Canadian and Australian inventions of the national:
The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion
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As individuals, we live in an era of multiple identities which coexist and compete to define the Self and answer the question "Who am I?" – a question which, as philosopher Charles Taylor points out, was unproblematic in pre-modern times: either you were born a king and your duty was to rule over your country and find ways to spend your subjects' money, or you were a peasant and this identity acquired by birth also restricted your choices and options in life, though in more unpleasant ways.[1] But the heritage of the Enlightenment – which encouraged all individuals to exercise their reason – added to the teachings of liberalism – whose theory placed individual freedom and autonomy at its centre – came to change people's representations of their own selves. Exercising their autonomy meant that they could choose which values and practices they wanted to adopt or reject or which group they wished to be part of, knowing that they could switch allegiances or even belong to several groups at the same time. It also meant that they could decide to emphasise one aspect or another of their identities according to the circumstances: an Englishman might stress his identity as a Protestant when visiting Northern Ireland, but he might speak as a soccer player at a sports festival, or define himself as a Conservative when talking politics. Thus today, in liberal countries, people of different origins and with different beliefs, goals and allegiances live inside the borders of the state, which raises the following question: in this context, what makes all these individuals citizens of the same nation? In other words, what (and who…) can define a country's national identity? In fact, it seems as though just as the self is made of multiple identities, we cannot talk of one national identity only but of national identities in the plural as multiple representations of the nation. In *Inventing Australia*, Richard White points out that the first explorers, the British immigration officers or – later on – the Australian government all conveyed different images of the Australian national identity which competed to gain pride of place in the national psyche. Therefore White argues that:

> A national identity is an invention. There is no point in asking whether one version of this essential Australia is truer than another because they are all intellectual constructs, neat, tidy, comprehensible – and necessarily false. They have all been artificially imposed upon a diverse landscape and population, and a variety of untidy social relationships, attitudes and emotions. When we look at ideas about national identity, we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve.[2]

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[1] Charles Taylor, et al., *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 35.
[2] Richard White, *Inventing Australia. Images and Identity 1688-1980* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981) viii.

Keeping this in mind, this paper intends to look at the different representations of their national identities that Canada and Australia have developed in order to ensure the cohesion of their societies and the allegiance of their citizens, with a particular attention to those conveyed by the State and its institutions.

The Enlightenment led to a vision of the nation as a community of individuals linked by a social contract which set specific rights and duties. Since those rights and duties were shared by all citizens, they could be thought of as what united them and, in a way, as what constituted their national identity. However, the liberal principles which underlined the social contract, usually embodied by a Constitution, were considered as universal, and according to the discourse of modernity, all nation-states would, in time, adopt them. Eventually then, if the national identity was equated with these principles, nothing would really differentiate one nation from another. Therefore, there had to be more than a political bond between individuals for them to be committed to the common good of the nation. This is why the nation-state tried to convey some representations of the national identity which would be more specific and would help define the national Self as against the Other. Through its historians, officials or public servants, it anchored the "universal" liberal principles in what came to be seen as a common history and a common way of life which, added to a common language, came to form a national identity, with the institutions of the nation ensuring its reproduction and dissemination. But in the second half of the 20th century, the increasing diversification of the population and the multiplication of counter-movements and discourses contributed to making such a conception of national identity obsolete, so much so that some historians such as Eric Hobsbawm now consider that the very concept of the nation-state in the era of both post-modernism and globalisation has become increasingly irrelevant.[3] And indeed, it seems that in Canada and Australia, the traditional representations of the nation no longer work as tools of national cohesion. But this doesn't mean that these countries have stopped defining themselves as nation-states and no longer strive to find some commonalities which may unite their people and ensure this cohesion. Contrary to many European countries which are still reluctant to let go of those traditional representations and therefore have to face the multiple discourses of those who feel excluded from them, Canada and Australia have tried to reconstruct their respective identities on the very basis of difference and diversity. This is why it is interesting to look at the representations of national identity that these two countries tried to project before such representations came to be questioned in the 1960s, and to compare them with the more recent attempts at a redefinition of the nation which would be more inclusive.

