FROM ETHNIC NATIONALISM TO STRATEGIC MULTICULTURALISM:

SHIFTING STRATEGIES OF REMEMBRANCE IN THE QUÉBÉCOIS SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT

M. LANE BRUNER

Abstract

The controversy surrounding Jacques Parizeau's dramatically rejected address on the evening of the Québécois referendum on October 30th, 1995, provides an opportunity to examine the shifting politics of memory in the Québécois secessionist movement. By tracing the historical tensions between French and English Canadians, the manner in which those tensions were transmuted into language and constitutional law, and how those laws reflect competing articulations of national identity, the Québécois movement is shown to have shifted from an ethnic nationalism based on French Canadien ancestry to a civic nationalism based on strategic multiculturalism.

M. Lane Bruner is Assistant Professor of Communication at History and Society Division, Babson College, Babson Park, Massachusetts.

Human beings are situated in both a material political economy and an ideational economy, and there is a symbiotic relationship between those economies (Baudrillard 1981; 1988).[1] Contemporary rhetorical theories, premised upon the notion that language ultimately constitutes and motivates human action, are intimately concerned with the various ways in which the ideational economy, from individual identity to collective identity, is constructed. Following Benedict Anderson's (1991) position that collective identities can be productively conceptualised as "imagined communities," and building upon that conception by arguing that national identities are politically consequential fictions produced, maintained, and transformed in part by rhetorical processes, I analyse in this essay how the history of political and economic inequality in Canada has contributed to the evolution of public policies and public discourses designed to construct collective national identity in the province of Québec.

Collective national identities, constructed primarily in response to economic exigencies (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Laclau and Mouffe 1985) and the human desire for metaphysical comfort (Nietzsche 1966), can be viewed as sources of communal identification as well as tools of the state for the maximisation of power within the international community.[2] One goal for rhetorical and social critics, therefore, is to identify the various ways in which these "tools" are used. This is not to deny the significance of ethnic/cultural identifications for community building, nor the materiality of ethnicity and cultural tradition; rather, it is put into question the multifarious ways in which those identifications are strategically deployed by those seeking to alter the relationships between imagined communities.

Frederick Dolan, drawing upon Hannah Arendt's ***The Origins of Totalitarianism***, argues that "the most fateful characteristic" of our contemporary world order is "the replacement of experience by fiction," and that those who would seek to deal with the violence of inequality must first deal with the fabrication of collective identities. For Dolan, "Ideology and the atomisation of individuals combine […] to form a 'fictitious world,' one that replaces the real world constituted in a genuine public sphere" (Dolan 1994, 168). I have attempted to investigate this relationship between the fabrication of collective identities and the health of the public sphere by suggesting that, as a result of unique economic and communal pressures, constraints are placed on public speakers who would articulate characterisations of the national persona that work against the instrumental purposes of the state and/or the "identity needs" of those comprising the imagined community. Those constraints, I maintain, are manifested in public discourse as "strategies of remembrance," or a politics of memory, that maintain a particular characterisation of what it means to be a citizen of the state. Additionally, if those limits (constraints) are transgressed, then the discourse will be dramatically rejected.

In support of this perspective, the following essay investigates a recent example of a dramatically rejected address delivered by Québec Premier Jacques Parizeau on the evening of the narrow defeat of the Québécois secessionist referendum on October 30th, 1995. The purpose of the examination is to discover the reasons for the speech's dramatic failure and Parizeau's subsequent resignation, as well as to identify competing articulations of Québécois identity, their attendant strategies, and how they contributed to the creation, maintenance, and transformation of imagined community. Such an analysis first requires a brief history of French Canadien, French Canadian, and Québécois nationalism, for such a review provides a useful context in which to

situate the contemporary divide between English and French Canadians. Next, a review of various language laws and constitutional battles will help to illustrate the changing balance of power between the federal government and the provincial government in Québec, and indicate how Québécois strategies of remembrance coalesced in the years leading to, and immediately following, the 1995 referendum. Such a context will help set the stage for an interpretation of various state discourses surrounding the 1995 referendum, and suggest that Parizeau's speech was rejected principally because Québécois identity itself was shifting from an obsolete form of ethnic nationalism to a strategic multicultural nationalism.

English and French Visions: Competing Imagined Communities in Canada

On October 30th, 1995, citizens of the province of Québec voted for the second time in fifteen years to declare nationhood and secede from Canada, and for the second time they voted to remain "Canadian." But unlike the secessionist referendum in 1980, where the No vote won by almost twenty percent, in 1995 the No vote carried by just over one per cent (Lett and Nairne 1995). Having yet another opportunity to establish a Québécois nation slip between their fingers, many Québécois nationalists were devastated. Burning Canadian flags, smashing car windows, and chanting "Québec for Québecers," crowds of Yes supporters surrounded the No headquarters in Montreal and the riding office of liberal leader Daniel Johnson was burned to the ground (Nairne 1995). Many Québécois nationalists expressed anger at anglophone and allophone minorities in the province, whom they believed ruined the Yes side's chances in the referendum, and the voting statistics indicate that their belief was not unjustified (McKenzie 1995). Almost every region outside Montreal voted to secede, as did sixty per cent of Québec's francophone population, but allophones and anglophones in the province voted ninety-five per cent No (Ouimet 1995).[3]

