time' as the reader assumes that multiple events occur at once. The reader is, in effect, omniscient. Anderson shows how, in nationalist novels, the time of the novel (its 'interior time') translates to the 'exterior' time of readers' lives, asserting their commonality (27). The writer situates characters within a 'society', and they are relatable, discussed with an audience of similar readers (29). In this way, the characters in (some of) the multicultural narratives under examination in the final chapter of this thesis function as both 'other' and 'same', as a means of illuminating 'otherness' for the purposes of celebrating diversity and fostering unity and coherence, but also keeping this 'otherness' at arm's length, or neutralizing it as a 'domesticated' other. In the novels I examine in Chapter 4, the reader *is* omniscient even if the texts are not examples of the kind of nationalist novels Anderson describes. These novels are not exactly superimposed onto a 'homogenous, empty time,' as these multicultural stories (or stories constructed or taken up as multicultural) are either situated in a pre-multicultural past and/or hinge on a multicultural transformation where the reader can anticipate the multicultural future to come.

Benjamin's understanding of history hinges on an understanding that there is a need to make links between events and to connect them in a narrative structure. However, there is also an understanding that these links are tenuous and subject to change.[10] Through the metaphor of the 'Angel of History,' Benjamin shows that "where we perceive a chain of events," the Angel of History sees only rubble, and though the Angel can make a whole from this rubble, the storm that is 'progress', or "empty, homogenous time," propels both the Angel and the wreckage 'forward' (257-8). Benjamin's foregrounding of fragments – the disparate wreckage that makes up history before it is perceived as a chain of events – is important to consider *in relation* to the need to make these chains. By viewing each historical subject as a 'monad', it is possible to separate the subject from the chain (or web), from "the homogenous course of history". For Benjamin, this move represents "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed" (263) and, for this study, a means to illuminate fragments that have been excluded from larger totalizing narratives. The construction of narratives is a necessary move in interpreting and apprehending surroundings and circumstances. However, this need to narrativize is always already imbued with the ambivalence of the narrative links that have already been constructed and the possibility that these links are themselves the result of present understandings and existing power relationships. Thus, it is necessary to maintain this ambivalence in constantly working and reworking relationships and the spaces and times in which these occur.

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[10] It is the tenuousness and ambivalence of the links and fragments in and of Benjamin's thought that makes it so compelling for my study of the co-optation of narrative. It is this ungraspability that makes Benjamin's narratives difficult to co-opt.

Homi Bhabha is critical of Anderson's reading of Benjamin's 'homogenous empty time,' writing that Anderson "misses the profound ambivalence that Benjamin places deep within the utterance of the narrative of modernity" (1994, 231). Bhabha's understanding of Anderson's formulation of the imagined community locates the missing 'otherness' of the imagined community in the time-space of the 'meanwhile.' In Anderson's formulation, 'meanwhile,' as a function of the simultaneity enabled by homogenous, empty modern time, "links together diverse acts and actors on the national stage who are entirely unaware of each other" (226). For Bhabha, 'meanwhile' is not a synchrony as it is for Anderson, but rather an articulation of different kinds of temporalities, in addition to the "cultural homogeneity and democratic anonymity" of the national community. For Bhabha, from 'meanwhile' emerge minority discourses that are missing from Anderson's theorization. Bhabha links the 'meanwhile' not to a synchrony, but rather to the performative, a view of the "present as succession without synchrony" (228). He takes issue with Anderson's construction of the novel as a "narrative of synchrony," perhaps hinting at the possibilities of the novel as a narrative of disjuncture (as I will explore through a reading of David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* in chapter 4 of this study). Bhabha views the 'meanwhile' not as simultaneous, but rather as instantaneous.[11] This view allows him to see this 'meanwhile' as "a space of iteration rather than a progressive or linear seriality" where "[t]he 'meanwhile' turns into quite another time, or ambivalent sign, of the national people. If it is the time of the people's anonymity it is also the space of the nation's anomie" (229). In my reading, a sense of 'meanwhile' is not necessarily exclusive to *either* a conception of synchrony or performance, but can act

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[11] I develop the distinction and relationship between 'instantaneous' and 'simultaneous' by examining the question of transformation in multicultural nationalism in Chapter 4.

through both – this might be the ambivalence of the totalistic and fragmented narratives Benjamin hints at. In this formulation, it might be possible to think about the play between the kind of synchrony and community fostered by and aimed at through 'nationalist' novels and the way in which this narrative is then performed and re-performed (in numerous kinds of readings and interpretations) and, through this performance, changes. As I argue below, performative mimesis works as parody and as a means through which to assert difference and subjectivity.[12]

In contrast to Anderson's characterization of the way a common imagining of national community eventually coalesces into an 'official' nationalism, Gellner's study of nationalism presents a conception of the formation of nations that explicitly links concepts of state as administrative unit and nation as a 'cultural' unit. Gellner defines "[n]ationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (1983, 1). For Gellner, nationalism is a mode of thought and practice that works to maintain the cohesiveness of modern industrial societies and in fact exists *specifically in order to perform this function*. The nation concept is the means to progress through the modern industrial economy. The contents of 'nationness' are irrelevant. Being 'Canadian' is incidental in this framework.

Gellner's characterization and justification of the means through which a nation-state functions draws out the parallels between this characterization and readings of nation-building in Canada, including, to some extent, the present study. Gellner describes the nationalist state as one that manages and reinforces "one kind of culture, one style of communication" (140). The nation-state maintains this culture through a centralized

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[12] For another reading of the possibilities for agency through mimesis, see Rancière 1999.

educational system run by the state "which monopolizes legitimate culture almost as much as it does legitimate violence" (140). This is necessary, for Gellner, because in order for individuals (and the individual is the unit of economic growth here) to be able to contribute productively, they must be socialized into "the same high culture." This system needs both a central culture and a central state where

> the culture needs the state; and the state probably needs the homogenous cultural branding of its flock, in a situation in which it cannot rely on largely eroded sub-groups either to police its citizens, or to inspire them with that minimum of moral zeal and social identification without which social life becomes very difficult (140).

Gellner identifies two conditions for 'nation-ness': the first, where two people are of the same nation if they share a culture, and the second, where two people are of the same nation if they recognize each other as such (Anderson's national consciousness, or imagined community). Gellner contests that nationalism imposes homogeneity. Rather, Gellner writes, "it is *the objective need for homogeneity* which is reflected in nationalism" (46, emphasis added). He contends that those cultures that do not industrialize disappear through either assimilation or obscurity (vis à vis 'industrialized' cultures) (47). Gellner is particularly critical of the possibility of cultural heterogeneity in industrial states, writing that "[i]n the industrial age only high cultures in the end effectively survive. Folk cultures and little traditions survive only artificially, kept going by language and folklore preservation societies" (117). For Gellner, then, there is effectively no co-optation of the kind I examine here. Those outside of the nation are either assimilated or disappear through 'obscurity'. The context of 'narrative' does not really figure into Gellner's characterization, and it is specifically *narrative* that is, I contend throughout this thesis, co-opted. As noted above, however, there are some "folk

cultures and little traditions" that are kept going "artificially." Could their preservation itself be a part of the national culture, a narrative that, in order to drive 'economic progress' has shifted to include minor cultural narratives (which are in themselves distinct from the critical or counternational narratives I focus on elsewhere)?

How might Canadian 'multiculturalism' as a kind of nationalism figure in Gellner's schematic? Is 'multiculturalism' an artificially maintained 'low' culture, or a particularly fruitful example of a 'high' culture, following Gellner's formulation? It is both and neither, as both options offered in Gellner's schematic construct a system that exists because *it has to*. The logic of multiculturalism as a 'national' mode of thought in Canada relies on its malleability, its consistent coherence- and unity-seeking impulses that persist despite the compatibility of Canadian public or civic culture *as* multiculturalism into a functionalist mould. It is this always already aspirational aspect of Canadian nation-building that is missing from Gellner's analysis. While Gellner's analysis can very easily be applied to the way in which Canada has been thought as a modern, industrialized nation, with a nationalized education system, there is also a sense in which Gellner's functionalist focus is diversionary. In its focus on relationships as necessary, Gellner's analysis (actively) naturalizes them and participates in the exclusion or assimilation of other ways of perceiving community. While Gellner's description can, indeed, be viewed as an apt characterization of Canada's development as a modern industrial nation-state with a national education system ensuring a high degree of literacy and educational cohesiveness, this focus and characterization are viewed as the only inevitable possibility, leaving out other possibilities, exclusions, oppressions and suppressions incurred in the process of nation-building. Such a focus on function, the

construction of a reasoning for a certain conception of existing circumstances, precludes a study of the processes through which these circumstances came to be, and what was and is excluded and made unintelligible as a result of this process.

Though not explicitly citing Gellner, Eva Mackey shows how something like Gellner's delineation of 'low' and 'high' cultures is mirrored in the perception of 'culture' presented by Canadian multiculturalism discourses. Here, the 'multi' cultures are identified, as "commodifiable fragments of culture, a defined range of traditional practices, cultural possessions and lifestyle choices" (151). These are simply *folk* practices, which are managed within the larger framework of Canadian national imaginaries, and are defined further as "less progressive folk *survivals,* within the totality of a *normative* national culture and the project of nation-building" (151). By contrast, the national culture ('high' culture, in Gellner's words) is viewed as "a whole and integrated way of life with shared and universal values, laws, education, institutions, and a state that should reflect the national culture" (1999, 151-2). In this way, a balance between the 'high' and 'low' cultures, to continue using Gellner's own terms, is struck in such a way as to maintain the dominance of the 'high' culture while foregrounding limited and heavily edited and managed versions of various 'low' cultures. As Mackey writes, "'multiculturalism' constructs a dominant and supposedly unified, white, unmarked core culture through the proliferation of forms of limited difference" (1999, 153). While debates around Canadian multiculturalism tend to focus on its contents and specific details (which groups are to be recognized in what ways), Mackey identifies the issue at stake more generally as about "the *authority* to define the project" (154). This is the question at stake in this study as well – how to begin thinking about possibilities of

disruption when any and all modes of 'difference' and 'otherness' are always delineated and assigned specifically managed spaces in a national project.

Critical readings of nation-building through narrative

I turn to Bhabha's conception of the relationship between the performative and pedagogic functions of the nation to point to another means of understanding the workings of national and counternational narratives. Here, Bhabha shows how through the teaching and repeated performance of nation narratives, 'nationality' is cohered. At the same time, however, he also introduces an articulation of the disjunctive temporalities of spaces constructed as 'national' that, working through an examination of the liminal spaces and supplementarities of that outside the 'national', introduce the possibilities of the performative and the pedagogical as modes of disruption as well as coherence. In contrast, I examine Shapiro's dual focus on the politicization of language and the positing of counternational narratives as modes of disruption and critique.

Bhabha's focus is, he writes, not on the discourse of nationalism, but, rather, about what he terms the 'locality of culture': "This *locality* is more *around* temporality than *about* historicity" (200-1). Bhabha writes against "the linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes," an approach that "most commonly signifies a people, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity." Rather, he writes through the force of narrative, a force that "brings to bear on cultural production and political projection" aiming to shed light on the "the ambivalence of the 'nation' as a narrative strategy" (201). He writes against assumptions of 'horizontal' national space, and articulates a doubleness, "a temporality of representation that moves between cultural formations and social processes without a

centred causal logic" (202). For Bhabha, narrative represents neither the historicism of national constructions, nor their imposition through state practices, but rather, "a strange temporality of the repetition of the one in the other – an oscillating movement in the governing *present* of cultural authority" (225). This movement, Bhabha argues, is ambivalent, and through it, it is possible to see the instability of national constructions and the possibilities in them.

Viewing the nation through ambivalences and contested temporalities, Bhabha suggests, is a means through which it is possible to shift conceptions of nation. A kind of agency emerges from the split between the pedagogical and the performative functions through which nationalism is iterated and affirmed, what Bhabha calls "the subject of cultural discourse." This opening itself enables the articulation of those marginal narratives illuminated through disjuncture. These counternarratives, emerging through those placed on the limits of the nation's narrative through the tension between performative and pedagogical (217), "continually evoke and erase [the nation's] totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities." (213). These are what Bhabha calls minority discourses. Bhabha writes that "[m]inority discourse acknowledges the status of national culture - and the people - as a contentious, performative space of the perplexity of the living in the midst of the pedagogical representations of the fullness of life" (225). This acknowledgement speaks to the conversations occurring in literatures that place themselves in a 'multicultural' space, but does not suggest the possibilities or content of such conversations. Put simply, what do 'minority discourses' *do,* once uncovered?

Mackey acknowledges the salience of this critique, but is critical of the usefulness of hybridity theories like Bhabha's. Her critique is that the kinds of 'in-between' spaces Bhabha and others find possibility in are implicated in the binary constructions they aim to subvert. This is not to say that a focus on the outside, or in-between, is to be discounted, but rather, that in undertaking this focus it is necessary to keep in mind its position within a paradigm and examine rather "how cultural difference is highlighted, and at the same time managed, limited, subsumed, and reconfigured within a broader project of national progress" (Mackey 1999, 73). For Mackey, the problem with asserting cultural hybridity is that it simply does not have the desired disruptive effect. These kinds of disruptions through difference, she writes, "are comfortably embraced and transformed… by the liberal multicultural tradition which sees cultural differences (hybrid or not) as colourful contributions to national culture and tradition" (164). This is where an approach mindful of the co-optation built into critique might be illuminating.

Shapiro offers an alternative, but complementary reading of the relationship between a nation and its self-justifying and proliferating narrative. He describes nation narratives as "historical interpretive performances" (1999, 107) where ontology is collapsed onto geography. Reiterating Bhabha's conception of the relationship between pedagogy and performance, Shapiro agrees that while the project to construct a 'coherent' national people requires a national pedagogy ('the space of the given') in which the people are constructed as 'objects,' the process through which the story is reinforced, its performance ('the space of that which must be constructed'), aims to show "the national life as a continuous process of renewal" and constructs the people as

'subjects' to be moulded and convinced (2001, 238). The state's performances, however, are in themselves incompatible and, in a way, incoherent.

As performances, narratives are repeated, shifting and adapting to responses and disruptions. Neither dominant/universal nor counter/particular narratives are static or autonomous from each other. To be intelligible and plausible, to affirm and re-affirm their believability, they *must* be performed, adjusted and repeated in various ways.[13] These performances blur the boundaries between universals and particularities, where universals adapt and re-affirm themselves through co-optation of disruptive critiques and the multiplicity of critiques, even though repeated, becomes grouped into a singular 'other.'

Shapiro's focus is consciously on performances outside of the frame constructed as an acceptable contribution to nation narratives, what he calls the "'micro-narratives' of diasporic individuals" rather than "macro stories of nation-building" (1999, 93). He explains this move by noting that because of the "essential contestability" of nation narratives, multiple positions are required to destabilize them. As well, he motions to, but does not significantly analyse, the ever-increasing requirement of states to perform their identities in the face of disruption (2004, 34). The ways in which these performances

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[13] Rogers Smith (2003) offers an alternative reading of the performance (and adjudication) of narratives as associated with national communities. In calling attention to how stories constitute and maintain the coherence of political communities, Smith argues for "the particular importance of certain sorts of stories, especially the types [he]... call[s] 'ethically constitutive stories', as components of the politics of peoplehood" (2003, 15). Smith implies a conception of narrative as a reference point, either through reference to a constitutive (and past) dimension rather than considering narrative as a possibility, a method and a changing process that in turn can work to shift or transform existing understandings. Stories of common experiences are not always and not necessarily 'people-making', as Smith appears to contend. The counternational narratives Michael Shapiro offers (see, especially, 1999, 2004) provide examples of different possible ways to imagine community.

continue to absorb disruptions, however, upholds and affirms the dominant narrative. While, in a way, nation narratives do work for the kind of finalities entailed in security projects, their co-optation and neutralization of counternarratives suggests an adaptability that is always finality-*seeking* rather than finalized. While nation narratives, in Shapiro's description, tend to be articulated as "false arrests", attempts at closure, their repetition in itself suggests that they are not in fact the final say(s). Shapiro is aware of this, writing that the articulation of nation narratives "attempts to control interpretations of the future" (2004, 48) and "manag[es] anticipation as well as historical memory" (2001, 239). By securing a past history, nation narrative performances work to secure a future story. However, this works not only through re-articulation and identical repetition, but also adaptation and co-optation.

Coherence, disruption and the question of critique

As coherence building projects, nation narratives aim to secure national spaces by articulating national stories. Shapiro's view is that the imposition of coherence through the construction of unified national imaginaries can be disrupted. Narratives are often constructed to function in a linear fashion, and, through this linearity, to engender exclusions. By posing alternative narratives in relation to each other, it is possible to articulate a kind of constantly shifting narrative system that, rather than working towards a closed system of linear coherence (a mode of 'national' intelligibility), works to voice stories through illuminating the disjunctures and ruptures in national coherence projects. Shapiro sets his challenge as positing alternative stories in a way that "employ[s] conceptual strategies that resist institutionalized forms of intelligibility" (1999, 15). That is, he works to disrupt coherence projects through counternarratives that, while

intelligible, work against universalizing and unifying modes of intelligibility, seeking instead ambiguity and constant negotiation. Disruption entails illuminating the links between the articulation of a coherent historical narrative and claims to associated 'national' territories. Shapiro writes that this "destabiliz[es] the very relationship between space and enunciation." The aim is to substitute the securitization of territory as the basis of meaning for "an interacting plurality of meaning performances issuing from a map that is always in a situation of becoming" (1999, 121). In this context, Shapiro's work aims to show that "the presence of the West's historical time has debts to other times" and that "literature can subvert the Western nation-state's monopoly of spatiotemporal presence" (2001, 236). His mode of subversion, as a kind of 'literary montage,' works by "substituting critical time images for the legitimating [evoked] in securing a space for… identity coherence" (1999, 95).

Shapiro's use of a variety of types of texts or representations, his 'literary montage,' underscores his 'bombardment' method of disruption. He writes that he "seek[s] to encourage a hospitality towards ambiguous, protean and unsettled modes of selfhood and community" (1999, 7). However, while Shapiro is thorough in his project of illuminating imposed coherence in nation-building narratives, he doesn't do the same for the counternarratives he poses, somewhat uncritically, as themselves coherent. While Shapiro affirms the interrelationships that make for shifting and fluid subjectivities, writing that "[o]ver time, 'culture' in the sense of practices of space, memory, subjectivity, and collective responsibility (among other things), alters as various different peoples share proximity as well as engaging in both direct and mediated encounters"

(1999, 115), the means through which he articulates counternarratives suggests their relationships only to the dominant stories Shapiro aims to disrupt.

Shapiro is oriented around 'counter'ing through disruption, working *against* a dominant power structure. While Shapiro's project, on his own terms, can be described as "writing peculiarly in order to disclose that what has made for intelligibility and coherence in our analyses is not the intelligible world but our intelligibility producing practices" (1988, xiii), this can also be reduced to a treatment of the relationship between universal and particular. Through the use of counternarratives, Shapiro foregrounds particulars that have been excluded from discourses oriented towards constructing a universal. In this task, Shapiro tends to overlook the relationships that occur when or after that constructed as universal reacts to the particular. Perhaps alluding to this problem of critically considering the state as arbiter of the universal, Shapiro quotes Pierre Bourdieu: "[i]f the state is so difficult to think, it is because we are the state's thinkers, and because the state is in the head of the thinkers" (2004, 6). It is thus a necessary part of critique to not only situate oneself, as Shapiro does (2004, xii-xiii), but also to take into account the ways in which critical practices against the dominant state practices are responded to and co-opted.

To apply his method, Shapiro must reproduce the same (in)coherences and binaries he describes. For Shapiro, this repetition and reproduction of stories as national, critical and counternational, is a part of story-telling – of rendering intelligible an unintelligible, incoherent world. Here, I draw from Shapiro and aim to extend his analysis. In putting forward a critique of Canadian multiculturalism as a nation narrative, I offer the reading that *co-optation is built into the very structure of criticism*. Part of

Shapiro's project to politicize texts rendered outside of the frame of the political, and necessarily part of the project undertaken by this text, is a view towards shifting what the political is, and examining discourses of power functioning within that which has been excluded from consideration *as* political. Insofar as critique is co-opted, or recuperated into dominant discourses, however, it is depoliticized. Co-optation de-politicizes critique while re-affirming the dimensions of the political as that which is defined by speaking through dominant discourses. Posing and re-posing critical inquiries and illuminating inconsistencies and incoherence within universalizing projects maintains a continuous mode of action that persists despite co-optation.