Starting from the 18th century, constructing and promoting a national identity required of the modern nation-states to find some commonalities which could unite their members, who were often quite different in terms of social status, regional character, and sometimes religion and ethnicity. It usually involved drawing on a mythical and glorious past to create a coherent narrative of nation-building whose landmarks and heroes could be remembered with pride. In turn, this shared heritage was to fuel a common desire to live together and continue the national project. In his inspiring

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[3] See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

1882 lecture at the Sorbonne in Paris, French historian Ernest Renan emphasised this link between past, present and future in the following terms:

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down. The Spartan song – "We are what you were; we will be what you are" – is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every *patrie*.[4]

Through the construction of the French narrative of nation-building, events like the storming of the Bastille thus became symbols of unity, even though at the time people from Brittany, Provence or Alsace did not even speak the same language. Man, as a bearer of civic rights and duties, was to identify primarily with the nation-state and the specific national identity transmitted by its institutions through the concept of republican citizenship. Therefore, as Henri Jeanjean likes to point out, all citizens of France, whether from Paris, the Caribbean or North Africa, were taught the stories of "our ancestors the Gauls [who] were blond and tall."[5] Similarly, the United States relied on events such as the American Revolution or the Civil War to build a national identity through which the principles of liberty and justice contained in the American pledge of allegiance acquired a distinctive flavour.

Lacking similar revolutions or wars through which a national identity could have emerged as against the Other, be it a political system or a colonial power, Canada and Australia experienced difficulties in developing their own national character. Although New France had come under British rule in 1763, Canada was still divided into two very distinct societies when the British North America Act was signed in 1867. Not only were those societies different in terms of language, but they had separate institutions, the majority of their members came from either France or Britain, and their religion also set them apart. It would be hard indeed to create a representation of national identity which might include both. Australia, for its part, carried the stigma of earlier convict settlement, which was hardly something a nation could be proud of. And so, during the first decades which followed their official birth, the two countries held tight to Mother Britain's apron strings. Australians and Canadians remained British subjects, the new institutions were to be British in character and even though they might be "roughing it in the bush", new settlers like writer Susanna Moodie in Canada tried their best to transplant the British way of life

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[4] Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation ?," *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 41-55.

[5] Henri Jeanjean, "France's Interior Colonisation," *Compr(om)ising Post/colonialism(s): Challenging Narratives and Practices*, ed. Greg Ratcliffe and Gerry Turcotte (Sydney : Dangaroo Press, 2001) 198.

in their new settings.[6] As a consequence, national identity was very much linked with ethnicity, relying on a common provenance, a common heritage, a common language and, to use 19th century scientific terms, a common "type". In the meantime, French Canadians retained their own character, language and institutions, and consequently felt much less committed to Canada as a whole.

Up until the 20th century, then, the national Self, in Canadian and Australian representations of their identity, was essentially British. However, although they lacked revolutions, both countries still managed to find a significant Other to construct themselves against. A lot of Canadians had been British loyalists who had escaped the United States during the American Revolution. Therefore Canadians seemed to stand apart from Americans in their respect for law, order and good government as opposed to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The current discourse of the media, the government or even Canadians themselves shows that the country still feels the need to differentiate itself from its neighbour in the South. Australia's "Other" came to be the "unassimilable" foreigner embodied by the Chinese coolies and gold prospectors who came to Australia during the 19th century. As the only nation of Anglo-Celtic heritage in the middle of the Asia-Pacific region, Australia wished to preserve the homogeneity of its society in order to retain its character. The need to maintain a border between the Self and this Other was reflected in the first law passed by the Australian Parliament in 1901, the *Immigration Restriction Act*. Today this fear of the foreigner, especially the "visible" foreigner characterised by a different skin colour or a specific religion like Islam still seems to be very much present in Australian society.