These results suggest that Québécois separatists had failed to persuade the non-francophone citizens of Québec to vote for secession. Yet, on the evening of the referendum's narrow defeat, such a fact apparently could not be acknowledged publicly by one of the central leaders of the secessionist movement. Appearing on national television, Québec Premier Jacques Parizeau rose to address Yes supporters, stating that sovereignty had been lost due to "money" and "the ethnic vote." Although newspaper reports across Canada and Québec before, during, and after the referendum suggest that Parizeau's statement was factually true, public reactions to the remark were so universally and strongly negative that he was forced to resign his office within days. Why was one of the principal architects of Québécois secession forced to resign his office for stating facts otherwise openly acknowledged in newspapers across Canada? Was there a relationship between the rejection of Parizeau's statement and the somewhat puzzling desire on the part of many French Canadians to secede from Canada?

Indeed, it is a puzzle to many that Canada, one of the world's most prosperous and peaceful federal states, has been wracked in recent years by continued attempts on the part of provincial leaders in Québec to secede. One possible solution to this puzzle was suggested in a recent conference on the relationship between global capitalism and the exercise of state power, where organisers discussed a central paradox of our times: while borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant with the rise of mass

communication technology and transportation systems, larger political units are fragmenting, states are trying to incorporate citizens, and numerous smaller nation-states are emerging (Blanc, Basch, and Schiller 1995). As several theorists of nationalism point out, the process of modernisation has led to peoples' increased mobility, which in turn has undermined traditional forms of local cultural identification (Anderson 1991; Toulmin 1964). Simultaneously, as individuals find themselves increasingly mobile and uprooted from traditional and fundamentally taken for granted forms of community, the task of creating identities has increasingly fallen upon the state (Gellner 1983, 36-38).

Perhaps, then, the desire for an independent Québécois nation is a result of globalisation, the loss of tradition, and the consequent fabrication of strong feelings of national belonging. According to Paul R. Brass (1994, 87):

> *[T]he study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically induced cultural change. More precisely, it is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups.*

Such a situation arguably exists in the Canadian federation because of the fact that historically the citizens of that state have been torn between competing national identities: French and English visions of Canada (Gamauche 1995; Gougeon 1994; Handler 1988).

Because of the relative strength of provinces in Canada due to recent constitutional reforms, citizens, especially in Québec, are frequently interpellated as belonging to two collective identities, or imagined communities: the provincial and the federal. Many English Canadians believe (and are encouraged to believe) that Québec is an integral part of an indivisible country composed of one nation: Canada. Conversely, many citizens of Québec believe (and are encouraged to believe) they are a conquered and colonised people, and the only way to overcome their minority status within English Canada is to obtain their own country through secession.[4] For example, Guy LaForest, a staunch defender of Québec secession, argues that French Canadians have historically devoted considerable energy "in a dream of two equal collectivities [the French and the English]," and that pan-Canadian "patriotism was possible as long as it permitted French Canada, Québec, to remain itself — as long as it did not demand that the Québécois renounce their primary allegiance to the society in which they were born" (LaForest 1995, 5).

Many citizens of Québec, therefore, are torn between two allegiances; one for Canada and one for "colonised" Québec. This "identity dilemma" leads to problems related to competing allegiances on a wide and abstract scale, for, as Will Kymlicka (1996, 122) has pointed out, "if citizenship is membership in a political community, then in creating overlapping communities [e.g., federal and provincial], self-government rights necessarily give rise to a sort of dual citizenship, and to potential conflicts about which political community citizens identify with most deeply." This tension between allegiances can lead to what Gregory Jusdanis (1995, 52) refers to as "culture wars," or the use of culture as a means for mobilising publics for the purposes of the state.[5]

Over the course of two hundred years, these two competing visions (of a predominantly English pan-Canadian identity and of a predominantly French-Canadian identity situated in Québec) have been put into political practice through language legisla-

tion, initiatives on the part of educational and cultural ministries, and constitutional reform. Together, these practices and initiatives have served to strengthen Québécois identity in unique ways by building upon perceived historical injustices, and it is to these historical injustices that I now turn.

The Historical Basis for Contemporary Québécois Nationalism

Québec's official motto, on every motor-vehicle license plate in the province, is "Je me souviens" (I remember), but who exactly is this "I," and what exactly do the citizens of Québec remember? Many historians, journalists, and political theorists agree that key memories helping to define the present relationship between the French and English in Canada can be traced to the so-called Conquest of 1763, a military event that marked the beginning of tensions that persist to this day (Dufour 1990; Gougeon 1994; Legendre 1980; Rioux 1987). Christian Dufour notes that "Canada is profoundly dependent on the conquest of 1763" since "Québecers are still very much affected by the aftermath of the […] conquest they experienced in the 18th century, which remains buried in their collective unconscious" (1990, 17-18). Between 1608 and 1759 a French Colony, New France, was settled on the banks of the Saint Lawrence river, but on September 12, 1759, English soldiers clashed with French and Canadien soldiers on the Plains of Abraham, with the English emerging victorious.[6] What followed was a series of egregious colonial measures by the British explicitly designed to assimilate the French Canadiens, establishing the foundation for over two centuries of cultural warfare.