It is important to keep in mind Shapiro's caveat that his "analyses are not aimed at developing a set of generalized abstractions but are 'focused on specific conflict[s] and are bound to… concrete situation[s]'" (1999, 1). My reduction of these questions and conflicts to a binary structure proceeds from the need to examine *both* discourses around unity and discourses around difference as a pair. Shapiro's focus on the exclusions of counternarratives deals only with undermining one half of this pair. To outline the ways in which critique proceeds and is co-opted, it is necessary to examine the multiple relationships implicit in this pairing as well as consider each side separately. It is necessary to not only address the relation that exists in binary structures, not only the potentially productive or disruptive half of a binary system, but all relations that can exist within and between binaries. Ian Angus's essay "The Originality of the Multicultural Context", examined in Chapter 2, outlines one possible means to rework this binary (but one that is, in my view, unsatisfactory in its resort to unity-seeking).

As much as Shapiro and others attempt to unsettle dominant discourses by resisting and putting forward alternatives, this work continues to enact and, in a way, reinforce binary structures. Whether the binaries are malleable may not be the question. It may actually be a diversion from the fact that they, and 'we,' exist in a system where we continue to reproduce them. One of the aims of disruption is "so that what is unrepresented is at least allowed to make visible the laws and limits of system[s] of representation" (2004, xiv, qtd from Chakrabarty). However, this is the process through which co-optation occurs: exclusions are illuminated and subsumed and a 'new' mode of critique emerges. A national imaginary needs exclusions, as critique needs a dominant mode to deconstruct. Binary relationships necessitate and reinforce each side of the duality. Shapiro's project appears not to be oriented towards addressing these problems, but rather to maintaining disruption with the assumption that for each critical position that is co-opted, several more will be illuminated. In "Time, Disjuncture and Democratic Citizenship," Shapiro approaches the question of co-optation but does not delve into it. He writes that there is increasingly a means through which

> even official texts, which seek to maintain a strictly
> juridical model of citizenship, constitute a form of double
> writing that ultimately imperils the erasures and
> containments that characterize national time. They promise
> a politics of citizenship that opens a space for more diverse
> forms of presence... the law legalizes a recognition of
> aspects of diversity (2001, 249).

This kind of "recognition of aspects of diversity," Shapiro acknowledges, while "a reflection of assertions of emerging forms of diversity" is also "one of containment, an exercise of authority aimed at 'transforming a diversity into civility.' … that seeks to maintain a homogenous community by manipulating the texts of citizens' rights in order

to colonize the future through a management of diversity" (2001, 250). This kind of legal management of diversity, Shapiro points out, while "aimed at containing and managing diversity… also names and legitimates a diversity that had been confined to extralegal texts" (250). The process of co-optation works through this management and confinement of otherness.

At the same time, Shapiro reads a productive tension in methods of co-optation. He writes that "in attempting its own spatialization of temporality, constructing society as a place where community and diversity are dangerous rivals, the law helps to produce a diversity that must inevitably endanger its containment strategy" (2001, 250). Thus, for Shapiro, co-optation engenders openings - "what it seeks to contain it also enlarges" (2001, 250). Shapiro seems to anticipate co-optation and is not troubled by it. It is also, however, not exactly his project to work with the concept of co-optation. This is where I seek to extend and refocus his context, showing the implications of posing and reposing critical narratives against the process of constant co-optation and the kinds of nation narratives that are constructed through a constantly co-optive process.

Conclusion

This chapter began by trying to problematize readings of the relationship between 'narrative' and 'nation', as well as influential theories of nationalism, finding in each a tendency to 'close' possibilities of critique through a focus on the material context or the function of nationalist rhetoric and practice. Anderson's formulation of the nation as 'imagined community' is particularly important to the development of the argument in this thesis because of its focus on the relationship between conceptions of time and the development of national imaginaries. I diverge from Anderson, however, in redirecting

my focus towards the co-optation of critique in nation *narratives*, rather than considering the *proliferation* of national imaginaries through multiple sites. Gellner's functionalist consideration of the nation sheds light on how, for example, Canada's national narrative has been framed as a means of cohering a group of people through homogenous education strategies. At the same time, however, this kind of account naturalizes constantly changing understandings of narrative and precludes shifts which are *not* due to the needs of 'industrial progress.'

While Anderson's and Gellner's ideas are important to understanding the ways the discourse around nationalism has been framed, it is my sense that Shapiro's use of counter-narratives works against finalities, completions and closures. Again, after Nancy, Shapiro views "community as literary communism - engagements among alternative ways of scripting the meanings of selves … that privileges encounters between articulations that issue from different ways of being present within the space of the state, rather than a politics that moves toward integration within a unitary national culture" (2001, 236). Shapiro aims at articulating the suppressions and exclusions fostered through coherence-seeking projects, and the impossibility of stable spaces and unified communities. But in order to understand the means through which the co-optation and/or absorption of counternarratives occurs, the "sharing of a space of encounter" requires consideration and examination of the relationships between those sharing that space, in addition to opening up that space to a multiplicity of stories. As unity in 'community' is fictive, Shapiro's project is to expose the exclusionary political consequences of this fiction and deconstruct them, opening up spaces for imaginings of co-presence. This project of imagining other possible kinds of co-presences, or 'sharing a space of

encounter,' is beyond the scope of my thesis, but it is my sense that, in explicating the function of coherence seeking narrativization, it is also important to at least point to ways in which this kind of critique can be expanded to a theorization of community more broadly.

Chapter 2: Multiculturalism and/as Canadian nationalism

The case of Canada forms a peculiar example in the study of nation-building. In Canada, rather than erasing difference and enforcing homogeneity, the cultivation of 'multiculturalism' through the inclusion of (particular kinds of) difference has been held up *as* a kind of national identity that both fosters (particular kinds of) diversity and, as Mackey has argued, reinforces the centrality of a dominant (non multi) culture and its institutions (Mackey 1999, 151). In this way, multiculturalism, as a concept both clearly outlined and defended and yet often vaguely defined, is taken up as a means to both expand a national framework and secure a national identity.

The questions of Canadian nation-building, Canadian 'identity', multiculturalism and unity have dominated the political landscape in Canada for at least the past three decades. This study aims to contribute to the critical scholarship on multiculturalism by applying the methods and questions developed in Chapter 1 to the 'Canadian' context. More specifically, it examines the relationships between polarizing binaries in the study of multiculturalism and nation through the lens of the proliferation of particular kinds of narratives, especially the spaces allowed and *delineated for* critical narratives. The case studies offered in Chapters 3 and 4 each present modes through which the discourse of multiculturalism has been framed, and, I hope, offer both a different framing of this discourse and possible trajectories towards a practice of sustained critique. To that end, my task in this chapter is to review key critical theories of the conception of multiculturalism as nationalism, the coherence of multiculturalism as a unity-seeking

discourse and the ways in which multiculturalism discourse both reproduces and challenges universal/particular binaries through the absorption of critique.

I study texts that both outline the work of multiculturalism theories in Canadian nation-building and offer critical assessments of the ways theories of multiculturalism have functioned *as* Canadian nationalism (Mackey 1999; Day 2000; Kernerman 2005). It is my sense that, for the most part, the use of co-optation to stop dissent, and foreclose possibilities for the critique and disruption of the integrationist mechanism of multiculturalism is missing in these theories. Mackey, Day, and Kernerman, in different ways, show how the discourse of multiculturalism as Canadian nationalism is stuck in a reiterative loop (what Kernerman refers to as 'the tie that binds'). None of them, however, work with the process through which critique becomes nationalized and, subsequently, none of them considers the practice of sustained critique. Each (with the exception of Mackey) examines instead possible moves to 'recover' the discourse. Manning does look at the context of critique but, for her, again, the context is framed through a 'countercoherence,' a seeking of possibility that might not work through a context of critical practice in particular. Of the theorists I discuss here, it is only Angus who addresses co-optation as such (though not in those terms) and specifically outlines the philosophical framework through which the co-optation of critical narratives takes place and is justified. While Angus's framing of the process is very close to my characterization of it, our readings of the implications are quite different. Here, I examine these theories as a means of both providing an overview of the field and pointing to their implications when viewed through the lenses of narrative of the co-optation of critical narratives more specifically.

Unity, inclusion, difference

The problem of unity- or coherence-seeking has characterized debates around multiculturalism. In *The House of Difference,* Mackey focuses on showing how the gaps, holes and exclusions of multiculturalism discourse in Canada as a means to articulate how multiculturalism "implicitly constructs the idea of a core English-Canadian culture, and that other cultures become 'multicultural' in relation to that unmarked, yet dominant, Anglo-Canadian core culture" (1999, 2). Thus, multiculturalism, as a co-opted critical discourse, works just as much to reinforce the dominant as it does to include the 'other.' Day also links contemporary multiculturalism discourses to a longstanding 'problem of diversity' in articulating a Canadian national identity where multiculturalism discourse is a formal response and plan of action to tackle the problem of diversity. He rejects the account that official and popular multiculturalisms represent a break from racist and exclusionary histories, and suggests that both represent similar aims in framing a *problem* of diversity that needs a solution through state intervention and, further, a problem that undermines the nation-state's primary unity-seeking imperative. Day's method is genealogical, so in a way, he is working through a re-telling of a narrative, showing that the story hasn't really changed. Day and Mackey's thought works through the lens of nation-building as coherence seeking. Mackey writes that nation-building practices "work not only through the erasure of difference and the construction of homogeneity, but are endlessly recuperative and mobile, flexible and ambiguous, 'hybrid' as well as totalizing" (1999, 5). In this way, both Mackey and Day acknowledge co-optation as always a part of nation-building, but do not discuss its implication towards an ongoing practice of critique.

The rise of multiculturalism as state policy, Mackey contends, is linked to state efforts that are different from conventional modes of nation-building through assimilation. Multiculturalism as state policy, rather works through attempts "to institutionalize various forms of difference, thereby controlling access to power and simultaneously legitimating the power of the state" (50). Emerging from Book IV of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission Report, 'Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework' was adopted as an official policy in 1971. The policy was as much an attempt to pacify the potentially difficult political situation of Quebec's sovereignty claims as it was to recognize other others. Mackey writes that

> [t]he support provided by the state is limited to that which
> will help cultural groups to *participate in* and *contribute to*
> *Canadian society* and Canadian *unity*. Therefore,
> acceptable cultural diversity must buttress the project of
> nation-building and national unity in Canada. Ethnic groups
> are thereby mobilized as picturesque and colourful
> helpmates and allies in the nation-building project (66).

This policy co-opts a critical discourse - reifying the process as *part* of a nation-building process, where *certain kinds* of difference are acceptable. While it must be noted that ethnic groups themselves have been instrumental in lobbying for official multicultural policies and, to some extent, have achieved a kind of recognition, it must also be noted that, as Angus points out, the specific requests of groups have largely been rejected. While Ukrainian-Canadian groups were influential in the construction of official multiculturalism policy, their agenda of 'cultural retention through bilingual education' has been rejected multiple times in the politics of multiculturalism where the preferences of those in power are towards "folk-arts and affirmative action for individuals" (Angus 1998, 95).

Indeed, when multiculturalism policy was formally enshrined in the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, it continued to further the 'cause' of diversity as nation-building, "as well as limiting that diversity to symbolic rather than political forms" (Mackey 2002, 67). Despite popular mobilization on the part of the ethnocultural groups recognized in multiculturalism policies, Mackey, too, rightly points out that in considering the question of diversity in Canada, whether limiting and excluding, or recognizing and including, the power has always lay with the dominant group and institutional change has never been a genuine possibility.

For Day, the problem of diversity ultimately seeks closure or finality in the way I describe above, as a finality linked to the framework or basic premises of multiculturalism, rather than its details or contents. He points out that "[t]he encounter with the Other is valuable precisely to the extent that it *demands* the modification of the Self's own structures, that it demands change and thereby helps to ward off decadence" (225). This is the kind of acknowledgement of the co-optation of critique that Shapiro appears to anticipate in enacting a repetition of counternarrative performances. The reluctance of English Canada to give up certain colonial institutions that are "supposed to be 'for everyone' and 'particularly Canadian' at the same time" suggests a kind of essentializing nationalism at play. Indeed, Day points to a context of co-optation by noting that "what has been protected has been a set of colonial institutions that attempt to destroy or co-opt all other forms, and have thus served only to *constrain* the development of what has been, and might be, particularly 'Canadian'" (225). In this way, Day preserves an idea of 'a national' (as multicultural) rather than focusing on continuing a practice of counternational critique.

At the same time, Day's reworking of the 'Canadian national' is radical in that, for him, in order to begin thinking about a different kind of multicultural imaginary, the "project of Canadian unity must be abandoned, so that the problem of Canadian diversity can be *dissolved*" (225-6). His critique is focused around three 'aims' that must be achieved if multiculturalism is to 'succeed' as an official community-building practical discourse. First, it must "openly admit and orient to the impossibility of full identity", that is orient away from ideas toward a completed national identity, and thus away from unity-seeking. Second, it must "affirm the value of difference and the Other as such" and lastly, it must "recognize the necessity of a negotiation of *all* universal horizons, including that of the nation state" (12). However, perhaps Day's aims may be applied more fruitfully to a conception of territorialized collectivity that does not specifically call itself multiculturalism? As this thesis aims to demonstrate, the language and underlying narrative presumptions of multiculturalism discourse lend themselves far too easily to totalizing practices. Might it be that the language of multiculturalism itself should be abandoned, as a means of attempting to move away from the frequent exclusionary and co-optive gestures that the discourse has engendered? This is by no means an attempt to disavow or sidestep the always present co-optation of critique, but rather to think through an alternative discourse that might broaden the space of available, permissible, or allowable speech and action. By letting go of this discourse, it might be possible (if difficult) to imagine a mode of relation or community that does not rely on nation-building practices. Day's first aim, acknowledging the impossibility of full identity, constitutes a particularly rich starting point for a means of thinking through relation in a non-universalizing way.

While Day does not explicitly discuss the way in which the concept of narrative

plays into how excluded discourses are absorbed or co-opted into national discourses, he

does acknowledge a process of co-optation. Day notes that the discourse of Canadian

diversity is characterized by an assumption that "a unity of higher types will emerge

through the preservation and tolerance of limited forms of difference" (149). He writes

that

> [w]hereas the modern nation-state relied upon coercive
> exclusion, the postmodern nations-state proceeds primarily
> by seductive incorporation in its (impossible) quest for
> inifinite striation. Instead of trying to transform its Others
> through assimilation, the postmodern nations-state leaves
> them as they are and articulates them with regimes of
> rational-bureaucratic discipline, through their
> identifications with designed positions in the ethnocultural
> economy (204).

Ian Angus's study, in attempting to show the universalizing possibilities of multicultural

discourse does just this, demonstrating the theoretical steps and justificatory processes of

co-optation and the closures enacted through them.

Angus contends that multiculturalism as a policy and as a concept has the

potential to be both "mere particularlism" and a larger kind of "universalism." It is

through articulations of the particular *as* universal that Angus aims to put forward a type

of multicultural community (1992, 66). Angus presents a version of multiculturalism

focused on futurity, where a multicultural political philosophy has two primary concerns:

"a *justification* of the particularity of ethno-cultures, which must of necessity be

retrospective, and the *formulation* of a universality inclusive of differences, which is

projective and anticipatory" (86). He argues that it is a distinction between nationalism

and multiculturalism that maintains divisiveness in Canada, writing that "[t]he politics of

multiculturalism is in a key location to address such a rethinking [as] [i]t combines a

recovery of a pre-rational sense of belonging with a claim to collective rights which must

be articulated universally" (66). While Angus characterizes the functioning of

multiculturalism discourses aptly, his prescriptive arguments, towards universalization,

are deeply problematic.

Angus outlines three key 'axes' on which the framework of Canadian

multiculturalism discourse has arisen and subsequently functions: "(post)colonialism,

immigration and a weak concept of nation" (76). He characterizes immigration as a

phenomenon that "splices off a fragment of a culture and inserts it in another history as a

subculture" (74). Thus, for Angus, and for the purposes of this thesis, the phenomenon of

immigration is disruptive of conventional articulations of historical continuity and

cultural closure. In the immigrant context, it is impossible to speak of 'a' culture because

'a' culture has been inserted into a different space through the experience of immigration.

It is thus not possible to talk in terms of living within a single culture and thus referring to

a single narrative. Immigration disrupts the possible coherence of nation narratives.

Angus also challenges the subject of 'us' when spoken in terms of the multicultural

context - does this 'us' refer to *all* groups together or simply one's own group? (84). He

writes that it is not an "us/them" relation that is at stake in considering multicultural

understanding but rather an "us/we." For Angus, 'us' refers to "one's own ethnocultural-

group" while 'we' is more broad, and refers to a nation – the multicultural Canadian

nation (84). The question for him, then, is how to be both 'us' and 'we' at the same time.

This is similar to my framing of multiculturalism discourse, where the first of these

positions ('us') is necessarily subordinated to the second ('we') as the second –

membership in a multicultural society – is elevated as a quality of the nation.

Angus begins to consider the means through which a confluence of nationalism

and multiculturalism may occur, positing that, at present, the following 'law' seems to

apply: "[t]he stronger the national identity, the lesser the acceptance of multiculturalism,

and *vice versa*" (76). In contrast to this, Angus contends that in order for a political

philosophy of multiculturalism to be possible, multiculturalism and nationalism must not

be seen as opposed or in competition. The domains of 'national' and 'multicultural'

identities must be distinguished, so that there is not a choice to be made between a

'national' culture and a 'multi' culture. This must happen if multiculturalism is to be

pursued as an ideal and as a viable political philosophy. Angus thus seeks to articulate the

kind of multiculturalism apparent in the institutional context, as well as in the 'national'

imaginary promoted by state policy, multiculturalism "as a *key content of a shared*

national identity" (78, emphasis in original). However, for him it is necessary that this

kind of multiculturalism is not articulated as a *particular* right of 'multi' cultures, but

rather as a *universal* right, as part of 'a' 'national' culture'. He phrases the contention as

follows: "The issue posed by multiculturalism for political philosophy is thus *the*

universalization of a right to particularity within a pluri-cultural, unilingual framework"

(79, emphasis in original). While Angus's descriptions of the conditions under which

multiculturalism discourse in Canada has become possible; the ways in which the context

of immigration is disruptive to nation-building discourse; and, in particular, the

relationship between multiculturalism discourse and nation-building discourse, is

pertinent, his call for the convergence of these discourses is problematic and ultimately

contributes to this kind of co-optation by being both critical and celebratory. While I can appreciate Angus's aim to decenter conceptions of community, and despite Angus's disclaimer about "multiculturalism as a political ideal" (76), it is either overly optimistic or disingenuous to put forward a conception of 'multiculturalism' that aims to speak for a *totality,* as such.

Bound by conversation?

Unlike Angus, Gerald Kernerman shows how, in Canada, rather than a broadening of available perspectives, the same set of conversations is repeated in a re-iterative loop. Kernerman does not see this repetition as fruitful, as Bhabha does, but rather constraining and insular. Kernerman's analysis of what he calls the 'bind that ties' or multicultural nationalism, coupled with his incisive characterization of the formation and proliferation of identity categories in Canadian multiculturalism through a kind of multicultural 'panopticism,' provides a complementary analysis to my reading of Canadian multiculturalism as a nation narrative that is always already recuperating and *precluding* the possibility of critique through counternarrative. While Kernerman remains enmeshed in questions of equality, rights and justice that are not the way in which I would frame my interests in this text, his analysis is illuminating in articulating the narrow ways in which arguments around Canadian multiculturalism are framed and repeated.

Kernerman's focus is not to move away from the multicultural nationalisms that frame conversations about Canadian unity, but rather to examine these articulations so as to disrupt them. Kernerman writes that a Canadian political community is *produced* through repeated performances of what he calls the "'Canadian conversation' of these

constitutive oppositions – through the performance of the 'Canadian conversation'"
(2005, 4). This is 'the bind that ties' – the *re*production is, according to Kernerman,
merely a repetition. It does not *produce* anything, contrary to Bhabha's assertion, as
positions and oppositions have been honed in such a way as to always already exclude
the possibility of producing any further openness where counterdiscourses, excluded
narratives, minority discourses, can emerge. There are no slippages in this repetition
"because attempts to transcend the oppositional character of these debates tends to
reinforce them" (4). Like Day, Kernerman writes that it is the quest for unity that drives
the Canadian conversation also makes it futile. It is the proliferation of the same
conversation, the repetition of unproductive and stifling arguments around unity that
constructs a situation where "[t]hrough their very participation in these polarized debates
– be they focused on rights, representation, federalism, or citizenship – minority groups
are 'civilized' by the unity-driven space of multicultural nationalism" (11). These are the
situations and conversations I explore and analyse in the case studies that make up
Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

  Kernerman elaborates a conception of horizontal governance he terms
'multicultural panopticism' (similar to Shapiro's conception of 'cultural governance'),
where "multicultural citizens who are not only 'free' but also encouraged to express their
freedom through multicultural coveillance... [that] assumes participatory citizens who see
and are seen" (99). It might also be part of the reason why, in certain immigrant texts
supported by Multiculturalism Canada, like *Chorus of Mushrooms,* discussed at length in
Chapter 4 of this text, critique resolves itself nicely into a celebration of diversity, much

in the way that multicultural projects recuperate critique and reimagine formerly critical discourses as now a part of a national discourse.