It took some time before Canada and Australia found ways to construct their own narratives of the nation which would set them apart from Britain, relying first on geography and then on history. Both countries had very distinctive landscapes, flora and fauna which became powerful images in the national psyche. Canada's climate contributed to the creation of the Canadian character of the rugged lumberjack battling against the elements, while the stoic bushmen in Australia had to face the heat and drought of desert areas. As Russel Ward points out in *The Australian Legend*, the values acquired on the frontier – mateship, the idea of the fair go, and masculine values in general – came to be seen as distinctly Australian.[7] Because of the constant battle such characters had to wage against the elements, Canadians and Australians came to be considered as stronger than their British ancestors, and much more emphasis was given to the physical rather than the intellectual prowess of the men.[8] Both countries also managed to find in their respective histories the materials necessary to write their narratives of nation-building by transforming what could have been seen as weaknesses into strengths. Canada did not have to wage a war of independence? Well, this was proof that Canadians were more inclined to be a peaceful, law-abiding people. Australia was first peopled by convicts and

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[6] See Susanna Moodie, *Roughing It in the Bush, or Life in Canada* (London: Virago Press, 1986).

[7] Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1958).

[8] Richard White thus quotes the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 22 June 1907: "The Australian is always fighting something. In the bush it is drought, fires, unbroken horses, and cattle; and not unfrequently strong men. Never was such a country for defending itself with its fists. . . We look upon all this as very shocking and unruly in England nowadays; but there is no doubt that having to fight for himself gives a man pluck. . . All this fighting with men and with nature, fierce as any warfare, has made of the Australian as fine a fighting man as exists." Richard White, *Inventing Australia, Images and Identity* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1981) 126.

bushrangers? Well, some of them could still be made national heroes. And thus was born the legend of Ned Kelly, a sort of Australian Robin Hood, who is still to this date the character who has been the most written about in Australia.[9] Thus was born the renowned dislike of authority amongst Australians. And finally, as Canada and Australia became involved in the First and Second world wars, their soldiers were incensed as symbols of the strength and courage of two nations who had finally come of age. After the Second World War, Australian and Canadian representations of national identity thus seemed to rest on firm ground.

Such representations, which typically defined the national Self as against the Other, were both inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive in the sense that they were meant to give rise to the feeling of a common belonging among the individuals who formed the nation, and exclusive since what defined the nation also set it apart from other nations, thus reinforcing this border between the Self and the Other. The problem with those traditional representations of the nation, however, is that they failed to take into account the diversity of all individuals and communities. French-Canadians, Aboriginal people, homosexuals, the handicapped, women… all these categories of the population belonged to the nation, yet were not acknowledged in its representations. Such representations, then, did not only exclude external difference – that is, other nations as opposed to one's own – but also internal difference – that is, people who were part of the nation but did not identify with the picture conveyed by its institutions. When Ann-Mari Jordens recalls post-war images of Australian identity, she reveals what those images did not show, what was occulted by the dominant discourse on national identity:

> In 1948 we all became Australian citizens, although it made no difference and nobody understood what it meant. I never met an Asian or an Aborigine or heard a foreign language spoken. This was because Asians were excluded from Australia by the "white Australia policy" and Aborigines were isolated from the rest of society by discriminatory legislation. Fathers were the head of the family, the breadwinners, and ran the country. Women stayed at home and looked after the children. Their concerns were trivial. The intellectually disabled were invisible. They were locked away in institutions and like perpetual children were denied the rights enjoyed by other adult Australians. This was my culture. My perceptions of what was normal, natural and right were shaped by the laws of my country, the regulations by which they were administered and the views of its politicians which my parents heard on the wireless or read in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and communicated to me.[10]

Another problem with Canadian and Australian representations of the nation was that they were still very much linked with British ethnicity. Both the *Canadian Citizenship Act* (1947) and the *Australian Nationality and Citizenship Act* (1948) distinguished between "British subjects" and "aliens". And when the two countries launched vigorous campaigns of immigration after the Second World War, it was clear that most immigrants were to come from Great Britain. However, because Canada's most important wave of immigration had occurred before the First World War and had included groups other than the British, and because one of its provinces held a

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[9] John McQuilton, "Looking at the Life and Legend of Ned Kelly," public seminar, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 14 May 2003.
[10] Ann-Mari Jordens, *Redefining Australians: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1995) xii.