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the population in Canada had been transformed from a predominantly French Canadien society into a broader Canadian community where a swelling British population enjoyed colonial power at the expense of the French Canadiens. For the next half century, the predominantly Catholic French Canadiens pursued farming and minor crafts, while the Protestant English minority became increasingly urban and secular. Economic and cultural divisions became more pronounced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when fledgling middle-class francophones were thwarted in their efforts to achieve and maintain social status, and French Canadien nationalism began to take on a double nature. On the one hand, there was a conservative clerical nationalism that supported co-operation between the Catholic Church and the colonial English Canadians, and on the other hand were separatist nationalists primarily comprised of members of the thwarted middle class who argued that cultural and political survival could only be guaranteed in an independent French Canada.

Rebellions in 1837-38, instigated by the French Canadien separatists, were prompted in no small part by the fact that the British minority was benefiting from their links with England at the expense of equal opportunities for positions of wealth and power (Bernard 1994, 19). To make matters worse, the British predictably had no patience for the ethnic nationalist aspirations of the rebellious French Canadiens. Britain's Lord Durham, sent to control the situation after the suppression of the rebellions, perhaps best summarised the British attitude toward the French citizens of Canada when he stated:

> *I entertain no doubt of the national character which must be given to Lower Canada; it must be that of the British Empire […] I should indeed be surprised if the more reflecting part of the French Canadians entertain at present any hope of*

> *continuing to preserve their nationality. Much as they struggle against it, it is obvious that the process of assimilation to English habits is already commencing. The English language is gaining ground, as the language of the rich and of the employers of labour naturally will* (cited in Rioux 1987, 269-70).

The colonial period of French Canada, then, between 1763 and the mid-nineteenth century, saw the eventual suppression of political/economic separatist nationalism and the consolidation of French Canadian identity in the cultural/religious sector. The conservative clerical nationalism that emerged from the failed rebellions allowed the English to maintain their dominant positions in politics and the economy, while French Canadian identity became imaginatively centred on anti-material sentiments.

With the dawn of industrialisation and urbanisation in Canada toward the end of the nineteenth century, though, conservative clerical French Canadian identity began to lose its appeal. In 1872, Québec was 77 percent rural, but by 1911 it was half urban, and between 1900 and 1930 there was continued massive migration by the rural French Canadians to the cities (Legendre 1980, 9). These demographic shifts served to intensify the exposure of French Canadians to business environments dominated by the English, which in turn resulted in increased recognition of English economic hegemony. Renewed hostility on the part of a frustrated but growing French Canadian middle class, coupled with the values of conservative clerical ideology, combined to maintain the conception of a distinct French Canadian identity threatened by the dominance of the English, even while the previously rural, Catholic, and poor French Canadians were becoming increasingly secularised.[7]

The Depression, followed by an expanded federal and provincial welfare state, along with the accumulated frustrations of over a century of economic inequality furthered by clerical nationalism, eventually led to a sharp break in Québec's political and social history. This dramatic shift in political orientation is commonly referred to as the "Quiet Revolution," or the gradual replacement of the authority of the Catholic Church with the authority of the state and the gradual modernisation of francophone Québec. Dufour summarises the change in ideological climate:

> *The energy that French Canada of the pre-Quiet Revolution years invested in religious activities, and the spiritual mission adopted after 1840 to compensate for the fact that true power had escaped it, were transformed around 1960 into a political nationalism, based on the use of the powers of the Government of Québec* (Dufour 1990, 91).

The intellectual elite came to believe that they had been misled by the "old myths," and that English values and institutions were perhaps more appropriate for modern society than their own.

In sum, French Canadians were starting to shed the conservative clerical values and traditions that had previously defined their imagined community, taking on instead a more "English" (secular and urban) character. Simultaneously, the Québec government began actively promoting "Québécois culture" by significantly expanding government departments of education and culture (Handler). Arguably, it is this combination of expanded departments of education and culture, coupled with subsequent language legislation and constitutional reform, that set the stage for an articulation of ethnic nationalist Québécois identity with enough collective force to motivate the majority of francophone citizens of Québec to secede from Canada.

Language Law, Constitutional Reform, and Federal and Québécois Strategies of Remembrance

It is significant that at the very point in history when French Canadians were taking on secular English political and economic values that the production of imagined community was actively taken up by the state, especially after the election of the Parti Québécois in November of 1976. In Québec, cultural production in the years following the Quiet Revolution, and particularly salient for the emergence of "Québécois" identity, focused on the areas of language legislation and constitutional reform, since language laws and constitutional reforms initiated by the federal government were considered to be nothing less than modern forms of English colonialism to be counteracted.

Battles over language primacy have been waged in Canada since the Conquest of 1763, and the fear of linguistic and cultural assimilation has remained salient since the days of Lord Durham. For Québécois separatists, one of the more recent "colonial" actions on the part of "English Canada" (the federal government) was former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's Official Languages Act of 1969. That Act brought a bilingual vision of Canada under the rule of federal law, infuriating Québec separatists who believed that the Act was specifically designed to dilute the "distinct society" status of Québec.[8] William Coleman details the way in which Québec's leaders eventually responded to this federal bilingual law, noting that the Charte de la lange française was the first major piece of legislation to be introduced by the Parti Québécois after its election to power. The legislation, introduced by the minister of state for cultural development in April of 1977 and eventually known as Bill 101, mandated that all Québec municipalities, school boards, and local health and social service institutions draw up all official texts in French only. In direct opposition to federal law, according to Coleman, "Bill 101 left no barriers standing in the public sector to the creation of an integrated nation-state" (1981, 466).