Like Day, Kernerman seeks to interrogate the problematic of diversity *as such,* looking, however, at the scholarly debates on questions underlying the focus on unity-seeking that Day examines. Kernerman aims to displace the binaries underlying questions of unity-seeking: equality/difference, identity/difference, outside/inside. His aim is still oriented towards an amelioration of a basic liberal framework. In this way, Kernerman falls short of interrogating the binary as such, focusing instead on the relationship between its sides. Kernerman replicates Angus's argument claiming that "[r]ather than give up on either term of the dichotomy, it is necessary to displace them, to dissolve their opposition" (23). Troubling the questions of unity/fragmentation, inside/outside, identity/difference, equality/difference must entail something other or more than a shift from opposition to mutual reinforcement, in other words, a collapse into a totality. It is not only that these binaries have been constructed as oppositions that have then been translated to a unity or totality seeking paradigm (what Kernerman terms the 'embrace of diversity') but rather, as Kernerman himself points out and yet seems to fall back into here, it is that the terms, presuppositions and vocabulary of the questions have not changed even though the means of conceiving the relationships have. Thus it is that, regardless of whether diversity is embraced or treated as a 'gift', and foregrounded as such, "the challenge of diversity is premised on a threatening other, not matter how this other is embraced and celebrated" (17). Hence, while Kernerman's project of interrogating the ultimately unfruitful repetition of the negotiations in the 'Canadian conversation' is illuminating in a way, in order to imagine another way of conceiving

these relationships, it is necessary to go further than merely reconceive existing binaries. As I write above, interpreting the limitations of Michael Shapiro's method of counternarrative critique, taking into consideration the recuperations of critique and the ways debates shift is important, but only *if* these broaden the spaces where available narratives can be performed. It is my sense that, if Kernerman's reading is to be accepted, what he terms the Canadian conversation around diversity does not provide a significant openness for a wide array of narrative perspectives.

Kernerman does stress that 'the problem' is not merely static versus fluid conceptions of identity, but rather "the manner in which the Canadian conversation, in its pursuit of unity, breeds identitarian contestation" (2005, 6). In the context of multicultural nationalism "[d]ifference itself becomes totalizing and uniform in its oppositional stance toward equality. A category of difference…becomes essentialized and standardized in the form of a 'nation' or some other category, which is then put forward in totalizing identitarian terms. Instead of the dichotomy being displaced, the struggles over symmetry and uniformity are reproduced *within* the differentiated category." (24). This is, at least in part, the way in which Shapiro's underexamination of counternarratives can be read: while the implication that counternarrative critique will be recuperated is ever-present, in not examining counternarratives themselves, the critic participates in the reproduction of the binary s/he is trying to disturb.

Nation-space, nation-time

The Canadian context is bound up with questions of space and territory and the securing, through discourses of identity and unity, of territorial sovereignties. These unity-seeking and securitizing aims work through both celebrations of diversity *as*

universal(izing), as Angus contends, and through a kind of flattening of territorial claims

into a context of domesticated, comfortable sameness (in difference). Manning reworks

and questions national stories in Canada by viewing them through a deconstruction or

reconceptualization of the binary discourses of universal/particular and inside/outside.

Like the thinkers above, Manning links the desire to construct national spaces with a

certain kind of unity-seeking, but for her, this unity-seeking is more intimately tied to not

only a unity within a collective of people, but a unity with a territory. She writes that

"[w]ith the conflation of identity and territory comes not only the promise of a spiritual

oneness of nature and self, but also the covenant of the mythical unity of a people who

are defined by the landscape they inhabit" (2003, 7). Though my focus in this text is on

the question of narrative and constructions of nation narratives (in a way, national

histories), in this section, I want to acknowledge the link between the spatial focus of

Manning's text and my own temporal focus as necessary aspects of nation narrative

construction.

Manning spends considerable space deconstructing binary relationships, and

positing possibilities through resistant cultural practices and the deconstruction of

vocabularies of the nation. Her focus is on the 'ephemeral', fleeting gestures, that work

against stable political constructs (x), against the reification of a notion of the 'political.'

Manning begins from the contention that "Canada is too large, too multifaceted, too

regional to be one place from which one discourse could emerge" (xi). Like Kernerman,

Shapiro and many of the other thinkers discussed here, Manning aims to disrupt the

binaries upon which national assumptions rest. Her means to do this is not, however, by

reconceiving how binaries function, but rather to focus on the ephemeral aspects of

relationships. Manning works against binary structures through what she calls errant politics, where "to seek the center is always to err in search of the ephemeral" (xxviii). Like Shapiro, Manning speaks to exclusions rather than working through the functioning of dominant narratives, writing that "errant politics foregrounds instances when articulations of subjectivity, territoriality, and belonging are at odds with the official imaginary of the nation" (xxix). In this sense, Manning writes that "*Ephemeral Territories* is a work against politics insofar as it recognizes politics as a metaphysical utterance that privileges the dichotomies on which the discourse of the nation-state relies" (149).

Focusing on the errant, the ephemeral, thus entails a reflection on the borders of that which is construed as a totality, albeit a totality of disunities, where "[t]he border both ensures the coherence of the center and disrupts it… The center requires the border subject to ensure its coherence. The nation-state creates the fiction of the border to strengthen its official narratives of inclusion and exclusion" (73). Manning writes that

> [t]he narrative of "Canadian identity", which envisions
> multiculturalism at its center, presupposes and celebrates
> the ideal of a coherence. As a result, in Canada,
> multiculturalism refers to a domesticated plurality that is
> always already defined by the binary structure at the basis
> of its founding narrative (88).

She suggests that if there is a possibility of disrupting the binaries secured by the maintenance of the border, in order for there to be a kind of 'radical multiculturalism' reflected in those identity performances that are on a border, "the stranger or racial other must be capable of turning the border inside out by reworking the official narratives that render the border the policed and heavily guarded marker between the nation and its outside" (73).

Errant politics is also a means through which Manning aims to challenge the vocabularies through which certain conceptions of nation are naturalized and normalized. She argues that "[t]o begin with the nation-state and to become uncritically captive in its linguistic, conceptual, and territorial imaginaries is, invariably, to reinforce nationalism by condoning the notion that the nation-state 'exists'" (xxvi). An approach through errant politics, by contrast, "seeks to instantiate a vocabulary of incommensurability, maintaining a critical stance toward all discourses that offer the promise of homogeneity and cohesion" (xxvii-viii).

Ephemeral Territories "celebrates cultural works 'made in Canada' that appeal to a polity that extends far beyond the reaches of the Canadian nation" (xi). At the same time, however, Manning continues to talk about 'a' polity, assuming a kind of community of singularity. Throughout the text, Manning continues to speak in a first person plural. Who is this 'we' she speaks for and to? Critics? Canadians? Political theorists? Critical Canadian political theorists? Like Day, Angus and Kernerman, Manning, too, seems to project and anticipate a future totality, a 'we' that can be spoken, and spoken for. Perhaps this is what she means by speaking of a 'countercoherence.'

Manning advocates that it is necessary to "employ culture as an instance of a countercoherence to the nation's vocabularies of exclusion,… locate within cultural texts the promise not of a stable language, but of an alternative that retains its ephemerality" (xxi), presenting this notion of 'countercoherence' as an alternative to national coherence projects. My question is, however, doesn't *any* narrative have an assumed implied, implicit coherence? A counternarrative's coherence is simply that: counter to a national coherence. It might be fruitful to consider narrative as precisely ephemeral but *not*

coherent, and *not* cohesive, always in process as a means of illuminating and clarifying relationships and the binaries that they are based on, reacting to, and aiming to disrupt. While Manning's analysis offers several important lines of thought to consider, her own vocabulary at times collapses back into a kind of community that may be too close to a recuperation of the multicultural nation narrative she begins by rejecting.

Conclusion

My aim in this chapter was to situate my own approach as towards the concept of narrative as a method of analysis that has been underexamined in critical studies of Canadian multiculturalism. Examining a discourse as it has been framed through narrative allows for an illumination of what has been excluded and taken up through that narrative through a process of co-optation that works as a means of securing a coherent national space, identity, and story. Day, Angus, and Manning, while critical of different aspects of Canadian multiculturalism discourses, in the end, each advocate a 'recovery' of this discourse. These calls for 'recovery', despite, in the case of Day and Manning, speaking actively against a universalization, nonetheless refer to a totality, and thus, an attempt to either 'restore' or 'construct' a system that is, by definition, illusory, and hence, implicitly exclusionary. In subsequent chapters, I shed light on the implications of these stances through case studies of sites where questions of the absorption of multicultural critique arise: the census and the opinion poll and the novel termed 'multicultural.' These sites are not only the work of political and literary theorists, but also the literary works of those termed 'multicultural Canadians,' statistical categories and their uses and 'neutrally' written policy documents.

Chapter 3: Narration by numbers and the politics of counting as Canadian

Having outlined both the broader theoretical context from which the thesis proceeds and the context of the 'Canadian conversation' around multiculturalism as a kind of Canadian nationalism, I now move to the first of my two case studies, an examination of how relationship between narrative, nation and multiculturalism play out in national censuses and public opinion polls. My analysis and critique here begin from the claim that in modern life, in order to act politically, it is critical to *count as a citizen*. The *acts* of counting and being counted as a citizen matter whether it be for the politics of the state management of populations, or for group lobbying and the allocation of resources, to name the two relations I work with in this chapter. By extension, the construction of categories of group identity is, it is widely acknowledged,[14] a political act. Who makes categories under which citizens are grouped, how, and for what purposes also matters. Further, these kinds of questions of category and categorization are not outside of broader practices of nation-building. They are, I argue, both inside of and distinct from means and methods of nation-building, and specifically, nation-building through narrative. Methods of categorization are not only different ways of ordering (from narrative) but also function as a means to justify particular kinds of narratives - the argument that 'of course this is true: there is *data* to back it up' - "Each human activity ha[s] appropriate forms of quantitative knowledge for rational calculation" [Berman forthcoming 2010, "I. Western States and the Power of Numbers"]. In making this

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[14] Anderson 1991; Berman forthcoming 2010; Eisenberg and Kymlicka forthcoming 2010; Hacking 1986.

assertion, it is important to consider practices of categorization not only from a 'top down' perspective (i.e. colonial census takers make/made categories in which to fit people [Anderson 1991; Berman forthcoming 2010]) but also from the point of group mobilization, acknowledging that, in many cases, the people described by the categories accept and embrace the categorizations; they are not, to use Ian Hacking's phrasing, 'made up people': some articulation of the group existed prior to the category.

To study the dynamics under which people may or may not be 'made up' I begin from Ian Hacking's discussion of 'dynamic nominalism', the idea that "numerous human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the categories labeling them" (236). I examine this concept in the context of categories of identity in the Canadian census ('ethnic origins' and 'visible minority') noting, not that the categories themselves have come into use in this way, but rather that stories they support (nation narratives about multiculturalism) come into being along with the categories, as a means to broaden a conception of Canadian citizenship that might, I argue, preclude further critique from those categorized. I accept Hacking's caution that there is "no reason to suppose that we shall ever tell two identical stories of two different instances of making up people" (236), that is, that in critically examining practices of categorization that reduce and generalize, it is not beneficial to offer as a counterpoint a theory that also reduces and generalizes.

To this end, I offer two readings of practices of categorization in/as Canadian nation-building: first, I examine the development of categories of identity in Canadian censuses, as well as responses to changes in the focus and aims of categorization, as a story about Canadian pluralism, but also, as noted above, as a means of 'backing up' –

that is, providing a retrospective justification for - the broader aims of multicultural citizenship. Second, I offer a reading of a recent popular text, Michael Adams' *Unlikely Utopia,* that relies on polling data to construct a narrative that both affirms Canadian multiculturalism as a kind of nationalism and reiterates a simplified binary construction of those 'for' multiculturalism and those 'against,' where 'positive' conceptions of immigrant others are translated into a multicultural citizenship that is inextricable from its construction and affirmation by and through the state.

In order to understand the means through which categories of identity are constructed, concretized and utilized as means to underscore nation narratives, it is necessary to examine how the classification of identities and the associated demands and concerns of those who claim them came to be a key interest, and a key paradox, for the Canadian state. The state's need to classify the growing and shifting minority groups within Canada's borders, coupled with the influence and interests of group leaders in the process, produce a constantly changing set of inclusions, exclusions and assumptions about the categories and methods of classifying.

Discussions around questions of the categorization of identity and the census have been situated in two broad areas: those based on changes in the meanings and statistical assessment of the concepts of 'identity' and 'race,'[15] and those that view the enumeration of people based on identities as a political, and politically charged exercise.[16] My focus is both in responding to and extending the views of this second group of texts. These texts show how institutions, individuals and groups have coalesced around questions of

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[15] Boyd 1993 and 1999, Goldscheider 2002, Kalbach and Kalbach 1999.
[16] Nobles 2000, Arel and Kertzer 2002, Eisenberg and Kymlicka forthcoming 2010, Berman forthcoming 2010.

identity through the census, and how the questions themselves have changed with shifting

power dynamics. My interest is in extending these arguments by looking at the census as

one site of contest within the context of nation narrative construction, reiteration and

upholding processes that follow from, re-contextualize, and recreate questions of identity,

inclusion, citizenship, and resistance to the mobilization of movements around

identification and inclusion.

In the context of the census as a site where nation narratives are created and

reinforced, it is worth noting that resistance to census categories in Canada has, in the last

twenty years, largely worked through attempts to establish a homogenous view of a

'state' or 'national' identity. Arguably, it is to a top-down broadening of categories that

resistance has occurred, not as a response to the potentially constraining ways in which

new categories are developed and inhabited. To this end, resistance has been exemplified

mainly through the 'Count me Canadian' campaign, but also through refusals to be

identified in order to resist equity legislation that is perceived to result in an emphasis on

fragmentation at the expense of social unity. The census has, as mentioned above, also

functioned as a site through which leaders of minority groups can lobby for recognition

and group specific funding, and so resistance to categorization has largely come from

those resisting multiplicities and identity markers that deviate from specific

homogenizing interpretations of 'Canadianness.' The narrow ways in which census

categories are produced, reproduced and function has made the census an unlikely site of

resistance to the narrow and static categories produced. On the contrary, it appears that

the census, through producing and reproducing categories of identification, duplicates

anxieties about 'Canadianness' - the qualities that constitute who can be and act as a Canadian citizen - that exist in other sites.

Michael Adams' text, *Unlikely Utopia*, provides an apt example of the processes I am seeking to describe. Subtitled "The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism," the study is based on polling data collected and compiled by Adams' firm Environics. Constructing questions and possible responses; compiling and organizing raw data from respondents; and interpreting the product, often for a very broad popular audience, is Adams' area of expertise. In the ways that the questions and resulting responses Adams poses are reinterpreted as data, statistics are concretized as truths about the contexts and circumstances Adams describes. Adams interprets the data he has created into a narrative – that of "The Surprising Triumph of Canadian Pluralism" – that proliferates through public understandings as both a story and a story backed up by facts - statistical data (a distinction that Adams seems to want to make and yet repeatedly confuses in interchanging the phrase "the facts on the ground" with "the data"). Adams' books are immensely popular; as the stories they present proliferate, they are absorbed into and reinforce a narrative about multiculturalism as Canadian nationalism in ways that, I suggest, perhaps, the narratives generated by the data in the Canadian census might not be as effective.

My interest in this chapter is not to offer an account that aims to dissolve conceptions of group identity as expressed through various kinds of statistical categories. Neither is it to question certain kinds of normative or empirical studies around the work of group identification and claims-making through numbers. Rather, I seek to show both how the categories themselves can be abstracted to a narrative about Canadian

multiculturalism. I argue that the truths produced through statistics work to underscore broader nation narratives that foreground an idea about a multicultural Canada that makes critical moves – continuous resistance as such - that insist upon *sustained* critique unintelligible. Underlying these moves are ideas about the construction of national coherence and the identity of coherent multicultural/national citizens. If, for example, someone identifies as within a particular census category (a category of citizenship), they are rearticulated *as* that category – as *that* kind of citizen in a coherent citizen community: the nation. This phrasing can be taken up by popular pollsters who, in confusing the changeability and decidability of 'data' and 'opinion,' reify these processes and categories. This reification of categories, supporting data and public opinion polls, makes the positing of alternative conceptions that question the premises of categorization practices exceedingly difficult.

Making up counting?

Ian Hacking's brief essay "Making up People" provides an example of key problems underlying questions of categorizing and counting identities. Hacking examines the possibility that certain kinds of 'othernesses' came into being at the same time as the categories constructed to describe them. Processes of categorization, 'making up people,' Hacking suggests, are both of recent origin and linked to systems of control. A reading of this text opens up ways to analyse relationships between the construction of categories as state practices and popular mobilization around categories, including the way in which popular movements can be co-opted. Further, examining the *uses* of categories, in addition to their construction, demonstrates possible approaches that foreground the instabilities implicit in practices of categorization.

While he doesn't explicitly address the census as a counting instrument, Hacking does mention the way in which censuses show that the categories into which people are slotted change every five or ten years. While it is "[s]ocial change [that] creates new categories of people…the counting is no mere report of developments. It elaborately, *often philanthropically,* creates new ways for people to be" (223, emphasis added). By "philanthropic," I take Hacking to mean an approach that, in aiming to produce order or to broaden conceptions of 'insider' or 'citizen', ultimately strives for generous sorting into categories that works against alienation and towards unity-building. It is this emphasis on the benign, the potentially *philanthropic* nature of counting that is foregrounded in the context of Canadian multiculturalism discourses that emphasize the utility of counting for administrative purposes tied to program delivery and equity, rather than the less apparent, but still significant, ways in which counting and categorizing underscore and justify coherence-seeking practices.

In this context, it might be valuable to consider Hacking's articulation of the possibility of 'dynamic nominalism.' This theory posits that it "is not that there was a kind of person who came increasingly to be recognized by bureaucrats but rather that a kind of person came into being at the same time as the kind itself was being invented" (228). Hacking qualifies this theory by very specifically *not* generalizing it, but claiming that, perhaps, in a few instances, categories and those they describe emerge at the same time. The force of this assertion, he writes, lies in the way in which it "changes the space of possibilities for personhood" (229).

Identification from below – 'self-identification' – can itself be co-opted. Mobilization can be taken over by minority group elites, who can be offered positions of

power and thus preclude or hide processes of assimilation or exclusion. Eisenberg and

Kymlicka write that "elites may strategically reframe the nature of the group's 'identity'

to fit the established expectations of governments or international organizations, or to

respond to incentives made available by the larger political opportunity structure"

(forthcoming 2010, "Introduction") – that is, they can work to deliver a proscribed kind

of citizen category into which potential citizens must insert themselves in order to belong.

Thus, while the co-optation of elites might secure limited adjustments to policy, it may

ultimately detract from broader political struggles and actually encourage the

performance of minority identity in ways designed to 'convince' dominant group of the

'authenticity' of the minority groups' performance ("Risks of Identity Politics"). This is

an important consideration to take into account when discussing the potential of 'bottom-

up' framings of categorization practices. At the same time, I underscore that my focus is

not on the moves made *from,* and as a result of identifications with, the categories

(different kinds of moves *towards* emancipation and equal participation and

representation), but rather to illuminate the way in which the construction and

functioning of the categories facilitates the iteration and reiteration of *narratives* that

themselves work to reinforce the categories. My aim here is to outline the mechanisms in

play in the construction and functioning of the categories.

For Hacking, working with the example of a category called 'homosexuality,'

deeply enmeshed in a context of medicalization (or, more properly, de-medicalization),

the institutionalization of a category, in some sense, comes 'first;' though the life of those

labelled 'homosexual' wasn't a product of the labelling, it did change as a result of the

label (233). That is, in some cases, before 'expert' identification, there were not self-

identifications for categories (Hacking mentions 'multiple personality disorder' as one such category), while there were for others (for example, 'ethnicity'). Those identified with some categories detach from the category and take on the label, while others do not. To follow this example, 'ethnicities' (Ukrainian, Filipino etc.) can be understood as identifications apart from formal categories. This kind of detachment from a category is not, I suggest, possible for the category 'multicultural' as this category is an example of the functioning of dynamic nominalism, coming into being simultaneously with those identified *as* 'multicultural.' While the subcategories of 'multicultural' might exist outside of categorization as such, the category 'multicultural' does not. Further, while categorizations based on ethnicity *might* be outside of enframings of citizenship, 'multicultural' is specifically a category *of* citizenship. Thus, as 'Ukrainian,' 'Filipino' and other categories of ethnicity are included in a 'multicultural' category, as I explain in more detail below, they are also included in proscribed categories of citizenship.