majority of people of French descent, the percentage of its population which could still claim British descent was already down to 48.3% in 1961.[11] Australia remained more homogeneous for a longer period with 90% of its population being of Anglo-Celtic origin after the Second World War, down to about 75% in the 1990s.[12] But more important than the exact composition of the population was the fact that the Anglo-Celtic group had become the main definer of Canadian and Australian identities in an attempt to conform to the traditional conception of the nation-state – a conception which, as Michael Walzer reminds us, does not require the population to be homogeneous:

> It means only that a single dominant group organises the common life in a way that reflects its own history and culture and, if things go on as intended, carries the history forward and sustains the culture. It is these intentions that determine the character of public education, the symbols and ceremonies of public life, the state calendar and the holiday it enjoins. Among histories and cultures, the state is not neutral; its political apparatus is an engine for national reproduction.[13]

National identity in Canada and Australia became a reference against which those who were deemed able to assimilate to the dominant group and its values were distinguished from those considered as unable to go through this process. Restrictive immigration policies were used to keep those "unassimilables" outside the country while the institutions of the nation ensured the reproduction of the national character.[14] Yet, since fewer and fewer British migrants came to Australia after the Second World War, the government had to rely on other European sources of immigration to supply manpower and populate the country. As Canada had done with its own relatively diverse population, Australia encouraged the newcomers to adopt the language, culture and way of life of the dominant group. But both countries slowly came to realise that assimilation was not easy, and that more and more people did not conform to the traditional representations of the nation that were promoted by Canadian and Australian institutions. In his 1973 speech "A Multi-cultural Society for the Future", Al Grassby, from the Australian Department of Immigration, pointed out that "The image we manage to convey of ourselves still range from the bushwhacker to the sportsman to the slick city businessman. Where is the Maltese process worker,

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[11] Jeremy Webber, *Reimagining Canada. Language, Culture, Community, and the Canadian Constitution* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) 62.

[12] Nira Duval Davis, "Anglomorphism and the Construction of Ethnic and Racial Divisions in Britain and Australia," *Immigration and the Politics of Ethnicity and Race in Australia and Great Britain*, ed. Richard Nile (Canberra: Bureau of Immigration Research; London: Sir Robert Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 1991) 20.

[13] Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 25.

[14] A definition of such "unassimilables" can be found in the Canadian *1952 Immigration Act* which gave power to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to limit the admission of certain persons due to : "1. Nationality, citizenship, ethnic group, occupation, class, or geographical area of origin; 2. Peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, or methods of holding property; 3. Unsuitability having regard to the climatic, economic, social, industrial, educational, labour, health, or other conditions or requirements existing temporarily or otherwise, in Canada or in the area or country from or through which such persons come to Canada; or 4. Probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties or responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after admission." Quoted in Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration. Public Policy and Public Concern.* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) 102.

the Finnish carpenter, the Italian concrete layer, the Yugoslav miner or – dare I say it – the Indian scientist?"[15]

This questioning of national identity also came from other deep changes which both societies went through in the 1960s. The traditional conception of the family was being undermined as a result of women starting to work and having fewer children and divorce being on the rise.[16] Attitudes about race were changing, with the lessons of Nazi Germany having taught the whole world about the dangers of exclusive ethnic nationalism. And new social movements, from feminists to gay rights and anti-war demonstrators, added many other pictures to the traditional clichés of Australian and Canadian societies. In Quebec, the Quiet Revolution led to the modernisation of French-Canadian society, which started to demand equality of status with English Canada and recognition of its special position inside the Canadian community as one of the "founding peoples", while similar demands for recognition were brought to the fore by Indigenous people in both countries. As historians and researchers started to study how different groups – French-Canadians and Indigenous peoples, but also immigrants and their descendents – had contributed to the construction of Canada and Australia, their accounts challenged the single narrative of nation-building which was a the basis of national identity. By taking the skeletons out of the closet of national history, these "revisionists" revealed the darker side of the past: the racism, the sexism, the injustice. There was a growing realisation that the traditional representations of national identity no longer worked as instruments of social cohesion since more and more people felt excluded from them on account of their difference and therefore identified first with a more restricted community – their own group – with its own particular discourse about the nation.