As a counter-response to the federal strategy of pan-Canadian bilingualism, the Québécois strategy appeared to anticipate the later advice of Dufour, who argued that francophones should "impose their mother tongue." According to Dufour (1990, 129):

> *For as long as the Québec identity does not appropriate what was then [during the colonial period] the English strength [linguistic, hence economic and political hegemony], for as long as it does not become its own conqueror, it will be condemned, unfortunately, to lose the same battle […] over and over again. This is a tremendous challenge: to stabilize the Québec identity in relation to the Canadian identity. It is the psychological equivalence of independence, the conquest of the Conquest.*

Here the colonial period is drawn upon as a justification for contemporary language legislation in the active promotion of cultural production, and makes for a good example of how imagined community can be promoted by state policy. What Defour leaves unstated, however, is how Québec's privileged constitutional position allowed its exclusionary language law to stand, despite federal law, thus making the "colonial" argument less compelling.[9]

Many of the constitutional battles waged in Canada in the years leading to the two referendums reflected differing strategies on the language front: the federalists attempting to articulate a pan-Canadian bilingual and multicultural identity, and Québec separatists attempting to articulate a Québécois identity based on the French language

and French ancestry. On the one side were federalists, such as Trudeau, who sought to defeat Québec nationalism through the inclusion of a Charter of Rights in a patriated Canadian constitution and the construction of a multicultural, bilingual, and pan-Canadian "national" allegiance. On the other side, Québec nationalists sought to maximise provincial power through the constitutional recognition of the "two founding nations" thesis and the "distinct society" status of Québec.

For many, the principal impetus for the 1995 referendum on Québec sovereignty was fuelled in large part by the patriation of the Canadian constitution in 1982, a move that in many ways was a federal response to the 1980 referendum crisis.[10] Trudeau, in defence of his move to have England "free" Canada, maintained that many Canadian prime ministers had failed in earlier attempts at patriating the constitution because any amending formula had to be unanimously approved by all of the provinces, "permitting every province to hold the country to ransom" (1990, 46). According to Trudeau, by September of 1980:

> *[I]t had become obvious that the greed of the provinces was a bottomless pit, and that the price to be paid to the provinces for their consent to patriation with some kind of entrenched Charter [of individual rights that would supercede community rights] […] was nothing less than acceptance by the federal government of the "compact" theory, which would transform Canada from a very decentralized, yet balanced federation, into some kind of loose confederation. That is when our government said, "Enough. We are going to give the people their Constitution and their Charter of Rights […]"* (1990, 54).

Trudeau was hoping to create a form of constitutional patriotism designed to "create values and beliefs that not only united all Canadians in feeling that they were one nation, but also set them above the governments of the provinces and the federal government itself" (1990, 46), so he decided to patriate the constitution without the consent of the Québec provincial assembly.

Trudeau defended his decision to patriate the constitution without Québec's support because, in his opinion, the Québec government would never have agreed on the proposed constitutional reforms, especially since the failure of reform could have been called upon as further impetus for secession. Furthermore, Trudeau argued that the provinces actually gained considerable power from the Constitution Act of 1982 in areas such as resource management, indirect taxation, and external trade. Most importantly, the provinces also obtained the right to opt out of certain federal laws, especially those affecting local cultures, through a "notwithstanding clause" (1990, 61). Nonetheless, Trudeau's actions were interpreted as treason by the secessionists, who redoubled their efforts at attaining independence from the Canadian federation.

Although the constitution was weakened considerably from the federalist's viewpoint by Québec's refusal to approve it and the inclusion of the "notwithstanding clause" allowing individual provinces to "opt out" of an arguably vague range of Supreme Court rulings, on April 17, 1982 the Queen gave her approval for the new Canadian constitution. This turn of events was a serious blow to the Québec separatists, for England had officially transferred constitutional power directly to the Canadian people and diluted the force of claims of colonial oppression. But for the separatists, according to LaForest, the Act merely invited the Québécois to commune at the alter of a Canadian national spirit whose genealogy goes back to an English-Canadian nationalism.

The patriation eventually led to other constitutional battles, but the significance of these battles is the way in which they reflected separate strategies related to the construction of imagined national community. The federalists, between 1980 and 1995, sought to construct a pan-Canadian identity based on individual rights, bilingualism, and multiculturalism, while secessionists sought to construct a Québécois identity based on communitarianism, monolingualism, and French Canadien ancestry (Taylor 1994, 54-61).