At least in part, it seems that categorizing, considered more broadly, is not necessarily *about* diametrically opposed moves 'from above' or 'from below,' although those are the terms I tend to adopt here in order to demonstrate the functioning of categories. Hacking writes that "if new modes of description come into being, new possibilities for action come into being in consequence" (1986, 231). From this, it is also possible to infer that, first, new descriptions can also act to delimit possibilities for action (for example, if categories are established and people counted, the state can implement equity programs); or, second, that without new descriptions, there will, eventually, be stasis (for example, the argument that the category 'multicultural' is established to, in a way, both preclude and produce stasis). The second of these possibilities seems to rest on

an idea of constant changeability, while the first posits that it is perhaps the categories

themselves that can serve to enforce 'stasis' or closure. It is my sense that all of these

possibilities are in play at different times in the construction of categories (as the

parenthetical examples above show). Indeed, this seems to be what Hacking himself is

arguing when positing dynamic nominalism as a *qualified* possibility in the case of *some*

categories. An aim of the articulation of this possibility is not to qualify its use but to

maintain it *as* a possibility, with each caveat in play at once. This might be a means

through which to approach questions of categorization that keeps instability in play.

Finally, it might be useful to consider an early study Hacking alludes to:

published in 1963, John Kitsuse and Aaron Cicourel's "A Note on the Uses of Official

Statistics" examines sociological methods and uses of official statistics around 'deviance'

and argues that in the 'use' of official statistics, it is a concern with *rates* (for example,

the census and its categories), "as the product of the socially organized activities of social

structures", rather than *forms* (the categories apart from the census) of deviant behaviour,

that "provides a method of specifying the 'relevant structure' to be investigated'" (136).

Further, through this approach, "rates can be viewed as indices of organizational

processes rather than as indices of the incidence of certain forms of behaviour" (137).

This approach to the 'use' of statistics as such, as I discuss above, is a means through

which to maintain the instability of categories, to trouble the factuality- or coherence-

seeking mechanisms through which processes of categorization work. What is important,

Kitsuse and Cicourel argue, about the use of 'official' statistics, is not the actualities they

may or may not produce but rather they way in which official statistics reflect "the

variety of organizational contingencies in the process" (139). This text, when read in the

context of the way categorization practices play into the construction of nation narrative

coherence, aids in stepping away from the *contents* of categories that often frame and,

arguably, paralyze discussion into a parsing of minute details and in moving towards a

discussion of how the forms themselves delineate possible contents.

Census studies: the politics of counting

Census projects are frequently seen as a matter of "bureaucratic routine… a kind

of national accounting" (Arel and Kertzer 2002, 2), but in recent discussions around the

census[17] "the census does much more than simply reflect social reality; it plays a key role

in the construction of that reality" (ibid). These texts conceive of the census as a site of

political contest, rather than as merely a statistical instrument, and situate it as an

important site where categories that not only describe, but proscribe 'identities', are used

to both enumerate and produce/reproduce those they describe. There is a move to

examine struggles around the construction of 'identity' categories, as these texts

emphasize the shift from enumeration categories generated from above, by state

institutions, to movements around self- or collective identification based around

categories elaborated by those to be enumerated. This dichotomy of interests, state-

management of identity and social mobilization around identity, forms the key concern of

both Nobles' and Arel's and Kertzer's texts. Berman focuses somewhat more on the

broader *narrativized* context in which quantitative knowledge, gleaned through counting

and categorizing populations, is applied to (colonial) nation-building.

Berman describes how and why states use statistics both *as* nation narratives and

as means to provide justification for nation narratives. He writes that for "modern

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[17] Nobles (2000), Arel and Kertzer (2002), Berman (forthcoming 2010).

societies [statistical measurement] was linked to quantification and number as providing

the most reliable forms of knowledge." It was

> understood that classifying and numbering nature and
> society were essential for the *rational calculation of risk*
> *and the exercise of predictable control over the world.*
> Classifying nature or humanity into clear and unequivocal
> categories objectified them, eliminated irrelevant variation
> and established what was normal or typical for each
> category, permitting each class of things to be
> unambiguously counted (forthcoming 2010, "I. Western
> States and the Power of Numbers" Emphasis added).

Berman introduces censuses as a means through which quantitative knowledge is used to

facilitate state control, where "the counting and categorizing of the national census took a

pre-modern world of socio-cultural diversity and fluidity and imposed upon it neat and

clearly circumscribed categories of ethnicity and class legitimated by 'scientific'

quantification and statistical analysis" (ibid.). It is partially in this way that statistics

became the scientifically legitimate means of describing and ordering populations, and

so, of rationalizing (in the Weberian sense) colonial modes of governance for distant

bureaucracies.

Nobles shows how the categories of the census function as a site where contests

about identity take place and from which key understandings emerge. In *Shades of*

Citizenship, Nobles sets out on a project to show how processes around the construction

of 'race,' in the United States and Brazil, have been shaped by the construction of 'race'

categories in those countries' censuses. She contends that it is through an examination of

censuses that it is possible to trace the question of 'race' in the development of both

states. Nobles' argument is that "individuals and groups seek to alter the terms of racial

discourse in order to advance political and social aims, and have targeted censuses precisely because they help make and sustain such discourse" (2000, 1-2).

The key concern for Nobles is the interplay between state-identified definitions of 'race' categories and social movements to change the categories in the census and thus change views of 'race.' The logic and aims of such movements, Nobles asserts, work against premises of social movement theories that presume the existence of group identities that guide action, and, in this way, re-shape discourses about identity by working towards refiguring and reconstituting identities through categorization (21-22). In this story, the state is "'target and mediator' of collective action," both generating categories and mediating concerns about changes to these categories (ibid). While framing her terms in this way, and writing that the aims of such movements "cannot be wholly satisfied by changes in the census, or even by institutionally derived policies and remedies" (ibid, 21), Nobles' account is narrow in its historical discussion around the politics of movements to re-construct 'race' categories: she does not directly address the broader movements around identity and inclusion to which census struggles are a party, the resistance to these movements, or, importantly, the way in which all of these are part of broader national coherence-seeking projects. Further, Nobles' insistence that "theoretical formulations that stress the radical plasticity of race, mostly correctly...risk obscuring its concrete manifestations and the institutional sites of its construction and maintenance" (ibid, 12) itself risks overlooking potentially useful formulations of the ways in which this kind of theory also functions as part of a larger spectrum of questions around challenging conceptions of identification and inclusion, both within the politics of the census and outside of it.

In "Censuses, identity formation, and the struggle for political power" (2002), Arel and Kertzer put forward a broader survey of the ways in which censuses have worked as sites of contest and control around questions of identity. Working from the view that "[w]hat is measured by the census is a particular kind of politicized social construction of reality" (35), Arel and Kertzer, too, interrogate the complexities and seeming inconsistencies of "the shift from census categories decided from on high to those crafted through a complex and messy process of political struggle, involving interest groups formed from the people being categorized" (27). While movements around identity are diverse, as both Arel and Kertzer, and Nobles demonstrate, it is frequently the case that in these movements identity is not viewed as fluid and constantly changing, but rather as 'primordial' or static. Thus, movement leaders find themselves working to convince potential members of the primacy of their roots (Arel and Kertzer 2002, 28), and at the same time working to reject changes to hardened concepts of identity that have been promoted and constructed as 'victories.'[18] This, Arel and Kertzer point out, produces a tension whereby "those preferring the blurring of categories confront not only actors whose interests lie in championing their own categorical identities, but a more general difficulty of promulgating identities that fail to fall in any simple category at all" (34). These questions of the impossibility of categorizing that which is unintelligible to the logic of categorization, I suggest, might be a site where the undecidability of nation narratives could be articulated. [19]

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[18] As Nobles points out, opposition to the multiracial movement in the United States came from groups organized around African American identity (2000, 128-162).

[19] For an analysis of the concept of 'undecidability' in the context of the figure of the foreigner, see Honig 2002.

At the same time, in this kind of project, it is important to examine some of the tensions and implications of the census *as* a method of categorization that fits into a politics of nation narrative-building. The conception of the modern state as bounded accounts, at least in part, for the complementary contention that the component objects of the state are "countable and hence able to be incorporated into the state organization" (Anderson 1991, 185). The line of argument can be extended to say that it is through these kinds of closures and attempts at counting that "every difference [becomes] no difference… part of a seamless whole" and that the census thus works to "count every potentially subversive rejection of culturally enforced norms as themselves normal, as normalizable, and as normativizable through law" (Brown 1993, 399).

This is the way in which multiculturalism discourse, more broadly, works through the absorption of critique: while the nation is the site of all stories (and hence no stories can be outside the nation), the census is the site of all identities (and hence no identities can be outside its categories). Censuses, generally, and 'race' ('visible minority' in the context of the Canadian census) and ethnicity categories, specifically, work in mutually re-enforcing ways to classify people as part of a single category through which they then work to secure and delineate particular stories and spaces situated within the narrative of both the census and the multicultural nation, as (re)produced through the census. Both the census and its categories work as coherence-building mechanisms in nation-building through narrative. Category-making and the placement of people into categories, in a way, serves to produce an ordering that, in addition to itself being part of a narrative about the nation, in its focus on *order*, itself works to dispel anxieties about national

coherence and fragmentation while delineating and sanctioning the contents and appropriate performances of belonging.

Canadian census categories

The census has worked as an instrument of both self-identification and policy implementation in the context of Canadian multiculturalism and equity policies. Those categorized have a stake in the process and the potential 'rewards' that can result from being counted, and, thus, 'counting' as members of the polity in a certain way. The question of 'self-identification' has been reflected in the framing and development of the 'ethnic origins' question and categories, as means to assert the particularity of 'culture' and shared ancestry, while movements towards implementation of anti-discrimination legislation have been framed through the debates surrounding the creation and use of a 'visible minority' category as a means to implement equity legislation. However, I also point to the intermeshing of struggles around these two questions and suggest that their impact extends further than the specific sites of self-identification through the census and the drive to enumerate people in order to implement equity legislation. Indeed, the categories and struggles around the census duplicate and replicate the way in which discourses around multiculturalism delineate what is intelligible in the space and narrative of the nation. It is only those categories which 'exist' (as countable) that can be properly (and appropriately) recognized or celebrated within the multicultural narrative of the multicultural nation. It is only those who are counted as such that count and, importantly, can act, as citizens.

Canada has had an 'ethnic origin' question on its censuses since the first census in 1871, stemming from the state's self-definition as 'a pact between two founding peoples.'

But it wasn't until the 1981 census that respondents were encouraged (that is, permitted) to mark more than one possible response to the 'ethnic origin' question. In 1996, the question became open-ended, with write-in options and instructions (and examples) to provide as many ethnic origins as possible (Kalbach and Kalbach 1999, "Measurement of Ethnicity in Canada's Censuses"). These changes can be said to reflect the increasing movement towards 'self-definition' that developed alongside debates about multiculturalism policies occurring at the same time.

Resistances to increasing moves towards self-definition have also taken place. The census 'ethnic origins' question became a ground of contention in the 1991 census when, for the first time in significant numbers, 'Canadian' was entered in the 'Other – specify' box of the ethnic origin question by 3.3 percent of respondents, making it the fifth largest 'ethnic' group listed. In successive years, the category has grown, with 24.1 percent of respondents reporting 'Canadian' as their only, or one of their, 'ethnic origins' in the 1996 census. In the context of the 'Canadian' response, recent censuses (1996, 2001, and 2006) have formulated the 'ethnic origins' question in terms of 'ancestors.' The 2001 census question asks: "To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's **ancestors** belong?" (Census Questionnaire 2001, emphasis in original), and in effect presumes that one's identity corresponds to that of his/her ancestors, "assumes an ethnic purity" (Arel and Kertzer 2002, 25) and a view towards a possibility of constructing a 'complete' national identity through the securing of historical roots. Further, this phrasing shifts the truth-claim uttered by the census questionnaire (and its writers) from one of subjectivity to objectivity. If someone is asked to define their own ethnic origin, they can't really be wrong—if they think they are Canadian, or Russian, or Vietnamese, etc.,

they are. If they are asked about their ancestors, however, the question is no longer about them, and the respondent could be objectively mistaken, or they may know their grandfather came from Ireland, but view that as having nothing at all to do with their identity.

Census makers were compelled to introduce an additional identity-based question to the census, the 'visible minority' category, as a result of the 1986 Employment Equity Act. As the Act stipulated that employers must report annually on the representation of women, persons with disabilities, aboriginal peoples, and 'persons who are, because of their race or colour, in a visible minority in Canada'[20] amongst their employees, the census required a mechanism to account for how these 'visible' persons were being represented. The question regarding 'visible minorities' appeared in the 1996 census, offering respondents 10 choices[21] (rather than the write-in option with examples offered on the 'ethnic origin' question) and an 'Other – specify' option[22]. The nature of the 'visible minority' question categories works in a way that seems to blur with the 'ethnic origin' question, and there is often confusion between the two, confusion that stems, according to Arel and Kertzer, from "a belief that identity can be *objectively* determined

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[20] A 1995 version of the Act has assumed the language of 'visibility' and reads that its purpose is to "to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities" (Canada Department of Justice 1995, 1).

[21] White, Chinese, South Asian (with examples including East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan), Black (with examples including African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali), Arab/West Asian (with examples including Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan), Filipino, South East Asian (with examples including Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese), Latin American, Japanese, Korean.

[22] In the 2001 census, 'Arab' and 'West Asian' appeared as separate options, and examples were removed from the category 'Black' and changed in other categories that provided examples. The 2006 census retained the same 11 categories as the 2001 but with different examples in the South East Asian category.

through ancestry" (2002, 11). The framing of 'visible minority' in this way can be phrased as a further example of the ways in which the debate around census is taking place within and reinforcing a broader narrative of identity and multiculturalism.

The two census identity questions are based on different developments and goals. The 'ethnic origins' question is tied to the Multiculturalism Act and the 'visible minority' question to the Employment Equity Act, as noted above. While the Multiculturalism Act works in a positive way in calling *for* subsidies for cultural and educational activities based on one's 'culture,' the Employment Equity Act works *against* discrimination in mandating representation of 'visible' minorities. It is in this way that practices of categorization through the census can be said to foreclose avenues for critique from those counted: the census counts all in all-inclusive ways, creating a coherent (uncritical and depoliticizing) multicultural nation. An important nuance to note here is the Multiculturalism Act's deep ties to groups of European ancestry, specifically Ukrainian groups, who were involved in mobilizing for its existence in the 1960s. By contrast, the Employment Equity Act is focused on inclusion of 'visible' minorities (Arel and Kertzer 2002, 18). Arel and Kertzer link this dichotomy to a parallel split between a "politics of entitlement" and "a renewed pride in one's ancestry, generally without *individual* benefits…" (18). However, I am not sure that the break is so easily made. In effect, it posits that multicultural citizenship is *not* a political citizenship, but is rather depoliticizing. While ethnicity is linked to "renewed pride in one's ancestry," the demands made by ethnic groups on the state and society are also to a certain extent about entitlement, though that entitlement is based on collective, not individualized, identity. Particularly interesting about this break is the way in which "pride in one's ancestry" is,

through the Multiculturalism Act, depoliticized and privatized while the question of entitlement and 'visibility' is made public and individuated. This individuating move works against possibilities for collective action based on anti-racism. If all moves towards equity are based on individual claims, systemic racisms cannot be addressed as such, indeed are not intelligible as such, but only as (privitized) situated disputes between citizens. Thus, the census is paradoxical: it counts groups, but also performs an individuating practice. The categories are both group-defined and lists in which individuals (not groups) are placed. The individual (and the state) is possible for the (group) identification.

Situating the census

The way literature around and about the production of census categories has evolved both precludes critique that situates the census as part of a narrative, and supports a narrative around a politics of multiculturalism. Acts to structure the identities of others have certainly been met by resistance, but resistance, as noted above, has been in the form of backlash. This resistance comes not from further state-based restructuring or minority group mobilization, but rather from citizens and groups reacting to the idea of multiculturalism as a nation narrative as it is articulated through the census. What it is to be 'Canadian,' despite multiculturalism policies, is challenged by assumptions grounded in an Anglo-Saxon identity and 'way of life' and, importantly, 'invisibility.' While movements to include have coalesced around the creation of census categories, resistance to categories has occurred in the form of movements to assimilate, like the 'Count me Canadian' campaign discussed below, and these types of movements have had widespread responses and resonance. It is through this lens of continuous resistance to

movements around multiculturalism that I read the coalescing of questions around census categorizations.

It appears as if "the effort to secure identity prevents ... from contesting its production" (Bickford 1997, 116), as movements to be recognized often obscure the possibility to question the terms of recognition, or even the question of 'recognition' as such. As Butler points out, "[t]o make identity the source of ...commonality...prevents 'a radical inquiry into the political construction and regulation of identity itself'" (Butler 1990, ix qtd. in Bickford 1997, 116). Once identities are cemented as the focus on which community is to be built (for example, a multicultural community), it is no longer appropriate to interrogate the way in which the constitutive parts of community work as this kind of interrogation would reignite anxieties about the coherence of the community. This is precisely the way in which a 'multicultural' identity category works to both articulate a continuous narrative that draws together conceptions of 'otherness' while at the same time moving away from possibilities of critique by proscribing all difference as acceptable and yet, diluted into the multicultural category, and the multicultural nation narrative. Moves to recognize identities by categorizing, according to Wendy Brown, function to produce

> persons [that] are reduced to observable social attributes or
> practices; these are defined empirically, positivistically, as
> if their existence were intrinsic and factual, rather than
> effects of discursive and institutional power; and these
> positivist definitions of persons as their attributes and
> practices are written into law, ensuring that persons
> describable according to them will now become regulated
> through them (1995, 66).

This kind of production, reduction and subsequent regulation through classification is a starting point of contention in the discussion of the ways in which census categories function.

Counting (as) Canadian(s)

The "Count me Canadian" campaign is perhaps the most widely successful act of resistance to the logics of census categorization. This campaign is part of a reaction to the way in which multiculturalism has been framed as a nation narrative; it is also, however, a reaction that aims towards *a* nation narrative that ultimately seeks to produce coherence and reduce critique, albeit from a different set of starting premises. I argue that this campaign represents a significant example of what Richard Day calls "the problem of the desire for 'unity,'" a problem that, for Day, will only cease to be so, when this desire is given up (2000, 12), i.e. when coherence-seeking imperatives are acknowledged and let go. It is from this suggestion that I move to examine the roots, impact and implications of the "Count me Canadian" campaign as another articulation of Canadian nationalism that is, perhaps, not far removed from multicultural nationalism.

The story begins with the intensification of murmurings of 'Canadian' as an 'ethnic origins' category through an Edmonton Journal article (November 30, 1989) about the previous year's census question design and testing, headlined "'Canadian' rejected as cultural identity." Over the following two years, spearheaded by Toronto Sun columnist Doug Fisher, Sun newspapers across Canada ran editorials, letters to the editor, and other stories urging respondents to write 'Canadian' as their 'ethnic origin' in the 1991 census. As noted above, the campaign was highly successful. That 24 percent and 33 percent of respondents marked 'Canadian' as an 'ethnic origin' in the 1996 and 2001

censuses, respectively, further underscores the way in which 'Canadian' was constructed

in a meaningful way as an identity category in the census (not to mention Hacking's point

about the way in which categories of people emerge at the same time as categories of

description). A question remains, however, of the reasoning about why some people

might choose to label themselves as 'ethnically' Canadian and others might not. Jack

Jedwab points out that persons of backgrounds other than British or French didn't give

'Canadian' as a response in significant numbers, and suggests that calls to 'thicken

citizenship, thereby strengthening Canadian identity' through the 'Canadian' response

creates "too strong a linkage between ethnic and national identity [and] risks precisely the

opposite result by creating polarization between… those reporting that they are ethnically

'Canadian' and the 'Others'" (2003, under "Conclusion").

I would argue that the kind of resistance working through the 'Count me

Canadian' campaign functions as a means of division much more so than as a 'uniting'

factor. Acting as a reactionary move to perceived 'threats' to what it is to be 'Canadian'

and further how and what a 'Canadian' story is constituted, the movement around the

'Canadian' category functions to re-inscribe dominant views of who is a citizen and

under what circumstances. Invoking 'Canadian' as an 'ethnic' category works to

demarcate those who claim their 'Canadianness' through histories of settlement and those

who are not properly 'Canadian,' immigrants, while also serving as a tacit

'encouragement' to these immigrant 'others' to disavow their otherness and claim

'Canadian' status. [23] In this tension, different readings and attempts to construct a

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[23] The question of 'Canadian' takes on another dimension in the context of those French-Canadians choosing the translated option of 'Canadian,' 'Canadien,' a term with very

'Canadian' narrative in relation to a history of immigration become apparent as each working towards a national coherence through the collapse of multiplicity into all-encompassing categories.