Faced with these multiple discourses and with representations of the nation which had become increasingly problematic, the Canadian and Australian governments took the lead in attempting to redefine their national identities in the 1970s. In order to cope with the growing diversity of their populations, both countries subscribed to the concept of multiculturalism as official recognition of this diversity and as a series of measures taken to ensure that all members of ethnic groups could participate to society without having to give up their heritage. Canada became increasingly concerned with the demands of Quebec and tried to answer them, albeit not very successfully.[17] Both countries also tried to take into account the demands of their Indigenous groups and at least managed to bring this specific issue to the forefront of the political and public debate.[18] As a symbol of the new Canadian identity, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms attached to the Constitution which Canada repatriated in 1982 emphasised the multicultural character of the Canadian

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[15] Albert James Grassby, *A Multi-cultural Society for the Future. Immigration Reference Paper*, Australia, Department of Immigration (Canberra: AGPS, 1973) 4.

[16] Céline Le Bourdais and Nicole Marcil Gratton, " 'All in the family,' Oui, Mais 'Quelle Famille!'? Évolution Sociodémographique de la Famille au Canada," *Canada: Horizons 2000. Un pays à la recherche de soi: Regard prospectif sur le Canada du 21ème siècle*, dir. Raymond-M Hébert and Raymond Théberge (Saint-Boniface: Presses Universitaires de Saint-Boniface, 1997) 13-43.

[17] The ongoing demands that Quebec be recognised as a "distinct society" were rejected, even though Quebec managed to secure some linguistic and cultural rights in the 1970s (e.g. *1977 Charter of the French language*, known as *Bill 101*).

[18] In Australia, the 1967 referendum gave power to the Commonwealth government to legislate on behalf of Aboriginal people – who were finally included in the census – and the 1977 *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* was a first step towards the recognition of Aboriginal rights.

population and singled out French-Canadian and Indigenous people as groups whose collective rights had to be protected. In Australia, the 1978 Galbally Report pointed out the difficulties migrants might face in their access to government services. It recommended special measures to ensure equality of opportunity and also stated that "every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures."[19]

Thus, the unitary vision of Canada and Australia as homogeneous countries whose Anglo-Celtic heritage was grounded in a particular context gradually gave way to a representation of the nation as consisting of various communities, each with its own culture and way of life, sharing a common territory defined by its political institutions. In a way, this model – as it was presented – was similar to that envisioned by classical liberals: it implied that different individuals and groups only shared a set of liberal principles anchored in those institutions. Therefore, difference was no longer represented as what defined the Other as opposed to the national Self, but neither was it included in the representation of this national Self: what would unite Australians or Canadians would be their membership in a political community but, as Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau said in 1971 when announcing the adoption of the policy of multiculturalism, the state would not promote any official culture.[20] Because of this, multiculturalism became severely criticised in the 1980s, especially since at the same time the State was losing its power as an instrument of promotion of a national identity and people were identifying more and more with their own groups rather than the nation in an attempt to resist the forces of globalisation. In this context, Canadians and Australians thought that the policy, with its emphasis on the preservation of cultural diversity, represented a threat to national unity. By challenging the domination of Anglo-Celtic culture, it had left the nation with nothing to hold on to but the thin thread of civic identity. Faced with the erosion of the traditional representations of the nation, people called for a strong government defending a common culture with which everyone could identify.

From a theoretical point of view, the problem was that because they based their identities on the shared political institutions and the rights and liberties their citizens could enjoy, Canada and Australia failed to recognise that apart from the cultural identity each individual may consider as his or her own, there existed a common culture at the national level. Such a culture, which Will Kymlicka calls a "societal culture", was directly and indirectly promoted by the State and its institutions. As Kymlicka points out:

> The state cannot give but at least partial establishment to a culture when it decides which language is to be used in government; what language and history children must learn in school; who will be admitted as immigrants, and what language and history they must learn to become citizens; whether subunits will be drawn to create districts controlled by national minorities, and so on. These political decisions directly determine the viability of societal cultures.[21]

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[19] Australia, Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants, *Report of the Review of Post-Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants*, by Franck Galbally (Canberra: AGPS, 1978) 4.
[20] In his speech in the House of Commons, Trudeau said: "Although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other." Canada, House of Commons, *Debates of the House of Commons*, 8 Oct. 1971.
[21] Will Kymlicka, *States, Nations and Cultures* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1997) 27.