These fundamental differences in imagined national identity led in turn to different strategies of remembrance in the years between the 1980 and 1995 referenda.[11] Despite a growing awareness that ethnic nationalist arguments were insufficient for garnering broad support among non-francophone citizens, most prominent Québec separatists, prior to the 1995 referendum, primarily sought to build national identity on the basis of the protection of ethnic culture, and the culture to be protected was French Canadien. Public articulations of Québécois identity prior to the referendum drew heavily upon traces of colonial memories of "conquest" and "abandonment," and frequently contained ethnic references. Recall that after the Quiet Revolution, certain attributes of the French Canadien identity were transformed, as the terms Catholic, anti-material, and rural receded into the background, and the French language, French Canadien ancestry, and the "colonised" aspects of Québécois identity were foregrounded. As a result, the strategies of remembrance of early Parti Québécois members were oftentimes based upon the notion that a "true Québécois" (pure laine) would be a descendant of the settlers of New France, French-speaking, and free from English (federal) authority of any kind. The result of such a conception was the construction of a potentially xenophobic ethnic nationalist sense of imagined community.

Federalists, conversely, sought to build a national identity based on individual rights, and the production of pan-Canadian identity where bilingualism and multiculturalism would prevail, and could, as a side benefit, dilute the potential threat of French power in Québec. Some have implied that the federal government was simply engaging in a strategic multiculturalism in order to maximise federal state power at the expense of the provinces, and that the liberal policies related to individual rights were simply a means of atomising co-cultures living within Canada. Charles Taylor, for example, argues that "the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic [English] culture […]. Consequently, the supposedly fair and difference-blind society is […] itself highly discriminatory" (Taylor 1994, 43). From another perspective, Masao Miyoshi (1993) suggests that liberalism may in fact be the ultimate multicultural mask for the levelling and homogenisation of culture and the globalisation of transnational corporate colonialism, although ethnic nationalist communitarianism may be no better due to its historically essentialising and neo-racist potential.

Regardless of the various potential strengths and weaknesses of federal and Québécois strategies, Québec separatists were oftentimes drawing upon the image of the colonised French Canadien to justify their secessionist agenda in 1995, and in doing so risked articulating an ethnic nationalist ideology incapable of incorporating anglophones and allophones. Even though provincial leaders in Québec already possessed considerable constitutional control over most economic, educational, linguistic, and "cultural" policies, they still sought to secede, and what I would like to suggest is that pre-referendum ethnic nationalist articulations of "Québécois" identity played

a significant role in this seeming incompatibility (leaving aside the more obvious economic and political leverage to be gained by achieving a majority Yes vote).

It would appear to be the case that the conservative clerical ideology contributed to English economic and political hegemony during the colonial period, and that the articulation of a Québec nation as "French Canadien culture under attack" had definite merit prior to and in the early years of the Quiet Revolution. Such an articulation at least provided provincial leaders with a powerful tool for recreating provincial/federal political relationships, not to mention a means for consolidating a national imaginary. But now that those relationships had been significantly transformed, and that arguments of "colonial" domination were becoming increasingly suspect, the question that remained was how articulations of "national" character needed to change in light of the economic and political needs of the province in 1995. In order to pursue that question, I now turn to the discourse of Québec leaders during the 1995 referendum.

The Public Negotiation of Québécois Identity During the 1995 Secessionist Referendum

As the history of conflict between the French and English in Canada, as well as the more recent manoeuvres in language and constitutional law, suggest, the violence of political and economic inequality in Canada has predominantly been transmuted into a cultural war over imagined national community. In this continuing struggle, the 1995 referendum constitutes the most recent major battle; a battle where skirmishes over ethnic issues provided the immediate context for Parizeau's dramatically rejected address.[12] Furthermore, it was arguably ethnic nationalist strategies of remembrance that provided both the key impetus, as well as the key stumbling block, for the establishment of a Québécois nation.

Almost every newspaper article appearing in the Canadian presses concerning the 1995 referendum were focused on ethnic issues, and many of the pre-referendum statements by secessionist leaders Lucien Bouchard and Jacques Parizeau revealed traces of neo-racism, or ethnic nationalism. As Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991, 48-49) have noted, there is an intimate relationship between nationalism and racism, especially if racism is conceptualised as overidentification with an ethnic identity. In order to articulate a sufficient cultural/ethnic/racial difference, national builders frequently draw upon a postulated common heritage. Unfortunately for ethnic-nationalists, such a postulated common heritage "run[s] directly counter to the nationalist objective, which is not to re-create an elitism, but to found a populism; not to cast suspicion upon the historical and social heterogeneity of the 'people,' but to exhibit its essential unity" (1991, 59-60). Contemporary Québécois nationalism is no exception to these observations. Not only does Québec's Declaration of Sovereignty (1996) state that the common heritage of the Québécois people is French Canadien, but the notions of "conquest" and "colonisation" used in the majority of secessionist arguments directly refer to the French Canadien past. This strategy of articulating common heritage as a justification for secession created considerable problems for the secessionists in 1995.

Just weeks before the referendum, Asselin Charles (1995) noted that "Belonging in Québec requires not the subscription to a set of values, or the demonstration of a number of qualities, but rather a certain 'Québécitude,' the exclusive essence of those whose French ancestors settled in that part of North America." Charles also noted that

a label frequently used by nationalists for identifying "true Québecers" prior to the 1995 referendum was the term **pure laine**. The term literally means "pure wool," but generally referred to "old stock" Québécois, or the descendants of the inhabitants of New France.