In this context, it is also worth considering how identifying as 'other' is coded into nation narrative constructions. In Canada, resistance to census categorizations through the category of 'Other' has, as discussed above, largely taken place through the 'Count me Canadian' campaign, as a means of assimilating identification categories, rather than questioning them. When people identify as 'other', this choice is either merged with another category or, sometimes, left in a large assortment of 'others' in the 'Other' tabulation. While it is possible and encouraged to mark multiple responses on both 'ethnic origins' and 'visible minority' questions, tabulation methods re-code self-identifications, and, in some cases, erase them. These moves can be seen variously in Nobles' discussion of the re-tabulations of 'race' category responses in US censuses (2000, 165-169), Berman's account of census taking in colonial Africa, and in the tabulated census data released by Statistics Canada (http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census/index.cfm). In these instances, categories that appear on census questionnaires are combined with other categories (particularly 'Other' responses) and responses are often re-distributed. In recent census data tabulations, "Other" becomes "Visible Minority not included elsewhere," re-coding potentially transformative identifications into an 'acceptable' statistical category. Similarly, in the 'ethnic origins' tabulations, responses not recognized by tabulators are lumped into continental 'not included elsewhere' categories (for example, "African, not included

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different connotations of distinctly French settlement. In the 1996 census, 42 percent of those responding "Canadian" to the ethnic origins question were from Quebec.

elsewhere") (Statistics Canada, "Census 2006"). As Arel and Kertzer point out, "even

when self-identification is allowed, the recoding of people's responses into a smaller set

of categories plays a large role in the statistical representation of groups" (2002, 34).

Berman also shows how the tabulation of responses into data can

delegitimize/deconstruct self-identifications. In the context of colonial census takers in

Africa, Berman characterizes the situation as one where officials' expectations of fixity

and consistency from members of groups assumed to be cohesive and a need for

"effective administration" led officials to construct their own groups, by combining

communities considered too small to be individual administrative units or to break up

larger groups in order to rule by "separation and isolation" (forthcoming 2010, "II.

Knowledge and Control in Colonial States: Counting"). While, in the Canadian case, it

may be possible to argue that diffusing 'Other' responses may be a way to garner more

numbers for boosting equity policies, I am trying to suggest that perhaps this innocuous

move can be viewed in a different way. This re-coding makes for a sense of futility in the

levels of differentiations. If a specific identification is recoded into a set of state-defined

categories, why would people feel compelled or interested in participating?

In this section, I have sought to position the census as generating, substantiating,

or justifying certain ways of reading and coding a 'Canadian' nation as 'multicultural'

through the construction of categories. This reading involves an analysis of relationships

between categorization from 'above' and 'below', as well as an examination of the

relation between this tension and how the census's existence as a narrative and as a

means to justify a narrative has faced reaction from those resistant to a particular reading

of multiculturalism as nation narrative. It is my sense that examining how knowledge

production through categorization and quantification is reiterated into 'historical',

narrativized knowledge provides some insight into the processes through which certain

understandings of nation – those based around an anxious desire to recuperate

'difference' into ideas about multicultural coherence - become naturalized. It is from here

that I move to a discussion of how knowledge production through quantification and

categorization is disseminated into popular understandings.

Unsound utopias: deciding and disseminating the data

While thus far, the focus of this chapter has been predominantly on the ways in

which 'official' (that is, state-produced, managed and maintained) processes work to

organize populations into categories as a means to enact coherent nation narratives, it is

important to note that coherence is not only sought through the official mechanisms of

the state. Nationalism is popularly maintained just as much as it is state-proscribed

(Anderson 1991). National coherence and, specifically, *national coherence through the*

affirmation of a multicultural nation narrative, is sought after and articulated in a popular

realm as well. Michael Adams' *Unlikely Utopia* provides an example of one such text

that advances ideas about national coherence on a mass level in a way that the census or

other Statistics Canada documents might not. In addition to this, the tropes Adams works

through serve to show, once more, several key anxieties (the tension between xenophilia

and xenophobia and concerns regarding internal and external national coherence) through

which multicultural nation narratives are formulated.

Adams aims to dispel claims that the impact of immigrants on 'Canadian society'

or 'Canadian identity' is largely negative by arguing, using a variety of polling data

collected by his firm Environics, that, in fact, the news regarding the impact of

immigrants is largely positive and necessary for population growth and the maintenance

of a Canadian story built around the response and management of diversity through

multiculturalism. Adams frames his intention as follows: "I can only hope that others will

agree that my optimism is rooted in an honest examination of the data and a fair reading

of our history as a people" (2007, 152), bringing together a narrative of Canadian history

with his polling data to show the salience of both, and the power of each to justify the

legitimacy of the other.

On the face of it, Adams is trying to dispel the xenophobia of a particular kind of

nationalist curmudgeon (the kind often featured in *National Post* editorials). He points

out a common criticism of multiculturalism brought forward by critics, that "the

emphasis on race instead of class can sometimes serve as a red herring in discussions of

equality because people are often more comfortable celebrating cultural diversity than

addressing economic inequality" (2007, 55-6). Adams' aim, as I explain below, is to

show that things aren't as bad as some think; Canada *is* unique, *is* comparatively utopian.

In this way, Adams sets his argument up against the kinds of sentiments that aim to

provoke fear of immigration (and immigrants) as potential threats to a Canadian polity

that has been so inviting as to not only welcome immigrants but to affirm

multiculturalism as a point of Canadian pride, identity, and, indeed, a central part of a

nation narrative. Adams' organization of his argument works to both further attempts at

coherence building and prevent possibilities of critique (where it is inappropriate to

question the assumptions of a 'welcoming' and 'affirming' narrative).

Adams makes a distinction between polling data (public opinion) and what he

terms the 'facts on the ground' (Statistics Canada data). This is the distinction between

the popular and the academic data that works to further and feed conceptions of

multiculturalism as a nation narrative. Adams acknowledges the fact-*seeking* aspect of his

text, writing that "[p]ublic opinion gives us only the aspirational part of the picture" but

views 'the facts on the ground' as the use of 'official statistics' to generate 'facts' rather

than polls. In making this distinction, Adams doesn't take into consideration Kitsuse and

Cicourel's caution to examine the organizational processes that produce 'official

statistics' rather than the contents of statistics as such. Adams also incorporates an idea of

history into the relationship between 'official statistics' and public opinion polls, writing

that "historical perspective can also serve as a reasonable corrective to the worries of the

present in the same way empirical data can serve as a corrective to the alarming headlines

of anecdotal evidence in the morning paper" (2007, xxvi). 'Historical perspective' stands

in here as a nation narrative ('we' can refer to them for comfort and balance in a difficult

present), while 'empirical data,' does the same (serves as a source of objective comfort),

constructing the truths, that, in time, also act as, feed into, and justify existing narratives.

Multiculturalism, as affirmed by the data produced through public opinion

polling, is key to national identity, Adams argues: "In 2003, 85 percent of Canadians said

that multiculturalism was important to Canadian identity. More Canadians cite

multiculturalism as central to the national identity than bilingualism or hockey. Also in

2003, four out of five Canadians (81 percent) agreed that multiculturalism has

contributed positively to the national identity" (2007, 20). It is through this *contribution*

to national identity that multiculturalism discourse can provide the much-sought

coherence of a Canadian nation. Tellingly, Adams does not specify what he means by

'multiculturalism' (for that matter, though for very different reasons, neither do I) as he

understands the term and as it might be understood by those polled. This is the 'magic' of

the discourse: it is an incoherent concept used to provide coherence to a nation narrative.

It enables Adams to argue that "if immigrants are in Parliament, something is working-

and working well. In Canada, immigrants are in Parliament. In fact, Canada has the

highest proportion of foreign-born legislators in the world" (2007, 69).

This statement begs the question of the way in which *elites* from minority groups

represent, and the problem of co-optation where minority discourses are both taken up

and articulated by group elites who present them in a way that is intelligible to a

dominant group and the way in which difference itself is taken up and recuperated as

intelligible within a nation narrative (the identification of identities/stories as

'multicultural'). Although Adams states that 13% of federal MPs are born outside of

Canada (the foreign-born population is 19.3%, according to the 2001 census), citing

proportions and statistics does not get at *who* these people are, what their motivations are,

and how his focus is on working *through* a system rather than challenging it. Adams also

points out that some foreign-born MPs come from very diverse constituencies. Jim

Karygiannis, the MP in Scarborough-Agincourt, has a constituency that is 35.7% Chinese

and 3% Greek (2007, 79). I wonder, however, whether this is not precisely the point of

the discourse – all 'others' are identified as such and grouped accordingly, not as

particularized 'others' (ethnicities) but generalized 'others'? Creating a binary, collapsing

it into the one works to foreclose critique but also in some ways to maintain 'difference'

and 'diversity'.

Adams does address an important critique of the way in which immigration is

depoliticized by multiculturalism discourse: the economic or class-based critique. His

data shows that although the number of immigrants with university degrees is rising (45% in 2004, compared with 23% of the total Canadian population [62]), the incomes these immigrants earn in Canada have not improved: "even after ten years in Canada the foreign-born are more than twice as likely as the national average to have low incomes" (62). This indicates that, in some respects, the 'problem' may not be the data as such; rather, the reliance on data (as generalized fact) that often precludes further questions and further study. Probabilities and statistics can make the 'so what?' and 'what is to be done?' questions unintelligible. This kind of focus, as many philosophers of science have written, works to exclude the scientist as subject and presents data as fact outside of its production by a subject with an agenda.

At least in part, the discussion above is troubled by the terms Adams sets, where, in the context of the Canadian nation-state either immigrants are enriching or damaging: "three quarters of Canadians agree with the statement 'Other cultures have a lot to teach us. Contact with them is enriching *for us*'" (38, emphasis added). Adams is concerned with both arguing for the positive aspects of immigration and the comparatively favourable way in which non-immigrant Canadians view immigrants: "When compared to a host of other countries' citizenry, Canadians emerge as exceptionally open to people of different backgrounds and exceptionally positive about the contributions newcomers make" (2007, xi).

The binary Adams positions himself within is, however, as Bonnie Honig (2003) has argued, unstable. While Adams seems to strongly support statements around the *contributions* of immigrants to a Canadian narrative (what Honig terms "what immigrants do *for us*" or xenophilia) and articulates his opposition as those who point to the threats

of immigration to a 'Canadian way of life' (what Honig terms "what immigrants do *to us*" or xenophobia), the boundary between xenophilia and xenophobia is rather blurry. Adams tends to slip at times, as when he writes that the eighteen men and boys, many of them born and raised in Canada, plotting bombings in Toronto in 2006, were targeting "Canadian civilians" (23). Why the need to specify that those targeted were *Canadian* civilians if the plotters were also Canadian? This distinction suggests that, perhaps, there is something *not* Canadian about these people, some of whom, Adams notes later, had actually "emigrated from Pakistan or Somalia". In this way, it is possible to discern the difficulty in drawing the line between xenophilia and xenophobia, between the multiculturalism that welcomes immigrants and their contributions and the multiculturalism that aims first at integration. Indeed, Adams returns to the idea of *integration* again and again, perhaps as a means of pacifying the fears of his (immigrant-welcoming) audience. 'Canadians' can welcome immigrants by holding multiculturalism (indeed, this is a great 'thing' *they* do for *us* - giving 'us' a central trope for an ever-fragmented and fragmenting nation narrative) as an important part of a nation narrative, but, at the same time, fear that immigrants are not 'integrating' well enough. Both the slippage in reference to some as 'Canadian' and others not, and the dual welcoming of difference and anxiety over integration speak to the tensions Honig identifies with articulating arguments around immigration in terms of a xenophilia/xenophobia: the binary tends to collapse in on itself and, further, countering xenophobia with xenophilia (as Adams professes to do through his polling data) tends to lead to an infinite regress (Honig, lecture to 305 class, 28 January 2010). Reiterating the simplified binary he starts from, Adams writes that there is a "concern … sometimes expressed that there are no

boundaries to Canadian multiculturalism - that minority communities can engage in any behaviour, even very objectionable behaviour, and defend it on the ground of culture or heritage or religion" (2007, 133-4). In delineating the distinctions in this way, Adams avoids discussing that multiculturalism discourse is precisely about boundaries; about coherence and *not* about whether immigrants *give* or *take.*

Finally, it is worth considering the question of the comparative: *Is* Canada unique? Can 'we' compare with other states? There is a distinction between internal and external coherence-seeking Adams' text: While there are undoubtedly ways in which national coherence is sought *within* state boundaries, *inter*national coherence is also sought through both seeking (favourable) comparisons to other states (to assert the primacy/dominance of the inside) and asserting the uniqueness of the inside (and hence, again, its primacy and internal coherence). Adams writes that "[w]ith domestic pundits so intent on pointing out flaws and warning signs, Canadians might be forgiven for being the last to know that in many ways we're on our way to becoming the planet's leading experts in the quiet heroism of getting along" (2007, 42) Here, 'getting along' is promoted to the world as *Canada's* achievement. This is a nationalist claim; Canadians, in order to affirm the nation, have to be experts in *something*. This book presents two arguments - one about internal coherence (xenophilia/xenophobia) and one about external coherences. Neither of these arguments questions or examines the premises they are based on, nor do they examine the borders (the delineation of inside and outside) on which any kind of coherence project rests. There is, as well, a tension about *when* comparisons can take place. Where Canada compares less favourably when it comes to comparisons of Canada's cities, Adams writes that "we have to consider Canada on its

own terms- not as a potential footnote to events in France, Great Britain, the United

States, or even Australia" (46).

Statistics, Adams points out, verify his assertions: "Public opinion data certainly

suggest that multiculturalism holds an ever more central position in the imagined

community that is Canada" (21). Statistics contribute to, proliferate and affirm a nation

narrative while Adams himself works to foreclose critique by sticking to a binary of

either embracing multiculturalism or racism (xenophilia/xenophobia). Adams takes "what

we know – what we know from the national census and Statistics Canada…[among other

sources]… and consider[s] this knowledge from a perspective of moderate optimism

rather than kneejerk alarmism" (2007, xiii). These are the only two options, and Adams

conceives that 'moderate optimism' is based on a kind of 'knowledge' gleaned from

statistics and public opinion polling. As I argue, however, this kind of binary opposition

is overly simplistic and not only leaves out, but forecloses the possibility of sustained

critique in its qualification (the optimism is *moderate)* and its aim *towards* progress.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to probe the relationships and distinctions between

different methods of ordering associated with national coherence-seeking practices in

Canada. What is the distinction between counting and storytelling, between data and

narrative? What is the relationship between these kinds of practices in the context of

anxieties about social unity and fragmentation? Situating my analysis in a field of study

that critically examines statistics as part of a politics of knowledge production through

ordering practices, I have argued that census categories and public opinion polls are

means of constructing coherence and addressing anxieties about social unity that both

constitute and serve to justify multicultural nation narratives. My aim, however, has been to redirect this argument to a Canadian context through tracing the development of both the 'ethnic origins' and 'visible minority' questions on the Canadian census and through an examination of *Unlikely Utopia,* a popular text that seeks to dispel xenophobic critiques of multiculturalism as a nation narrative, and to show how these questions are situated in a more complex story about coherence, citizenship and nation-building. My focus has been to demonstrate that the construction of categories in these ways works parallel to, and as part of, narrativizing practices that delineate what is appropriate in the space and story of a multicultural nation, and to show that this delineation works to simultaneously foreclose possibilities of questioning the assumptions that ground the narrative of the multicultural nation.

Chapter 4: Transformative presen(t)(ce)s in Canadian multicultural literature

In this chapter, my second case study, I seek to show how the theoretical frameworks and empirical examples I have presented in the first three chapters work in and complement both discourses about Canadian literature produced by immigrants and their descendents and fitted within a multicultural 'canon,' and how these texts themselves exemplify the means through which critical discourses about exclusion are transformed into nation narratives. To do this, I again examine practices of coherence-seeking and coherence-building that function through the recuperation of critique in both scholarly and popular spaces. I contextualize the chapter by examining arguments around what 'Canadian literature' might signify in its relationship to both nation-building practices more broadly and the way in which these texts both critique and reinforce the location of texts within a national literature and a narrative about the continual expansion of what is accepted as *Canadian* literature (Szeman 2003, Dickinson 1999, Verduyn 1999).

The main section of the chapter will present a close reading of three novels about the experience of racialized immigrant otherness in Canada: Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981)*,* Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994)*,* and David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* (2007). These novels, published over an almost 30 year period, span a breadth of both immigrant/'other' approaches to a Canadian nation and approaches to multiculturalism as a Canadian nationalism. *Obasan* is based on Kogawa's own experiences during World War II, and is also the first novel to discuss the internment of Japanese-Canadians during

WWII. It became the first popular novel[24] about the encounter between the state and its

settled outsiders and was instrumental in then ongoing and subsequent debates about

multiculturalism policy in Canada. While *Obasan,* it has been widely argued

(Kamboureli 1996, Sasano undated), as one of the first popular novels that can be deemed

a Canadian multicultural novel, speaks to a 'pre'-multicultural nation and to an earlier

generation of immigrants and racialized 'others', its popularity (and frequent appearance

on Canadian literature syllabi) signals its integration into a narrative about Canadian

nationalism. It is a critical story become a national story. Here, I will present a reading of

Obasan that focuses on how the critique of the state Kogawa presents is aimed towards

inclusion and the different ways each of the three generations of characters approach

ideas about inclusion.

      Chorus of Mushrooms has often been read as a direct response to *Obasan*

(Kamboureli 2000, Sasano undated), but speaking from another generation and another

relation to the space of the nation-state. Without a need for disclosure, grief and redress,

Chorus of Mushrooms addresses those outsiders born in Canada but still *outside* and

attempting to negotiate both their relationship to their immigrant families and to their

Canadianness. Unlike *Obasan,* where change in the form of character transformation is

advocated and gestured at, *Chorus of Mushrooms* is specifically oriented towards

character transformation in the three parallel generations of central female characters.

The novel's transformations indicate a recuperation of critical otherness and of immigrant

temporalities as history becomes a history *of* transformation and a multicultural future. In

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[24] *Obasan* was and is also highly acclaimed – winning both the 1981 *Books in Canada*
First Novel Award and the 1982 *Canadian Authors' Association* Book of the Year
Award, as well as being taught in many literature courses in Canada.

Soucouyant, by contrast, such experiences of temporality are suspended as a negotiation of historical otherness is (un)grounded.

Each of the novels plays with themes of forgetting and remembering as means to approach writing and understanding history from a present that is often excluded from critique. *Obasan* – published in 1981 - takes place in the early 70s, describing the events of Japanese internment during WWII. *Soucouyant* – published in 2007 - is set in the late 80s and describes events dating back to the 40s and 50s *Chorus of Mushrooms* is the only one of the three novels that is set in the same time it is published - in the early 90s. As with the themes they describe, *Obasan* and *Soucouyant* look back and reflect, whereas *Chorus of Mushrooms* focuses on transformations in the present, where these transformations, I will demonstrate, work to preclude and *recuperate* a critique situated in a present.

There is something to be said here about form and why the novel form is a fruitful space for the kind of study I present in this chapter. The novel form is decidedly modern and, as Anderson and others have written, is very much connected to nation-building practices. Imre Szeman writes that in Anderson's thought, the nation and the novel are presented as "roughly congruent." Further, in much analysis (though not that of Anderson, who focused on form, as I discuss in Chapter 1) focus is placed on the literary contents of the novel, rather than the form of the novel and questioning this form. While I acknowledge and examine, to some extent, the possibilities that present themselves in playfulness with form, for the most part, this work focuses on, as Szeman puts it, "the ways in which various novels 'imagine' the nation or how through novels the nation is imagined by readers" (2003, 41).

I close this introduction by returning to the theme of recuperation in a popular sphere, where all of the novels I examine are read, supported and rewarded *as* multicultural Canadian novels, exemplifying a process through which critical literatures which question grounding in a national space, *through that questioning*, affirm and are incorporated into a national sphere of possibility as that sphere expands to subsume its others. All of the authors I discuss (of both primary and secondary literature), and many of those writing in and being placed in the field called Canadian (multicultural) literature know each other, work with each other and critique each others' work. For example, Imre Szeman's book *Zones of Instability* is reviewed in *Topia* by David Chariandy, whose text *Soucouyant* I discuss in this chapter and who is also Assistant Professor of English at Simon Fraser University. In the acknowledgements of Chariandy's book, he thanks a list of people that reads like a who's who of Canadian multicultural literature, including, significantly, Hiromi Goto, whose novel *Chorus of Mushrooms*, I also discuss in this chapter. Six degrees of Canadian multiculturalism narratives, indeed.

Why is this significant? On the face of it, it's significant for a somewhat obvious reason: it's important to know the context you're in working to situate yourself critique it. More interestingly, though, it is my sense that this set of relationships signals something significant in relation to one of my central claims: 'Canadian literature' or 'Canadian studies', if it is taken to include the concept of 'multiculturalism,' has always already incorporated all stories. This is a non-textual example of this claim. Even a text like Chariandy's, which, I argue below, functions against many of the ways in which critique is subsumed in the other two texts I examine, is, despite working to counter dominant multicultural narratives, always already co-opted by them.

Michael Shapiro, writing, and cultural governance

I address the role of immigrant Canadian literatures as part of Canadian

multiculturalism in relation to Shapiro's conception of 'cultural governance' (2004, xi). I

go further, however, in examining the enlargement of state-sponsored exercises and the

always already political nature of the critical literature recuperated as Canadian.

Shapiro's interpretive method, discussed at length in Chapter 1, seeks to deconstruct

nation narratives through politicizing literary techniques and texts read as literary -

deconstructing genre boundaries; fostering disruptions by opening the closures that create

exclusions and so illuminating exclusions and impositions of (false) coherence – with the

aim of disrupting established structures of power and authority.

Shapiro's consideration of all linguistic forms as explicitly political stems from

his view that "[a] failure to exercise a literary self-consciousness…amounts to the

adoption of a depoliticizing posture, the acceptance of institutional imperatives" (1984b,

239-40). In working to blur the boundaries between what is accepted as 'knowledge,'

Shapiro aims to demonstrate that some modes of writing, like policy documents,

"subordinate... their literariness, aspir[ing] to make their language neutral" (239-40). The

politicization of language works to "shift from discourse as a mode of communication

about things to one that raises the questions of 'power and eventualization'" (2004, xvi).

Thus, in order to 'read' dominant or alternative discourses, it is necessary to appreciate

how the signifying practices contained in alternative historical narratives yield insights

into the politics of knowledge: "attention must be on the interests that a discourse,

historical or otherwise, serves" (xvi).

One must not only uncover the aims and interests of writing construed as neutral

knowledge, but also put forward modes of writing that function as resistance. Shapiro

notes that "[u]nless unusual political movement takes place to change the discursive terrain within [which] the "prosperous nations" control meanings, political participation remains circumscribed within the dominant language of politics" (2004, 23). Disruption, then, takes myriad linguistic forms that work against the imposition of coherence. Shapiro points to the way in which "grammatical consolidations (the 'we's, 'our's) [work] to construct a united community of believers, who face a world of ideational division while repressing division within" (1999, 103), showing how linguistic forms and narrative forms enforce existing structures of power relations. He looks at certain kinds of literature as disrupting linguistic coherence, by examining the ambiguities and incoherence "within the practices of intelligibility we call language and within the institutional loci that give language its points of departure" (2004, 28). Similarly, certain kinds of 'minor literatures,' "resist common sense and provide a politicized mode of apprehension by making space for 'pilgrimages' within the dominant language" (1999, 91). It is these kinds of 'pilgrimages' that I examine in this chapter but through a lens that gestures towards their absorption to 'national literature' and the processes through which this kind of absorption occurs.

For Shapiro, modes of resistance work against closures. Following Nietzsche, Shapiro refers to systems of intelligibility as "false arrests," "the arbitrary fixings of the momentary results of struggles … that could have produced other possible systems of intelligibility" (1992, 2). Fiction writing, Shapiro suggests, working through imagination rather than a nod to neutrality, "provides the escape from the traps set by the search for certitude" (16). Similarly, "an emphasis on translation contrasts markedly with the closural emphasis of empiricists who seek commensurability of concepts across cultures

and politics" (2004, 27). Political and politicizing readings, then, illuminate and press movement rather than describe finality in the form of coherence-seeking and declarations of closure. Movement, then, is not merely about shifting kinds of coherence-seeking (even if the coherence established is momentary), but rather about maintaining movement in critique, even if critique is always already being incorporated.

In politicizing language and deconstructing genre and disciplinary lines, Shapiro elucidates a move from "political theory to literary/political space" (1992, 15). He considers texts as spaces, writing that "the fiction-fact boundary tends to dissolve with the recognition that all places have a meaning that is mediated by an imaginative geography" (1992, 10). Ways of speaking, "always take place in a preconstituted meaning system; they are always in a world. It is in this sense that the spatiotemporal location of a conversation is protoconversational; it shapes the economies of the said and unsaid, as well as providing a structure of intelligibility for the said" (10). Shapiro uses Foucault to show that current given states are not simply matters of description. There is hence a need, through thinking about 'nows,' to illuminate that "the 'now' is an unstable victory won at the expense of other possible nows" (12). This is key to understanding the spatiotemporal presences and emphases on transformation in the novels under discussion below.

Shapiro writes that *all* stories "contain a mythic level," what he describes as "a job to do, perspective to promote." Through both their grammatical or rhetorical structures and implicit argumentation, stories have agendas, which Shapiro frames as either "arguments for entrenched authority or polemical critiques which seek to demystify or disestablish existing structures of power and domination" (1984a, 2). The

former work to legitimate and underscore the existing order and include any stories that "incorporate... the prevailing language." These not explicitly critical texts, for Shapiro, are "collaborating in telling a story... that is designed to remind the society's members what has to be done" (1984b, 243). Further, in order to maintain the substance of these myths, control over the field of discourse, and particularly "over the dominant story of national origin" is necessary in order to secure the coherent 'nation-state' against claims that do not fit the national story (1999, 47-8). That said, my aim in this chapter is not to perform political readings of literary texts, exactly. Neither is it to *insert* literary readings into a political text. Rather, I aim to read these novels as part of a literary-political space and time.

Before I delve into analysis, however, a caveat: I offer this brief overview of some scholars in Canadian Literature discourse not as a truncated survey, but as a means of acknowledging my own ignorance of a wide field and an attempt to provide some potential counterpoints to both the claims made in earlier chapters and the analyses of the 'multicultural' novels that make up the bulk of this chapter. It is my sense that contextualizing this Canadian Literature criticism about inclusion and the nation to my argument about multiculturalism as a kind of nationalism that can be read in a number of sites, including in literature, both broadens the field and provides a basis for a different approach or series of critiques.

Situating literature as 'Canadian'

Imre Szeman's 2003 study of the relationship between postcolonial literature, national literature and 'globalization,' *Zones if Instability,* also orients itself to the political relationship between literature and nation-building and, especially, to the way

the pursuit of 'nation' is situated in literature in many postcolonial states. Szeman traces

the concept of 'national literature' to the Romantic period where, "just as the nation

became a seemingly natural way of organizing groups of people, so too did the belief that

literary and cultural products reflected the unique national soil from which they

organically developed" (22). By way of introducing his study of the role of nation-

building in post-WWII nation-building in Canada, Szeman notes that in Canada "it is the

very artificiality of the nation that is an essential component of the literary attempt to

create the nation… The artificiality of the nation is highlighted not as something to

overcome, but as the starting point for the new nation" (13-4). This apt observation

applies not only to the kind of nation-building that occurred in Canada through the

criticism of Northrop Frye and others (the focus of Szeman's study), but also to the way

that studies of Canadian literature have positioned texts excluded from a 'canon' and

critical of post-war characterization of Canadian literature. This is the 'recuperation' or

'incorporation' of critique that I discuss throughout this chapter and this thesis. While the

field may be changing, I argue, its boundaries are no less concrete and, as Szeman points

out, the concept of 'nation,' whether it is positioned in relation to other 'nations' or in a

context of 'transnational' movements, remains all too present and hence, must be

analysed.

Szeman's central argument relates to the continued usefulness of the 'nation'

concept. He writes that

> the discourse of the 'nation' might still today fulfill a
> critical function, and not just because it represents 'the least
> bad version of governmental practice,' because it remains
> 'the most universally legitimate value in the political life of
> our time,' or because 'all modern history demonstrates that
> proletarian dictatorships have only taken root where they

> fused with a national liberation.' The growing sense that
> the nation is an inherently negative, limiting political form
> that should be replaced by discourses that deal with
> 'nomadism' or 'deterritorialization' should be tempered not
> only by the continued empirical existence of nations, but by
> the real political possibilities that it might have once and
> may still represent in those national situations in which the
> 'global' alternative to the nation in many cases represents
> no alternative at all (29).

Szeman's argument about Canada, specifically, articulates a link between Canadian literature and ideas about a Canadian nation tied to mid-century/post-WWII discourses of nation-building. He notes that the contents of this nation-building have been effectively challenged by critics questioning these nation-building practices from the perspectives of Indigeneity, ethnicity, gender, 'race,' and sexual orientation. While Szeman discounts calls to discard the idea of the 'nation' as a concept of study, his focus on the relationship between 'nation,' and 'globalization' also does not get at one kind of nationalist politics currently occurring in Canada: those linked to a specifically national distinctiveness based around multiculturalism. This nationalist politics incorporates identity-based critiques in constructing a nationalism that foregrounds 'official multiculturalism' as what is distinct and unique about Canada, something that Canada, the nation-state, should be proud of. While Szeman might read the texts I discuss below as part of a critique of one kind of Canadian nationalism, I try to show that they also exemplify another kind of nationalism in addition to critiquing it.

Szeman's study is, however, instructive in contextualizing the construction of Canadian literature as a discipline where "political and literary considerations overlap" (159). To this end, he notes, quoting T.D. Maclulich, "'some form of literary nationalism provides the only logical justification for treating Canadian literature as a separate field of study'" (159). Further, it is explicitly through government support for writers, presses,

journals and conferences that an 'explosion' of Canadian writing occurred in the 1960s

and 1970s (154). Through this process, Szeman writes, "…the federal government

invented *ex nihilo* the canon of Canadian literary texts that would occupy much of the

literary critical energies of this period and that would define the field of Canadian

literature in the decades to follow" (155). My sense is that this is still happening in the

context of multicultural literature, though, as I've argued in chapter 2, top-down (state)

efforts are accompanied as well as bottom-up efforts (from writing communities) to shift

and broaden conceptions of 'Canadian literature.' It is also worth noting that many of the

state supports and accolades created in this period continue today, as the books I read in

this chapter are each supported by projects designed, at least in part, towards nation-

building during the time period Szeman discusses.[25] Szeman acknowledges that the

process of supporting writers in this way serves to position the state to take the "writer's

role as its own" where writers have warned that "the aims of a nationalist literature in

Canada have been co-opted from the outset, that any idea of the nation produced by or

through literature merely meets the demands and desires of the nation-state" (161). While

inclusion and representation seem to be key goals for many writers and commentators

now included under the rubric of 'Canadian literature,' it is my sense that the

implications of inclusion are often underanalysed. Readings of literary texts by immigrant

or racialized authors can help illuminate these implications. It is to these that I now turn.

---

[25] For example, *Chorus of Mushrooms* was written with support from a grant from
Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada while *Soucouyant* was long-listed for the
Governor General's Award and the Giller Prize.

Reading coherence, performing multiculturalism

Reading *Obasan, Chorus of Mushrooms* and *Soucouyant* in the context of

'Canadian literature' and specifically as examples of the way discourses around

multiculturalism are transposed into a coherent instance of national distinctiveness hinges

on reading for both coherence and transformation. Transformation is a key concept here:

transforming the vertical line between two sides of a binary into a horizontal one. Here,

inclusion/exclusion, past/future, forgetting/remembering, same/other etc. are negotiated

through transformations required to turn one into the other in an attempt to collapse the

distinction. However, since the attempt begins *from* the distinction, any attempt to close it

only reifies it, even if there are discursive means to render, within the transformed space,

the distinction unintelligible. The discussion I undertake below works by thinking

through how these distinctions are articulated in themes about belonging and coherence,

presence and a present in multicultural discourses, questions of memory and forgetting

and how these play into claims about distinctions between storytelling and history.

Finally, I suggest that these themes each work into the claim that in discourses around

multiculturalism in Canada, where possibilities of sustained critique are foreclosed.

As the characters in each of these novels negotiate possibilities of inclusion and

belonging, it becomes apparent that a national as multicultural identity must be

performed so as to provide the coherence and the accompanying narrative necessary to

secure and maintain the nation state's unity. The process of making a nation narrative

secure works through the recuperation of critique: 'otherness' and 'distance' are

recuperated into a healthy multicultural whole through a performance specifically *viewed*

as multicultural. Though *Chorus of Mushrooms* seems to speak against the kinds of strict

delineations proscribed by multiculturalism as nationalism, it, in a way celebrates the

depoliticizing aspects of this discourse. While Goto ties together her conceptions of 'Japanese' and 'Canadian' she starts out with clearly defined conceptions of what each of these entails. Goto's 'Canadian' begins very much as the kind of stereotyped white 'Canadian' that is easily replaced through appeals to multiculturalism.

In *Obasan,* Kogawa offers and plays with similar ideas around Canadian/'other' identity, at once troubling the relationship between presenting and critiquing these kinds of identities, but ultimately gesturing towards a belonging to come, an impending change in both the perception and identity of the central character, a third-generation Japanese-Canadian woman named Naomi, and in Canadian state policy, the coming of the Multiculturalism Act, which, as I've suggested above, was spurred in part *by* the claims made in *Obasan.*

Obasan is set in the early 1970s and narrated by Naomi looking back at her childhood during and after WWII, where she and her family, along with several thousand other Canadian citizens of Japanese descent and Japanese immigrants, were 'evacuated' from Vancouver to an internment camp in the interior of British Columbia and later 're-settled' in southern Alberta. During this time, Naomi and her brother Stephen are cared for by their first-generation Japanese-Canadian aunt and uncle, Obasan and Uncle Sam, as their family is fractured and dispersed. Their mother's second-generation sister, Aunt Emily, is able to escape to Toronto from where she continues the protest against the state that had been started in Vancouver.

The novel makes much of the contrast between the silence of the *Issei,* first generation Japanese-Canadian citizens and immigrants, and the claims against the state made by the *Nisei*, the second-generation, born in Canada. Aunt Emily, in particular,

performs a 'Canadian' identity that insists on citizenship as the sole basis of 'Canadianness.' Aunt Emily insists that since the family are Canadian citizens, the classic Japanese fairy tale "Momotaro" is Canadian as well: "Everything a Canadian does is Canadian" (Kogawa 1981, 54), Aunt Emily declares. All stories are the histories of the nation. At the same time, though, Stephen, Naomi's brother, rejects Uncle and Obasan, in favour of Emily, as she is somehow 'more' Canadian. Throughout the family's internment, he insists on 'Canadian' food instead of Japanese and, Naomi comments, "is always uncomfortable when anything is 'too Japanese'" (217). In this world, pre-*Chorus of Mushrooms*, pre-multicultural transformation, there is only one or the other: Japanese or Canadian.

In this pre-multicultural world, Emily (and, later, Stephen) is the only one who sees herself as an insider; all the other characters see themselves as forever outsiders. The shift that Goto takes on in *Chorus of Mushrooms* is to show that both of these perspectives are problematic and that *both* 'home-culture' and 'Canadian' identities are necessary – this is a call for the multicultural transformation that Kogawa lays out a case for in *Obasan* by creating stark archetypal characters. What each of these texts aim for, however, is a finality in relationship, despite their emphasis on memory and changing relationships. A gesture towards finality, as I've argued throughout this thesis, also opens and finalizes exclusions.

Nonetheless, in *Chorus of Mushrooms,* there is a shift to a more playful performance of identity, but the performances here are still, I argue, placed along a kind of trajectory that aims *towards* a multicultural identity easily fitted within a multicultural nation narrative. *Chorus of Mushrooms* is a story about the identity transformations of 3

generations of Japanese-Canadian women and Hiromi Goto is extremely critical of what she terms 'immigrant stories' that involve falling back onto stereotypes of 'Japanese-ness' that involve questions of 'integration'. Even though Goto foregrounds playfulness, questions established structures of authorship and authority and celebrates hybridity, this is a critique with limits, with aims, towards coherence. The transformation from immigrant outsider to multicultural citizen is inevitable.

The novel presents a relationship of performance and coherence: the performance *of* coherence in the Canadian multicultural nation-state, even if it's an occasionally ambivalent performance. The 3 women in *Chorus of Mushrooms* perform particular roles and are transformed accordingly. Naoe, the shut-in grandmother, opens up a Japanese past to her granddaughter and simultaneously a Canadian future for herself: she is transformed by a bullride at the Calgary Stampede, a place where, finally, for a brief moment, amidst tremendous struggles on both sides, she and the bull are "one". They are "never partners, but never really enemies" (Goto 1994, 218). The immigrant transforms into the 'multicultural' and the 'multicultural' and the 'national' merge to become the 'multicultural nation'. There is a moment of "sweet purity." Keiko or Kay, Naoe's daugher, the aspirational immigrant, seeks to assimilate to her new surroundings, but, upon the loss of Naoe, her own alienated mother, she breaks down, not talking to anyone, not eating. She eventually recovers enough to go back to cooking the 'Canadian' foods that she is committed to. However, she too is transformed to "sometimes, on a holiday weekend, ask [Muriel/Murasaki, her daughter], to whip up something from ... [what she calls the] 'little cook book'", code for the Japanese cookbook (191). Finally, there is Muriel or Murasaki, the culturally confused narrator and granddaughter, who rejects her

mother's aims towards assimilation and escapes into the exoticism of her grandmother's Japanese stories, and eventually begins to tell stories herself, including the story of *Chorus of Mushrooms*, proposing that the ambiguity of the stories and positions performed through them are all part of a "happy story" (197).

While Mari Sasano writes that Murasaki and Naoe exemplify a "permeability of categories and the reality, as well as the fiction, of the difficulties of assimilation into an undefined norm," I want to suggest that there is a norm into which they are fitting, the multicultural norm. They are not 'simply' 'Canadian' or 'Japanese' but rather a 'Japanese-Canadian' identity that performs a splicing, a splicing that, as I've argued throughout this text, may preclude any further playfulness.

To get a sense of how this process works, it might be instructive to turn to an example from the third novel I examine, David Chariandy's *Soucouyant.* While *Obasan* may be termed a novel of remembering (the book jacket describes it as "a moving novel of a time and suffering we have tried to forget"), *Soucouyant* is described on the book's cover as "a novel of forgetting." Structured around the debilitating dementia of the narrator's Trinidadian immigrant mother, *Soucouyant* returns again and again to the figure of the 'soucouyant' a mythical bloodsucking creature somewhat like a vampire that, rather than killing its victims, bites them and leaves them to a slow, almost imperceptible dying, the kind of death Chariandy suggests has beset the narrator's mother, Adele. Here, then, the transformation occurs through deterioration, a slow death, struggling to survive in an unwelcoming Canadian space, while in *Chorus of Mushrooms* transformation occurs through Naoe's invigoration and the abrupt change incited by the personal agency to *make* a life change. This is perhaps why *Soucouyant* can't be easily

placed in the multicultural discourse I locate *Obasan* and *Chorus of Mushrooms* within. In *Soucoyant,* the transformation that occurs is not towards a coherent multicultural nation. Rather, it is a tragic one, where the first generation (Mother) never *becomes* multicultural like Naoe or Obachan does. She dies from her wounds, and the son is left to negotiate his own identity, unable to perform in any particularly coherent way.

In both *Chorus of Mushrooms* and *Obasan,* by contrast, there is constant negotiation of identity and space. In *Obasan,* this is extended through a metaphor of bridging, where the bridge over the river between the space of internment outside of the town of Slocan and the town itself represents for Naomi, the place "where sad thoughts come" (128), where the difficulty of negotiation presents itself as Obasan and Uncle are silent about this. Like the bridge, the negotiation of voice and silence proves an important metaphor to negotiating identity in *Obasan*. Naomi's two aunts form the binary Naomi attempts to position herself around. There is, for Obasan, a protection in silence ("From both Obasan and Uncle I have learned that speech often hides like and animal in a storm," Naomi writes (3)), a way of maintaining coherence by simultaneously excluding and "swallowing up" a threatening outside: "In her steadfast silence, [Obasan] remains inviolate" (224-5). Aunt Emily, on the other hand, seeks coherence through redress. If Obasan is "stone", Aunt Emily is "sound" (33). Through her voice, she seeks clarity and change, the acceptance of Canadian citizens *as* Canadian. If Aunt Emily is the multicultural cause, Obasan is unintegrated and hence unintelligible. Even this unintelligibility, however, is included, as I'll show below.

In *Chorus of Mushrooms,* Obachan transforms from a kind of 'Obasan'-like character not to someone claiming inclusion, but to someone seizing it. Rather than

remaining silent, she is biding her time, speaking only when it is on her own terms, rather than remaining silent. "I want so much for someone to hear, yet it must be in my words" (15), Naoe tells the reader. This seems to be an invocation against speaking *for* someone, especially an immigrant someone, as Emily seems to be doing in taking up an injustice that she herself did not exactly experience (as Obasan and Naomi did). Here, Goto could be saying that that what must be heard is what hasn't been spoken, listening directly rather than through the representations available through the discourse of multiculturalism. Naoe admonishes her daughter's speech: "The language she [Keiko, speaking English] forms on her tongue is there for the wrong reasons. You cannot move to a foreign land and call that place home because you parrot the words around you. Find your home inside yourself first, I say. Let your home words grow out from the inside, not the outside in" (48). Here, though, the emphasis is on looking inside to gain an understanding of what is outside. 'Home' as something internal (internalized?) that is then adapted to external circumstances. This intimates, again, the impossibility of changing external circumstances. If it is only you who must change, not that you are 'up against' ('Canadian culture'), then the reader is left with another form of cultural governance, albeit one that hinges on individual agency rather than unity.