The charges made by Charles about the ethnic nationalist basis of Québécois nationalism were echoed by others after Bouchard, generally acknowledged as the leader of the separatist movement in 1995 (Mackie 1995a; 1995b), publicly complained just weeks prior to the referendum that white women in Québec were not having enough babies. In a speech delivered on October 13th, Bouchard stated, "Do you think it makes sense that we have so few children in Québec? We are one of the white races that has the least children, [and] that doesn't make sense" (Ha 1995a).[13] Rather than apologising for the remark, both Bouchard and Parizeau argued that there was nothing wrong with the use of the phrase "white races." Parizeau flatly stated: "How do you want to call it? The pale race? I don't know. What's the deal? I don't understand. I don't see what's shocking unless your nit-picking." Bouchard went on to argue that the No side was trying to make a mountain out of a molehill, arguing that it was ridiculous to consider him a racist (cited in Ha 1995b).

According to Balibar and Wallerstein's theory of ethnic nationalism, neo-racist foundations for the cultural protectionism required by separatist movements directly undermine attempts to build broad popular support for their cause, and there is evidence to suggest that, despite Bouchard's and Parizeau's attempts to defend the "white race" remark, the denial of the ethnic basis of Québec separatism had been a growing component in the separatist strategy. Tu Thanh Ha (1995c) notes that, contrary to the evidence supplied by most of the arguments for secession forwarded by LaForest, Dufour, and Parizeau, "sovereigntists have soldiered on for years, trying to dispel the image of their cause as one born mainly to address the nationalist aspirations of the descendants of New France settlers." As support for his claim, Ha points out that, in the spring of 1994, when separatist member of parliament Philippe Pare publicly complained that ethnic voters could deprive "old-stock Québecers" of independence, Pare was demoted from a key referendum planning committee by Bouchard, primarily because Bouchard had been attempting to make the term "Québécois" more inclusive. Additionally, in the first week of October, while campaigning in Val D'Or, when a radio host interviewing Bouchard used the word "Québecer" in a way that implied "francophone Québecer," Bouchard quickly corrected him (Ha 1995a). Such "corrections" on the part of Bouchard suggest that he was well aware of the exclusionary meanings attached to the term "Québécois," and therefore sought to make his "white race" remarks seem an aberration.

In the weeks leading up to the referendum, then, there was considerable contestation over the content of the terms "Québécois" and "Québecer." On the one hand, Toronto journalists such as Charles and Ha were quick to point out the fundamentally neo-racist and ethnic nationalist character of the separatist movement. On the other hand, Bouchard, despite his "white races" remark, was struggling to make the term appear to be more inclusive, for as Charles (1995) noted, "The more lucid among the nationalist elites know that minorities and immigrants are an asset to the province. They must send them a more inclusionary message." Nonetheless, in an anonymous editorial in ***The Globe and Mail*** on October 17th entitled "Mr. Bouchard's Ethnic Nationalism," the writer argued that, although s/he believed neither Bouchard nor Parizeau were racists:

If Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Parizeau occasionally talk this way, it is because their movement, whatever its fervent denials, is rooted in ethnic, rather than civic nationalism. Blood is more important than citizenship. While they claim to embrace a wider world, the independentistes advance an essentially insecure vision. Their language and culture may be safer than ever before, but they are unable to admit it because it would expose the emptiness of their cause.

The writer also noted that "There has been a long strain of racial intolerance among militant nationalists. Invariably it becomes a question of 'we or them.' Today, more precisely, it is a question of Oui or them." This comment would prove prophetic, especially for Parizeau, in the weeks to come.

From Ethnic Nationalism to Strategic Multiculturalism: Shifting Strategies of Remembrance in Québec Nationalism

On the evening of the referendum's narrow defeat the problematic conflict between the ethnic nationalist strategy of remembrance (providing a difference sufficient to justify secession) and a more inclusive strategy of remembrance (providing a similarity sufficient to draw non-francophones into the secessionist camp) came to a head. Parizeau appeared before a large crowd of Yes supporters, who had been on an emotional roller coaster throughout the day, and his remarks were aired live by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in French, with an English translation provided.[14] Before addressing the crowd, Parizeau had spoken briefly with Bouchard by telephone, and Bouchard attempted to discuss strategy with Parizeau. Parizeau decided, however, to set aside the written conciliatory remarks that had been prepared for him (Lessard 1995).

The Yes supporters were very animated during Parizeau's speech, and although he only spoke briefly, he was continuously interrupted by chanting, singing, and cheering. Parizeau began his address by acknowledging that the referendum had gone down to defeat, and then stated, "Let's talk about us. Sixty per cent of us voted in favor." The crowd cheered. Then, after stating that the separatists would not "wait for another fifteen years" before the next referendum, Parizeau made the following statement:

> *But what has happened is wonderful. In one meeting after the next, people were saying that the future of their country wasn't all that important, but more and more of them were coming along and were saying we want a country of our own, and we will get it. We will end up with our own country. It's true. It is true that we have been defeated, but basically by what? By money and by the ethnic vote. Basically that's it.*

The remainder of his speech was devoted to a reiteration of the fact that sixty percent of the francophones ("us") had voted for secession, and that "solidarity" was "picking up speed." He concluded by listing a large number of groups who had joined the Yes camp, and conspicuously absent from his list were large corporations, anglophones, and allophones.