The negotiation and inability to arrive at a single story or identity, the uneasiness presented by the ultimate arrival at a multicultural identity, is also apparent in many characters' multiple names and in the way that characters act as archetypes (the assimilated, the 'new' immigrant, the confused child of immigrants etc.). While Sasano presents a playful reading of *Chorus of Mushrooms,* as compared with that of *Obasan*, as I suggest, Goto's text can be read a different way, as a novel not of necessarily

transgressive transformation and play, but as a novel where transformation, while it may begin as transgressive, is quickly co-opted into a multicultural norm. This playful naming, Sasano rightly points out, is not necessarily always empowering, as just as Muriel takes on the name 'Murasaki' to play with multiple names as a means of multiplying conceptions of identity, Keiko also has a second name that she prefers, Kay, and her husband has shortened the name Isamu to 'Sam.'

What is the significance of naming to building a coherent (national-ized) identity? Beyond the obvious, that particular names are associated with particular languages, names are *situated*. When a person is named, they take *one name at a time*. Thus, while Muriel/Murasaki may play with different identities and not fit into either, at the moment of naming, she does have a singular identity. Further, her transformation transforms the playfulness of her identity so that while 'Murasaki' may start off as a transgressive name, it is transformed into a name that 'belongs' to a multicultural Canadian who also belongs to the multicultural nation. The narrator in *Soucouyant*, conversely, is never named. He does not name himself, nor is he referred to by name by any of the other characters. His brother is also never named. As he remains always already in flux, unable to fit into a space, a story, or a nation, he is unnamed.

Impossible exclusions

As narratives that are in many ways about belonging, these novels negotiate the non-belonging half of the binary in compelling ways. I want to suggest that, when viewed through the lens of a multicultural nation, 'exclusion' is an unintelligible concept. When all stories are national stories, there is no possible outside. Performances of identity transformation both constitute the narratives of the characters' lives *as* characters and

form the narratives through which a multicultural national imaginary can be read.

Because the discourse of multiculturalism functions as the all inclusive space of all

stories, as a unity-seeking discourse, it makes the possibility of exclusion itself

unintelligible: in the tumble of the *Chorus of Mushrooms* rodeo, there is "simple purity,"

all is "one:" the (Calgarian) bull and the Japanese immigrant. That is, where the nation is

the space of all stories, there is no possible outside and whatever outside there may be is

either unintelligible or, at the moment of intelligibility, recuperated into the national

space through a multicultural transformation.

Even prior to her transformation, Naoe is 'included' in the Canadian house of her

daughter, Keiko. It is just that she cannot be understood. The moment of transformation

makes prior unintelligibility comprehensible and past exclusions are treated as part of the

story of transformation itself, where the possibility of transformation is not a possibility

but an inevitability. The process of inevitability is apparent when Naoe states that her

"words are the only noises in this place [she] calls a home." (11) while she's "never left

this dusty house, it hasn't been the time" (19). While Naoe calls Keiko's house "a home,"

she is both included and excluded from it, her words incomprehensible, her presence an

ambivalent unintelligibility. While her words may sound like "a torrent of noise and

scatters," an unintelligible "tornado", Naoe is biding her time – waiting for the age of

"roaring." Similarly, Obasan and Uncle Sam in *Obasan* are included in their silence –

they are enveloped by the outside – while Aunt Emily is always already performing not

only her own Canadianness but also that of Obasan and Uncle Sam. The letters the

Soucouyant family's narrator receives responding to the special needs of his brother

present a similar enveloping inclusion:

> Some of the letters explained in simple and patient terms that schools were now learning to respond to hands-on students 'just like yours.' One of them came with a glossy pamphlet describing a new program where students would get to work in 'relevant' settings for half of the school year. Behind the cash register in fast food restaurants, for instance. 'Real life business skills… Common sense education…' The pamphlet showed a rainbow of coloured faces (Chariandy 2007, 15-6).

At the same time, Adele is once again outside of this equation: she is contained by the house she lives in, but she keeps 'escaping' and scandalizing the neighbourood by wandering about in her underclothes and picking through the garbage. While she is not exactly excluded, she is never to be included either.

Discourses of (official) multiculturalism

In an early essay on *Obasan,* Gary Willis describes the novel as "expressive of a sensibility that wishes to define, in relation to each other, Japanese and Canadian ways of seeing, and even to combine these divergent perceptions in an integrated and distinctive vision" (1987, np). This description corresponds well to the way the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1985) describes commitments to (among others) "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada's future"; and to "promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation" (Multiculturalism Act, s. 3(b)(c)). These novels are both shaped by and shape the way discourses about multiculturalism (both 'official' and 'unofficial') develop. Willis continues this discourse, writing that

> the Japanese Canadians are a part of the Canadian society
> which deprived them of their Canadian rights…what was
> done to them has important implications for the health of
> Canada as a whole. 'What this country did to us, it did to
> itself,' Aunt Emily says to Naomi (33) (1987, np).

As I've suggested, the redress or therapy on the part of the state is a means of integration

and coherence-building through a recognition of a past that works in a way to close

additional discussion on the past.

Chorus of Mushrooms' "Part 3 An Immigrant Story with a Happy Ending" works

similarly:

> Part 3
>
> An Immigrant Story with a Happy Ending
>
> *Mukashi, mukashi, omukashi….* Nothing is impossible.
> Within reason, of course.
>
> Part three. Everything that is missing or lost or caught
> between memory and make believe or forgotten or hidden
> or sliced from the body like an unwanted tumour.
>
> Or.
>
> A longing. A desire for.
>
> Forgetting or remembering something that never happened.
> Wondering when does one thing end and another begin? As
> if you can separate the two.
>
> Part three.
>
> The missing part (159).

This section of the text is presented as a version of the limits of immigration, an unsavory

past and critical engagement with these histories through the simultaneous setting of a

limit – "Nothing is impossible. Within reason, of course." – and the acknowledgement

that the transformation into a multicultural citizen requires transcending the limit –

"Wondering when does one thing end and another begin? As if you can separate the two."

This is to say that in neither *Obasan* nor *Chorus of Mushrooms* is serious consideration given to changing the systems that organize the functioning of a state (or moving discussion away from a statist paradigm) and 'its' others. The focus is instead on redress (leading to resolution) and personal agency and change through an isolated reevaluation of power relations. This is exemplified as Aunt Emily admonishes Naomi:

> 'Some people,' Aunt Emily answered sharply, 'are so busy
> seeing all sides of every issue that they neutralize concern
> and prevent necessary action. There's no strength in seeing
> all sides unless you can act where real measurable injustice
> exists. A lot of academic talk just immobilizes the
> oppressed and maintains oppressors in their positions of
> power' (Kogawa 1981, 35).

Arguably, what Aunt Emily is talking about is multiculturalism discourse's attempts to 'balance' while celebrating only certain aspects of culture. At the same time, given her criteria, how is injustice to be measured? Ostensibly, once the problem she is addressing has been addressed by the state, as Japanese internment was formally addressed and redress and restitution received shortly after the publication of *Obasan*[26], the issue is closed and covered over by a discourse of celebration where, as I've argued, it is inappropriate to bring up issues deemed closed.

By contrast, the multiple layers of forgettings, rememberances and returns in *Soucouyant* indicate a chaos that while in some ways captured by the logics of the

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[26] A clip from a 1988 broadcast of CBC's 'The National' outlines the Canadian government's formal apology and offer of restitution ($21,000 for each surviving person interned during the war, an offer of (re)'re-patriation' to Canada for all those 're-patriated' to Japan after the war, and a $12 million 'community fund'): http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/second_world_war/clips/1621/

multiculturalism discourse I locate in the other two novels, often resist it as well. The son

leaves and returns multiple times; the reader can't *quite* 'place' the mother: perhaps she

can be placed in comparison to Obasan and Obachan as somewhere between resolutely

steadfast in a past and transformed into a multicultural future, but the point is that she

can't place herself. Her lack of agency, her multiple forgettings, refuses a multicultural

logic that requires transformation through choice (or its explicit refusal). Similarly, the

reader can't quite place the son: he moves back and forth and is never quite implicated in

multiculturalism as he tries to negotiate his relation to his mother and the spaces in which

they both live. Yet, as a child of immigrants raised in Canada, without an accent, the son

is never quite outside multicultural logic: as I argue above, the space does not allow for

outsiders. This is evident in the casual reference to the Multiculturalism Act the son reads

at his mother's house. It and he are both there, but not quite belonging there. It is a

surreal scene:

> It's late into the second afternoon of my return, and Mother
> is napping upstairs in her room. I'm in the sitting room
> floating my eyes over a newspaper, some heated editorial
> on the Multiculturalism Act passed over a year ago. The
> young woman, Mother's nurse, is here too, and she's
> claimed the entire couch for herself (33).

Similarly surreal is Chariandy's representation of one of the classic examples of 'official

multiculturalism': the 'Heritage Days' festival. The 'traditional' community the family

lives in has a 'Heritage Day' parade where "*everyone* was invited to participate, since the

Heritage Day parade was being revamped these days to recognize 'people of

multicultural backgrounds' and 'not just Canadians'" (60).

As Mackey suggests, this kind of performance of 'heritage' is a shift that does not

change the relationship between dominant and excluded but rather broadens a frame of

inclusion as a means of turning attention back to the dominant (1999, 2). Heritage Day is still about 'Canadians' and *all* 'heritage' is not 'Canadian,' despite official discourse. This becomes apparent in *Soucouyant* when Mother's difference is 'paraded' during the parade:

> Mother was without a blouse or skirt or pants but mercifully in a bra and pantyhose…I realized that the parade had come to a halt. The participants were looking at Mother in their midst and also down the cul-de-sac at me… I wanted to get away, but then another parade seemed to start. Mother was now being helped somewhat unwillingly toward her home by an older man and woman. She seemed, magically, to grow to inhuman proportions. She swelled as big as one of those inflatable puppets you sometimes see on poles at parades. As looming and caricatured and awkwardly handled as that. Coming toward me. Coming home…
>
> 'Have you noticed them?' said a man holding a bell and wearing a tricorne hat. 'The boys? They're *always* like that. They're always shrinking away and skulking about. They never meet your eyes…'
>
> '… his *mother*, for god's sake. And he just *stands* there. I mean, what kind of people are we allowing to live here, anyway?' (61-2).

The son is paralyzed in between his mother and 'Canadians.' 'He' and 'here' are neither here nor there. The parade demonstrates the inability to decide and the insufficiency of the enclosures of a discourse of multicultural inclusion. The mother is enclosed, ostensibly included, but it is not in a celebratory parade.

Transformative presents/presences

This paralysis or undecidability reflects the coherence-seeking negotiation over an always unstable present that I locate as a significant aim of the discourse of multiculturalism. Each of the three novels describes a revisiting or remembering of a time

of transition, transformation or integration by someone who is more or less accepted as a multicultural citizen. The *present*, in each of the three novels, is a relatively untroubling, uncritical multicultural present. Any issues that arise are with understanding the relationship of a troubling past to a present of integration: the project of taking the 'longing' out of 'belonging'. The negotiation of the present, as I've suggested above, takes place through a personal transformation from immigrant 'other' to multicultural citizen. This is most starkly apparent in the transformations that the three main characters in *Chorus of Mushrooms* undergo, but it is also evident in Naomi's transformation to come in *Obasan* and the tense instability represented by Adele and her younger son in *Soucouyant.*

In *Chorus of Mushrooms,* the present is a juncture: the moment of transformation *from* critical *to* nation narrative; a transformation from 'immigrant narrative' to 'multicultural *Canadian* narrative'. The transformative moment works not only to transform and subsume the present through a pause – the narrative transformation that must occur in order for a multicultural Canadian present to be intelligible as such - it also works to recuperate an immigrant past *as a Canadian* past. That is, there must be a Canadian past if there is to be a Canadian future that is *multicultural* and intelligible as multicultural.

In this text, the character of Naoe exemplifies both the difficulty and yet, necessity, of change. Her departure and subsequent transformation shows that even an old immigrant woman can become a multicultural Canadian. This is the ultimate possibility in the land of such possibilities, with ideal *conditions of possibility* always already in place. That is, even though it's difficult for Naoe to close the door on both her limited

inclusion in her daughter's home and her Japanese immigrant identity and past, it is "a time for change" (76) and she is "not too old for change" (113).

Naoe's transformation enables the transformations of the other two women, transformations that Naoe frames as having to "shape [their] own location[s]" (113) but, which are also shaped *by their location*, by the compelling ways that the multicultural space and narrative recuperate those present in it. Two exchanges between Naoe and Murasaki exemplifies the temporal dimension of the transformation:

> Murasaki: Is this a real story?
>
> Naoe: As real as these words here and now (64).
>
> ---
>
> Murasaki: Obachan, everyone wants to hear stories. And I
> can't finish them. They scatter like sheep. Like dust.
>
> Naoe: No need to tie them up. There is always room for
> beginnings (63).

This is an example of an instance of transformation, which is also the instance of containment. It is only in *the present* – the "now" - and in the space of the Canadian nation-state - the "here" - that the story is "real", that it can be told. At the same time, though, Murasaki complains that even though "everyone wants to hear stories," she "can't finish them." Naoe's response, that there is no need to finish stories, that "there is always room for beginnings" can be read simultaneously as a response against closure, but at the same time as a response *for* a kind of acceptance of change. This is a response towards the transformation that occurs throughout, but especially at the end of the novel, when Goto reiterates the "Immigrant Story with a Happy Ending", recounting a series of stereotypical personalized representations of immigrants and non-immigrants, beginning again with the "mukashi, mukashi, omukashi." This phrase – a Japanese 'Once upon a

time" - places the story in a past, as the transformation has occurred, and yet is about to occur, is always already occurring. Murasaki both laments the stories with increasing urgency -"When does it end? When does itend? When does it end? Whendoesitend?" - and expresses the sudden shift that has occurred through transformation, through both the merging of the words in the lamentation and by asking, "When does one thing end and another begin? Can you separate the two?" (211-12).

In *Obasan,* through the character of Naomi, Kogawa sets up a pressing need for multicultural transformation as a means of addressing past tragedy. The novel sets up a constant presence of 'otherness' and tension. Naomi introduces herself by snapping "What else would anyone want to know? Personality: Tense. Is that past or present tense? It's perpetual tense" (7). The text implies that the sense of tension lingers, but perhaps this is because of the silences – it could also be (and has been) interpreted as the need to discuss tragedy to overcome it and reconcile it; the reparations and Multiculturalism Act address the tragedy. After much silence, Naomi decides it is a time for change, much like Obachan, after much silence, decides it is a time for change. While Obasan can't change, (somehow, she is 'in stone,' it's too late for her) Naomi takes on the challenge, as does Obachan. Perhaps in making Obachan change in *Chorus of Mushrooms*, Goto is suggesting that *anyone* can change, even Issei, while for Kogawa, too much silence is insurmountable and it is up to the next generation to seize the possibility of change.

In *Soucouyant,* the character of Adele represents a profound undecidability, an incoherence: she is unintelligibility and incoherence personified. The departures of each of her family members that begin the narrative can thus be said to represent moves *away from* incoherence and unintelligibility. "We each left Mother in our own ways" (25), the

narrator writes. For Father, another first generation immigrant exhausted by the struggle *towards* coherence, there is no more *towards;* he dies. For the narrator's older brother, there is a departure that is simultaneously a retreat from the greater society which attempts to provide coherence – retreating into poetry and his own writing, he seeks coherence in texts, in literature. For the narrator, the younger son, departure is not necessarily *towards* coherence or intelligibility, it is simply *away* from incoherence, perhaps in hopes of a transformation that never arrives.

The son's leaving is, however, diligently planned. He wants order even in, *especially in,* leaving incoherence: "I wouldn't just leave her, of course. I'd first alert all of the crucial people at the bank and the phone and cable companies… I'd make all sorts of provisions for my departure" (28-9). The son's second leaving, having seen that he cannot reconcile or return to his mother, is also about making provisions, but not to seek grounding or coherence, like the first time, but rather to move away into a self, rather than being 'buried by history':

> Very soon, I'll have to tell Mrs. Christopher that I'm also
> losing myself, going my own way…
>
> I'll ask Mrs. Christopher just what sort of son sacrifices his
> own life for his parent's? Just what sort of son tells himself
> that this is generosity and goodness instead of a form of
> cowardice. An evil, a mockery of existence itself?
>
> I'll try something like this and wait. I'll wait for a response
> sufficient enough to send me away. Something hurtful.
> Some final curse (132-3).

The son does not frame leaving and returning to or encountering his mother in a present tense. It is always set in either a conditional or future. There is never a current leaving: it is always a past leaving or a leaving to come. There is ultimately no *placing* the action,

and hence no place: only negotiation. As I suggest above, this novel and each of the others is set in a past where difficult times in a further past are recounted. This framing works against possible critiques of the time of writing, of the authors' own present. All unpleasantness is in a past. The reader is left to speculate about the future and the present.

In *Soucouyant,* as the present proves too unstable to make sense of, and as the mother's dementia proves more and more debilitating, she turns to the past. In her dementia, the mother forgets details of the *present* but not the past; she is perfectly lucid about the past, even though it is perhaps the traumatic experiences of her past that have brought on her dementia. In this way, she maintains a coherence *about* the past, just not about a present in which she does not belong. There is no coherence in the present and any imposed coherence, is just that: imposed. There can only be imposed coherence (narrative) in a past and a projected future coherence.[27] The son explains:

> Mother can string together a litany of names and places
> from the distant past. She can remember the countless
> varieties of a fruit that doesn't even grow in this land, but
> she can't accomplish the most everyday of tasks (47).

While *Obasan* makes a strong argument for a need to reconcile with memory, to remember in order *move on*, if one is to be 'healthy' or a participant in the community, *Soucouyant,* as a novel "of forgetting" doesn't make this kind of argument; it doesn't make any particular kind of claim at all (though it is possible to consider the novel's commitment to undecidability or ambivalence a claim in itself). *Chorus of Mushrooms*, on the other hand, isn't really about remembering or forgetting; it isn't a novel looking towards a past or a future, but one that is attempting to transform them in a present in a

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[27] This is similar to Hannah Arendt's thought on the question of recognition. For Arendt, there can be no recognition of a present, only of a past, of something that is over (Arendt 1958, 184).

particular way: into a multicultural history and a multicultural future. Each of the three novels (even *Soucouyant* in its refusal to make a claim) makes a claim about the space of outsiders inside a nation narrative and the way in which outsiders/immigrants critical relationships to the state/inside is negotiated and changes.

Storytelling history

Early on in *Chorus of Mushrooms,* Murasaki comments that "[h]ysteria and history can become one and the same" when negotiating a narrative of insiders and outsiders (36). Goto constructs a history and continually acknowledges the constructedness of *any* history. In this way, there is a kind of transformation from *hysteria* to *history* that, while in some ways empowering is also consistent with a trajectory towards a multicultural coherence. As Naoe states later in the novel, it's "[u]seless to waste time on sentimental memory. I may be an old fool, but stupidity is another matter. So important to remember, but say the words out loud. Don't wallow in pools of yesterday, I say. Don't drown in yesterday's tears" (74). This statement precedes the move towards 'Canadianness,' moving into a shared space.

In *Soucouyant,* the narrator's childhood librarian, Ms. Cameron, attempts to place him in a history by teaching him about 'his' history, Trinidadian history. History is relational, Ms. Cameron insists, but at the same time, through this claim, it is an easy step to the multicultural claim that 'all histories are Canadian histories.' In some ways, Ms. Cameron's 'benevolent' claim that Trinidad was 'important' to the British Empire does nothing more than reiterate colonial relationships and in associating the son with this history (106), replicates it so that the boy's relationship to Canada is again read as subservient; important, but only important as *what he can do for* the state:

> 'Your history is a living book,' Ms. Cameron once told me.
> 'Your history is your blood and flesh. Your history is your
> grammar for life…'
>
> My history is a travel guidebook. My history is a creature
> nobody really believes in. My history is a foreign word
> (137).

The final statement in this segment, in the narrator's attempt to again position himself in a space and time and his inability to make sense of a history, despite Ms. Cameron's best efforts, suggests the incoherence of transformation from hysteria into history.

The potentially transformative relationship between hysteria and history can be linked to a transformation into a historical trajectory, a coherence-seeking practice. In *Obasan,* Emily and Naomi seek resolution. The text ends with an "Excerpt from the Memorandum Sent by the Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians to the House and the Senate of Canada, April 1946" (a statement Aunt Emily is heavily involved in drafting) and this itself ends with a nod towards the new United Nations and sets out the groundwork for multiculturalism policy (248-250). This fragment is a gesture towards a unity-building, a putting together of the many fragments scattered throughout the text and the characters' lives. There is palpable discomfort with fragments here. What can Naomi make of the fragments? Throughout most of the novel, she seems to choose to disavow them. She doesn't consider the fragmented sense of history in her life, until she is forced to, when she learns of her own mother's tragic death. Early in the novel, she reminisces about her mother, unable to come to terms with the possibility that her mother might be dead:

> The woman in the picture is frail and shy and the child is
> equally shy, unable to lift her head. Only fragments relate
> me to them now, to this young woman, my mother, and me,

> her infant daughter. Fragments of fragments. Parts of a
> house. Segments of stories (53).

Chorus of Mushrooms, by contrast, ends with the statement "You know you can change

the story" (220), intimating agency of a different kind, to rearticulate stories in a different

way, rather than seeking closure. Goto's characters perform this shifting through the

rewriting of Japanese folk tales. At the same time, though, despite their playfulness with

the stories they tell, the characters themselves seek particular kinds of resolutions in the

narratives of their lives, as I've argued above.

    Soucouyant begins with an epigraph fragment of a Caribbean tale:

> *Old skin, 'kin, 'kin,*
>
> *You na know me,*
>
> *You na know me…*

This fragment, both in *being* a fragment and in its contents, represents an impossibility of

shedding an "old skin" while at the same time, never really "knowing" both the old skin

and what it has changed to – "the new skin." Chariandy' consideration of fragments

doesn't try to 'work with them,' changing or resolving. Fragments remain unsorted

scraps. Chariandy refers to both the kinds of 'shared cultural objects' that Benedict

Anderson claims construct a national consciousness, but also to all the personal effects

that cannot be reconciled, that do not *mean*, that do not *belong*, but signal rather a *stain*,

something that perhaps can't be 'overcome' in order to go to sleep comforted by the

"anthems at the end of broadcast days":

> Dirty numbers and greasy doorknobs. This was our
> belonging. Memory was a carpet stain that nobody would
> confess to. History was a television set left on all night. The
> car chases and gun fights sponsored by oil companies. The
> anthems at the end of broadcast days (14).

Adele's story-telling style underscores Chariandy's treatment of fragments in the novel: "She told, but she never explained or deciphered. She never put the stories together. She never could or wanted to do so" (136). There is no coherence-seeking *narrative* here, only stories that are themselves fragments. There is no coherence, despite characters' coherence seeking. As the younger son imagines what it might be like to meet his estranged older brother again, he considers what they might say, how they might reconcile with each other and with history and how they would leave things between them, unresolved (129). They wouldn't *really* reconcile, but rather acknowledge the inability to do so – the inability to 'understand' their fragments and breaks; to construct a coherent family narrative with a happy, transformative multicultural ending.

The recuperation of critique

Throughout this chapter, I have been gesturing towards the implications of the transformations and readings of identity and belonging in the narratives of *Obasan*, *Chorus of Mushrooms* and *Soucouyant*. In the final section of this chapter, I would like to make these implications more clear. In the background of this chapter is a claim about the way a transformative moment in literature incorporated as national functions in relation to the construction and securitization of a narrative of the nation. That is to say, a nation narrative requires a past, a present and a future and in the multicultural transformative moment, a critical or previously excluded history thus becomes part of the story *about* transformation. This expansion of 'national' stories works by recuperating critique, as a means of precluding future critique. There is a juncture between the opening and closing of possibilities of critique that is enacted through the workings of Canadian multiculturalism *as* a nation narrative.

In this way, in *Obasan,* formerly interned and excluded Japanese-Canadian 'others' can be incorporated into a nation narrative of regret, redress and resolution that while bitter and a source of ongoing tension, is addressed through both personal transformation (Naomi's grief) and activism (Aunt Emily's). Each of these points is apparent in a scene where Mr. Barker, a farmer who had employed the family as labourers on his beet farm after the war, laments their treatment several decades later, upon the death of Uncle Sam:

> 'It was terrible what we did to our Japanese,' Mr. Barker says.
>
> Ah, here we go again. 'Our Indians.' 'Our Japanese.' 'A terrible business.' It's like being offered a pair of crutches while I'm striding down the street. The comments are so incessant and always so well-intentioned…. 'Have you ever been back to Japan?'
>
> Back?
>
> Does it so much matter that these questions are always asked? Particularly by strangers? These are icebreaker questions that create an awareness of ice (225).

There is a tension in the move towards resolution through multicultural incorporation in *Obasan* (though decidedly not the *same* kind of incorporation Mr. Barker implies) and the gesture towards continued lingering strains on relationships ("These are the icebreaker questions that create an awareness of ice").

In *Chorus of Mushrooms,* the text displays an awareness of its own storytelling limitations and repeatedly questions the limits of narrative boundaries, as stories initially introduced as separate begin to bleed into each other (as do spaces and times initially constructed as distinct). It is important not to claim that Goto's novel is wholly engaging in a multicultural discourse: there are aspects of the text that remain transgressive and

critical that have not been co-opted, like Goto's use of language, as Sasano notes,

comparing *Obasan* and *Chorus of Mushrooms*:

> Both novels mix Japanese words into the English text.
> However, Goto does not always translate herself and, at
> times, even uses Japanese characters without providing
> romanization or translation (51, 187). Kogawa's characters
> will often say something in Japanese; written in italicized
> roman script (another marker for difference) and the text
> will repeat immediately the same phrase in English. "Umi
> no yo....It's like the sea" (1). This provides non-Japanese
> readers with a way to understand the language. However,
> Goto's strategy of not facilitating easy translation marks
> her refusal always to cater to those who are the majority
> (Sasano undated).

Commentators have acknowledged the relationship between co-optation and

transformation in *Chorus of Mushrooms* as Sasano again points out, examining Naoe's

bull-ride and citing Sneja Gunew, who writes that "'To be heard and seen, even if that

facilitates recuperation [of "exhausted monolingualism and monoculturalism"], is

nonetheless preferable to being completely invisible. Even better, if it is possible to

subvert expectations and to set up alternate reading formations which in turn appropriate

existing discursive formations concerning migrants'" (151)." (Sasano undated). As Naoe

tells Murasaki, it is necessary to take ownership of storytelling possibilities and positions,

because "[i]f the positions become static, there can never be stories. Stories grow out of

stories grow out of stories. Listening becomes telling telling listening" (172). In this way,

taking ownership of storytelling possibilities is like taking ownership of one's self –

rather than the state defining one's story, you do this on your own, away from the state.

At the same time, however, dialogue is necessary. Goto advocates engagement between

listener and teller and a fluidity of roles.

However, Goto's insistence on and awareness of the changes implicit in repetition and performance works as a kind of peace-making mechanism, where, rather than maintaining tension, awareness of an impossibility of closure dissipates tension as the characters gain 'freedom' through multicultural transformation The text's final call is, as noted above, "You know you can change the story" (220). This call to individual agency is perhaps similar to the agency of Naoe who 'left' both Japan and the enclosure of her alienation to be transformed into a multicultural Canadian. *How* and *to what* can the story be changed, though? Though this novel's critical stance of course enlarges the frame of intelligible critique, I've suggested that it also *structures* possible future critique, where Murasaki both narrates and performs the recuperation of critique:

> People always want to hear a happy story. Something with
> a warm-hearted ending with maybe a touch of a lesson that
> makes you think, yes, that was meaningful but very
> positive. Let's be more careful. People say this and that.
> Why can't you tell a story with a happy ending? It just
> depends on how your hear it. This is a happy story. Can't
> you tell? I've been smiling all along (197).

Murasaki acknowledges the search for coherence – "People always want to hear a happy story" – and that what she is telling is actually a critical story – "Why can't you tell a story with a happy ending?" – but also, that in performing these two acts, she is being transformed and the story itself is "a happy story", as its narrator, whether ironically or not, has "been smiling all along".

Even though at the end of *Soucouyant*, the character of Meera, Adele's volunteer caretaker of sorts, tells the narrator that he doesn't need to tell her the story of his mother's encounter with the soucouyant, he finishes the novel by telling this story. The story the son tells begins with the sentence "She saw a soucouyant" (173). This sentence

is repeated numerous times throughout the text as a means of explaining why Adele is the way she is. It was due to an evil spirit, not an action that she herself took, the action of lighting her own mother on fire, in effect turning her mother into a soucouyant, and then slowly dying as a result of the transformation she herself performed, displacing blame and disavowing agency. Adele's forgetting is an extreme way in which this kind of disavowal occurs.

The son recalls how, at the age of 17, he recounted his knowledge of Caribbean war history to his mother, and she wondered how he knew these things. He responds by saying that that he read about them in books. She responds that "[t]hey does always tell the biggest stories in books" (175). This response intimates Chariandy's move in telling the story of *Soucouyant* as a counternarrative: it is decidedly not a 'biggest' story, but by writing a book about it, he is framing it as such and attempting to displace other kinds of stories about the Caribbean, about immigrants to Canada – the kinds of stories being told by Ms. Camerons. At one point towards the end of the text, Chariandy even discusses competing historians' views of the war in Trinidad, of the way in which people (black and South Asian people) were displaced in order to make room for a US Air base on the island:

> Years after the war, certain historians and community
> activists pushing for the island's political independence
> would kick up a fuss… They would point out the
> continuing arrogance and racism of the soldiers stationed
> there, as well as the exploitative relationships that
> inevitably resulted… But other historians would offer what
> they described as a more 'balanced' perspective on these
> events. After all, the world was at war, and proper
> measures needed to be taken, even if this meant
> inconveniencing a few illiterates who, most likely, would
> not have grasped the severity of the situation had it been
> explained to them (179).

In this way, Chariandy poses narrative against narrative, and poses the dominant narrative as a counternarrative (by placing it second, in non-chronological order, as a response to activists), playing with the way in which 'history' as such is written. Perhaps that is his point in recounting this history at the end of the novel: not so much to reify 'history' as 'history' but to show that not only can a 'story' be history, be significant as such, but that 'histories' are themselves contestable stories that are contingent on a number of factors and on memories that are, like Mother's, fleeting. The joke, of course, is that Mother's memory of the past is not at all fleeting. She remembers exactly what happened, but is choosing to displace it with the story of the soucouyant. In the same way, it can be argued certain or other historians, police the borders of the discipline in order to construct a coherent narrative.

Conclusion

Each of the novels I have examined in this chapter has been widely read and incorporated into both a 'Canadian literature' and a story about literature read as 'Canadian' literature that says something about *being* 'Canadian.' These texts, in different ways, present a critique of exclusionary and problematic aspects of negotiation into a 'Canadian' nation, but, as popular (and popularized?) texts, in both content and reception, are anticipated by a multicultural national discourse that always already includes them as Canadian.

Canadian multicultural literary narratives function within and outside 'official' readings of 'Canadian literature' as a field and 'multiculturalism' as a related discourse. What constitutes a counternarrative in the face of the re-inscription/reification/co-optation of difference as a critical discourse? Part of these analyses has included an

interrogation of the ways accepted readings of multiculturalism are inscribed and re-inscribed through the enlargement of the sphere of acceptable critique. In the case of *Obasan,* this critique has been instrumental in shifting the nation's narrative through an expansion to include formerly excluded stories like that of the state's treatment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II, the text's focus. In this way, I argue that *Obasan* works as a critique of a kind of 'pre-multicultural' Canadian state and towards inclusion. By contrast, *Chorus of Mushrooms,* in part a response to *Obasan* a decade later, contributes to and reproduces the existing Canadian multicultural nation narrative, but problematizes and complexifies aspects of it, asking questions, but conceding the value of the inclusivity and dialogic possibilities of the 'all stories are national stories' model presented in the introduction of this thesis. Finally, *Soucouyant* offers yet another kind of reading of the nation, questioning conceptions of 'nation' or 'national community' and foregrounding an undecidability in both situating a self around a narrative and situating a narrative in relation to a space. These categorizations are offered here as an analytical tool, offering simultaneously the caveat that they are necessarily reductionist and incomplete sketches of a much more complex assemblage of questions, continuing to examine the narratives termed 'Canadian.'

Conclusion

This thesis has examined narrative based conceptualizations of 'nation' in the context of Canadian multiculturalism through two case studies: the construction and use of statistical categories in the census and public opinion polls, and fiction articulated as 'multicultural'. It shows how these sites and narrative practices are implicated in Canadian 'nation building' projects. I have offered a reading of multiculturalism narratives in Canada as implicitly including certain accounts of the experience of the space of a Canadian 'nation' while excluding others, at the same time also showing how census 'identity' categories (ethnic origins and visible minority) are constructed as more or less neutral statistical measurement tools used to further and legitimate multicultural narratives of the 'nation.' I discuss 'multicultural' fiction in order to illuminate how narrative practices can work in multiple ways – by reinforcing 'nation-building' practices or by critiquing them, and, at times, illustrating how critique itself can work to reinforce the relationships it analyses.

Narratives, Roland Barthes writes, are "simply there, like life itself" (1994, 251-2). In this thesis, I have tried to show that narratives are *especially* present in the community building and preserving practices known as nationalism. Furthermore, nation narratives are not static. As the populations they seek to define shift, so do the narratives. This shift often takes place through a practice of co-optation, and this practice of co-optation has particular implications for a practice of sustained critique. Though I hesitate to situate this thesis *within* a particular set of debates (though its context is certainly the debates around Canadian multiculturalism) as to do so would be to close off some kinds

of critique, the contribution that this analysis makes is *around* a series of debates about the relationship between narrative and nation more broadly and around the way in which this relationship applies in the context of the positioning of Canadian multiculturalism as a kind of nationalism, where formerly critical narratives are framed as included (that is, co-opted) into an always progressive, continually broadening nation narrative. To situate *around* rather than explicitly *within* a series or set of debates signals a need to question the debates as reifying a particular idea as a totality – in this case the totality that is Canadian multiculturalism as a nation narrative. To that end, this thesis has focused on extending the question to the context of co-optation and examining the relationship between co-optation and critique, which is necessarily both around and within debates about multiculturalism as a nation narrative.

One of my key claims is that co-optation is built into the structure of critique. Following from this, I have gestured towards a practice of sustained critique. I understand sustained critique in relation to a refusal to think in terms of finalities or totalities, while at the same time working in multiple sites to both engage a dominant narrative and interrogate the interrelationships between and within critical narratives. This kind of critical practice proceeds not necessarily as part of other kinds of critique or towards particular ends, but always next to them, questioning their methods, logics, and premises. Classic theories of nationalism (such as those of Anderson and Gellner) analyse the processes through which national communities proliferate common narratives, and critical theories analyse the processes around the relationship between narrative and nation (such as those of Shapiro and Bhabha) focus on disrupting the coherence of nation narratives. This thesis uses the example of Canadian multiculturalism as a nation

narrative to examine processes of nation narrative construction as specifically coherence-seeking and, in doing this, to refocus my study on the question of what happens after a nation narrative responds to the positing of a critical or counternational narrative. What happens when a critical narrative is co-opted? As co-optation is always already a part of critique, I call for a practice of sustained critique, not unlike that of Michael Shapiro. Shapiro believes that stories can work to both elucidate and disrupt. Part of this work occurs in deconstructing not only nation narratives, but also how the interaction between excluded narratives and nation narratives is negotiated as nation narratives shift to absorb critique. Though much of the widely read scholarship around nations and nationalism focuses on denaturalizing historicized notions of nation, both Shapiro's explicitly disruptive approach and his emphasis on the absorption of critical turns towards nation, open up a less examined dimension of this field of study. This dimension, around the context of co-optation, focusing on the recuperative and adaptive processes of nation building through narrative, has been the focus of this thesis.

This thesis comes, of course, with a number of caveats. While I aim towards a practice of sustained critique, in part by articulating the closures that preclude its possibility, my scope is necessarily limited to the context of the nation and the case studies I present in relation to it. A practice of sustained critique as a theoretical framework is necessarily applied to, as Szeman writes, "the examination of specific, concrete sites – in the relationship, in other words, of specific literatures to specific national problematics" (2003, 64). I am aware that in posing the very specific Canadian context as the limit of my research and in claiming that it *is* specific I may be reifying it

further. At the same time, I want to suggest that the context I study will be taken *as* a context and that the framework may in fact be applicable to multiple contexts.

At the same time, I want to acknowledge two important contexts I did not have space to discuss here. My focus was on the co-optation of counternational narratives into a dominant narrative. In this sense, I have not been able to discuss the relationships between different kinds of counternational narratives and within them, though these are continually under discussion in the literature discussed in Chapter 4 (especially in *Chorus of Mushrooms* and *Soucouyant*). I also have not been able to discuss the contexts of space and security, and specifically how multiculturalism as a national narrative works in relation to claims about a 'globalized' world. Here Szeman's analysis may prove a useful starting point.

I return now to the question of what it means to gesture *towards* of a practice of sustained critique. In considering questions of coherence seeking and critical practice, it is necessary to account for the question of finality or closure. Here, it is instructive to consider the relationship between narrative and coherence. Coherence implies an assumption of completion or solution as understandings of the nation are reworked. This is not to say that the context is necessarily, from the moment of coherence on, unchanging, as nationalism and multiculturalism are always to some extent changing (always 'moving forward,' 'progressing'). Rather, I refer to a resistance to a certain kind of critique. Once a national (or, in my context, national as multicultural) framework is established, questioning its premises is difficult; this kind of change is not intelligible in the context of the nation narrative and the space of the sovereign nation-state. The only critique available involves minor tweaking in the context of further inclusions. This

clarification also applies to considerations of the relationship between coherence building and integration. My sense is that integration is implicit in coherence building, but multicultural coherence building is concerned with a discourse of finality: a kind of closure of discussion once integration (according to, usually, an empirically-defined predetermined threshold) has been achieved. In order to live in a space, one needs to adapt to that space in some ways, obviously, but in considering oneself 'integrated' to a particular idea of a space, there are many losses: people may be empirically considered integrated, but they might not ever feel *a part* of a nation – whether or not they are born in Canada. In this sense, the nuance added by a study of narrative (through literature or in other ways) is important.

Through texts like *Soucouyant* and *Ephemeral Territories,* it is possible to glimpse possibilities of community in their ephemerality. In *Soucouyant,* Chariandy's narrator imagines his mother's life as a means to imagine his own, but he cannot place either within a progressivist narrative. Everything melds together, confused; the story is incoherent; the narrator attempts to 'make sense' of it, but cannot:

> I wanted to imagine her growing, not diminishing. I wanted
> to portray her awakening to something that we wouldn't
> have guessed at otherwise. The freedom of meaning, the
> wild magic of existence. Geographies slipping into each
> other. Constellations wheeling above and seasons bleeding
> into each other so that some wintry neighbourhood can
> become tropical in an instant (2007, 194).

Chariandy frames this incoherence as a kind of malaise. The narrator's mother reads him as "a boy so melancholy, melancholy despite the luxuries that she'd worked so hard for him to enjoy. A boy moping for lost things, for hurts never his own" and asks him "Why you crying, child of mine, child of this beautiful land?" (194-5). After all, as a child *of*

Canada, an integrated multicultural Canadian, he should have no reason to be lost, no

reason to be sad. The hurts are not his own. They have been transformed into a past

history and his present *should* be a national present. Yet, the presence of his mother

serves as a constant reminder of the incoherence within. In this sense, it is fruitful to

consider both the contents of this particular communal context and narrative as a political

methodology as precisely ephemeral, but not, as in Manning's articulation, coherent, and

not cohesive. Rather, the intervention through narrative analysis here is a means to both

disrupt and affirm different kinds of connection through sustained critique. As Nancy

writes, between each narrative practice is a juncture – a space where there is "always a

play *between*" singularities, and where "*the totality is itself the play* of the articulations"

(Nancy 1991, 76). It is my sense that this mode of relating offers a productive way of

rethinking concepts of "being-in-common."

Following Nancy, Shapiro advocates "a recognition of incommensurable modes

of presence." He describes Nancy's conception of community *as* a kind of ephemerality:

> 'Community,' for Nancy, cannot be based on
> communicative consensus because, he maintains, there are
> no stable spaces and no secure identity boundaries to
> ensure communicative integration... To the extent that there
> is a community, it is a being in common of
> "'particularities'… not founded on any autonomous
> essence." Being in common for Nancy involves "only a
> juncture," the sharing of a space of encounter (2001, 235).

The coherence-seeking imperative of the multicultural nation narrative precludes the

'play of singularities' that is the juncture. Since coherence-seeking, as described above,

requires the regular return to more inclusive *moments* of coherence, the kind of "play of

the articulations" Nancy describes is unintelligible in its ephemerality. Like the practice

of sustained critique, the play of articulations continues without coherent moments. That

is, the juncture, or the sharing of a space of encounter, cannot be intelligible in the same

way that the narrative and space of a nation are intelligible to the citizens they identify,

claim and envelop. The reason that the narrative of the nation *is* intelligible to the citizens

it claims is because of the way it replays the national community it has already described.

In order to share spaces, it is necessary to continue to question "the myths of

commonality upon which collectivities predicate their (imaginary) cohesion" (Shapiro

2001, 238). There is no 'future' community to be achieved, no finality and no closure on

questions of difference. Rather, 'co-presences' require constant contestation through a

practice of sustained critique.

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