But it was Parizeau's comment about "the ethnic vote" that would ultimately spell his doom. Reactions by reporters and political commentators immediately after his speech were universally negative, as were reactions in the French and English presses the following day. As soon as the speech ended, the news commentary began with a reporter noting the "money and ethnic vote remark." Another reporter followed saying:

> *Mr. Parizeau also said at the beginning of his speech that sixty percent of us voted Yes. The history of Québec, in many quarters over many years, has been a story about us and them, and who is a Québecer and who is not a Québecer, and it's a great sensitivity in Québec, and Québecers have great difficulty talking about this and dealing with this because on the official level Québec politicians have always told the rest of the province that if you pay taxes in Québec and if you live in Québec then you are a Québecer.*

Another reporter representing the separatists stated that "Mr. Parizeau [was] pathetic. His words, to me, do not ring true. This is not how nationalists have envisioned Québec. Nationalists have envisioned Québec in a much more pluralist way, and in terms of leadership obviously here Mr. Parizeau is not leading the nationalist movement I do know." And yet another separatist stated that "What Mr. Parizeau did tonight was an appeal to ethnic nationalism which is really out of tune with the modern nationalism that has evolved … ."

Responses to Parizeau's remarks in Canadian newspapers were no kinder. The front page story in the Québec paper ***La Presse*** discussed how, in the morning after the address, Parizeau "had to undergo a certain displeasure on the part of the most influential ministers meeting in the priorities committee" and that "certain deputies said frankly that Parizeau had to leave after such an outburst" (Lessard 1995). Additionally, ***La Presse*** was inundated with calls and letter of protest against Parizeau's remarks, many from secessionist supporters. Ironically, many of the comments appearing in the newspapers were not so much concerned with the actual ethnic nationalist message conveyed by Parizeau, but with the "image" that such remarks would project (Gagnon 1995). Donald McKenzie (1995), echoing the remarks of secessionist critics, noted that "The Parti Québécois has gone to great lengths in recent years to win over cultural communities to its cause. The PQ has gained some credibility with ethnic groups but is still viewed as an ethnocentric party." Therefore, according to McKenzie, while Parizeau was factually correct in his claims numerically speaking, such a "swipe" was a "no-no" because it gave renewed credence to the concerns that the separatist movement was based on ethnicity.

Perhaps what can be witnessed in the rejection of Parizeau's address is the shifting movement of strategic remembrance of Québec separatism away from the colonial arguments (the descendants of New France must preserve their culture from English cultural and economic hegemony) toward strategic multiculturalism. As additional evidence of this shift, less than a year after Parizeau's resignation, his successor, Bouchard, gave one of several addresses designed specifically for the non-francophone community entitled "Québecers Must Not Forget How To Live Together." In that address, Bouchard articulated a Québécois identity based upon multiculturalism and Québec citizenship because, he argued, "We [Québecers] have to create a new atmosphere" based upon "a better understanding of how linguistic and cultural diversity make our metropolis vibrant and unique" (1996, 21). Bouchard continued by saying that:

> *It should be known that the Québec nationalism that we are building no longer defines itself as that of French-Canadians, but as that of all Québecers; it no longer seeks homogeneity but it embraces diversity and pluralism; it no longer focuses on political aims alone, but is also concerned with social and cultural issues that bind us all* (25).

According to Bouchard, then, the "new" Québécois identity, that is, the new imagined community being articulated by the provincial leaders of Québec, is multicultural. Seen in this light, Parizeau's address was dramatically rejected because it continued to articulate a vision of imagined community that alienated the non-francophone population living within Québec. Parizeau's dominant strategy of remembrance, borrowed from the long history of English colonial oppression in Canada, had apparently outlived its usefulness. Read generously, one could argue that the secessionists had "learned their lesson," and had turned away from ethnic nationalism toward multiculturalism because of a genuine desire to be democratically inclusive. More cynically, however, one could argue that the secessionists had merely become strategically multicultural in order to further the goal of gaining independence from federal Canada.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly there are many Québécois separatists who truly value the uniqueness of French Canadien culture and nonetheless believe in an imagined community where members can be both "Québécois" and multicultural. Still, it is difficult to understand why secession would necessarily follow from such a vision, especially given pan-Canadian liberal federalism and the present balance of power between the provinces and the federal government. In other words, if the Canadian federation is already multicultural and bilingual, and if Québec already possesses the constitutional right to preserve French Canadien culture, then why continue in attempts to secede?

One possible answer to this dilemma is to suggest that multiculturalism is a mask not only for Québécois nationalism, but for Canadian federalists as well, and that Québec secession is simply a response to federal strategic multiculturalism. English Canadians maintained economic control within Québec well into the twentieth century, and it was only after the successes of the Quiet Revolution and the rise of French power that federalists such as Trudeau attempted to articulate pan-Canadian identity as bilingual and multicultural. From this vantage point, both federal multiculturalism as well as Québécois multiculturalism may be viewed as strategies, moves in a vast economic power struggle. This is not to suggest, however, that strategic multiculturalism is necessarily a bad thing, for even a strategic multiculturalism is arguably better than an overt colonial ethnic nationalism. And yet, what if strategic multiculturalism is simply a new kind of imagined community that, by atomising all cultural affiliations, sets the stage for a contemporary form of corporate colonialism?

Regardless of whether such scenarios are plausible, it is perhaps enough at present to recognise the shifting nature of imagined community in Canada and its relationship to shifting balances of power within the Canadian federation. It is equally important, however, to recognise that public discourse can be both truthful and transgressive, and that discourse related to the public negotiation of imagined community can be distorted by the politics of memory. Imagined community can serve as a weapon in economic struggles and can easily devolve into a xenophobic and ethnocentric motive for the marginalisation of others. Even more ominously, such processes can occur in the most democratic of settings. Social critics would do well to recognise that imagined communities are discursively contested, and seek to continue investigating the rhetorical processes through which those communities are created, maintained, and transformed.

Notes:

1. This essay is based, in part, on chapters five and six of the author's dissertation (University of Washington, 1996) directed by Barbara Warnick, which was developed with generous support from the Elizabeth Kerr McFarlane Scholarship and the Center for Advanced Research in the Arts and Humanities at the University of Washington. The author would like to thank Ernst Behler, John Stewart, and Haig Bosmajian for their helpful suggestions on earlier drafts of this essay.

2. This is not meant to suggest that publics are "cultural dupes," nor that state leaders are not frequently "true believers" themselves. Rather, nationalism is co-constructed "from above" and "from below" in a dialogic process.

3. The term "francophone" refers to an individual for whom French is their first language. The term "anglophone" refers to English speakers, while the term "allophone" is a general term for those whose primary language is neither French nor English.

4. This divergence in the national imaginary within the state of federal Canada is perhaps best outlined by secessionist supporter Guy LaForest (1995) and former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1990). LaForest's basic argument is that the federalist tendency represents English Canadian interests at the expense of French Canadian language and culture, and that recent constitutional reforms have been designed according to the English colonial spirit of conquest. Conversely, Trudeau argues that Québec secessionists have already won language and cultural protection from recent constitutional reforms, and that arguments of ethnic protectionism are smokescreens for maximising economic and political power within the Canadian federation. A close review of the respective arguments of both sides, I maintain, suggest that they are both correct to a certain extent.

5. In what follows I focus primarily on the construction of Québécois identity, but again, and this cannot be stressed enough, this by no means is meant to demonise the leaders of the Québécois secessionist movement. Another study could equally well develop the construction of pan-Canadian nationalism on the part of English Canadian statesmen and the contemporary discourse of federalists such as Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chrétien. Rather, the study simply seeks to illustrate how dramatically rejected discourse can reveal dominant strategies of remembrance operative in the public negotiation of imagined national identity.

6. The term Canadien refers to French settlers and their descendants in New France, as is to be distinguished from the term French Canadian, which refers to francophone citizens of the Canadian federation. I choose the date of the Act of Union (1840), when the British parliament officially recognised and united French Lower Canada and British Upper Canada under one government, as a convenient marker for the transition. While problematic, since it was not until 1867 and the passage of the British North America Act that the descendants of the Anciens Canadiens obtained a government politically effective against the colonial English, the English presence was sufficient in 1840 for a distinction to be made between the two dominant "Canadian" populations. Each label is politically significant and ideologically specific, as is the new label "Québécois."

7. Arguably, this compensatory tendency may have considerable explanatory power. That is, the more the French Canadians lost their French Canadien imaginary, and the more "English" they became (through urbanisation, secularisation, and increased capitalist sentiment) the more stridently they worked to maintain their "non-English" identities.

8. Many battles were fought over the issue of whether or not to include a "distinct society" clause in the Canadian constitution. See Trudeau (1990) for the federal position, and LaForest (1995) for the Québécois position.

9. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if the federal government was truly interested in a bilingual Canada, or was actually attempting to dilute "French power" in the province of Québec. Nonetheless, it was Québec's unique constitutional privilege (the "notwithstanding clause") that allowed it to pass provincial laws in defiance of federal law. Such a privilege might suggest that the old "colonial" arguments were not as salient as they once were, since Québec already had constitutional jurisdiction over many aspects of language law, educational policy, etc.

10. For an inside account of the constitutional battles surrounding the patriation of the Canadian constitution from the federal perspective, see Trudeau (1990). For the Québécois perspective see

LaForest (1995), especially pp. 103-4, 130-31, and 151-153. The term "patriation" refers to the process of acquiring ownership of a constitution initially developed by another state. In this case, Canada was attempting to secure the constitution originally developed by colonial England.

11. For an introduction to the different assumptions underpinning liberalism and communitarianism, see Kukathas (1996). Basically, liberal political philosophy holds that individual rights always take priority over collective rights, and that the laws, not the aims, of societies should be regulated by the state. Communitarian political philosophy holds that collective rights may take priority over individual rights, since collective aims, as well as laws, are concerns of the state. Arguably, federal strategies of remembrance follow liberal theories and Québec separatists follow communitarian theories.

12. Economic issues were also salient in 1995, but less publicly debated. The economic reasons for secession, though, are not the focus of this essay. Rather, the focus is on how economic issues were displaced into ethnic, and later strategically multicultural, strategies of remembrance.

13. The translation is Ha's.

14. My quotations are from a transcript of the broadcast, as are quotations from the brief roundtable discussion by journalists and political commentators immediately following the address.

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