Therefore, instead of trying to make their societal cultures "invisible", Canada and Australia needed to make them more inclusive so that they would form the core of a national identity everyone could identify with. Such attempts can be traced back to the end of the 1980s, after some voices among politicians and academic circles started to express fear at what they saw as a multiplication of interest groups without any common bond.[22] Faced with this backlash against the discourse on national identity which had emerged as a consequence of multiculturalism, Canada and Australia started to promote a common culture which would be at the centre of a new representation of their national identities while making sure that this common culture would be as inclusive as possible. Such a representation, by including difference, would re-conceptualise it into what defined the national Self.

In order to reach this goal, the two countries needed to recognise and include the values and practices of the different groups, so that they would develop some form of allegiance to the new national identity which would be transmitted by the institutions. The teaching of history, for example, would have to take into account the contribution of Indigenous people or immigrants to the construction of the nation. One of the goals of "multicultural education", therefore, was to present the variety of people, values, religions, etc. which make up Canadian and Australian societies while showing how this diversity contributes to the common good. The transformation of the societal culture also entailed the recognition that some groups, owing to their religion, might want a day off other than Sunday. It led to the abolition of some dress codes or other requirements for particular jobs[23], the creation of prayer rooms in the workplace, or the setting up of intercultural training schemes for some staff. The national museums now showcasing the new Canadian and Australian national identities attest to how much these identities have changed compared to their earlier representations. The Canadian Museum of Civilisations, created in 1989, includes in its account of Canadian history and its presentation of "folk culture" the contribution of many ethnic groups. While a whole floor is devoted to Aboriginal culture, the rest of the museum also presents artefacts belonging to different ethnic groups (French-Canadians, Brazilians, Ukrainians, etc.). The National Museum of Australia, which opened in 2001 for the Centenary of the Federation, also aims at developing a picture of Australian society which would include the contribution of all groups and thus features accounts of Aboriginal history and of the settlement of different migrant communities in Australia. Even national celebrations promote this picture of Canada and Australia as made of different communities. With its *Canada Week*, the country first recognises its national minorities through *National Aboriginal Day* and *Saint Jean-Baptiste Day*, then its ethnic minorities with *Multiculturalism Day*, before enjoining all of them to celebrate *Canada Day* together.

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[22] See for example Geoffrey Blainey, *All for Australia* (Sydney: Methuen Haynes, 1984), or the *Globe and Mail* survey which found out that 72% of Canadians believed that "the long-standing image of Canada as a nation of communities, each ethnic and racial group preserving its own identity with the help of government policy, must give way to the US style of cultural absorption." *The Globe and Mail*, 14 Dec. 1993.

[23] It was recognised, for example, that the height requirements used to select future policemen or firemen discriminated against people of Asian origin, who are usually shorter than people of European origin.

The policy of multiculturalism, which was criticized by those who saw it as an obstacle to the elaboration of a national identity, has now become an instrument for the promotion of this identity, emphasising the fact that beyond diversity and difference, Australians and Canadians are united by some common values and practices which still set their nation apart from the others. Thus, in its preparation for the National Agenda for a Multicultural Agenda which was to devise the goals of multicultural policy in the future, the Australian Advisory Council of Multicultural Affairs stated that

> The policy of multiculturalism has always affirmed the importance of an overriding and unifying loyalty to Australia's interests and future. It remains based upon a shared commitment to a common set of institutions, an accepted legal framework, English as the national language, and parliamentary democracy. While it accepts diversity it also emphasises values that are common to all cultures, such as the importance of the family[24].

It is important to remember, however, that these common values are grounded in the liberal, Anglo-Celtic heritage which constitutes a framework for what can or cannot be accepted as part of the common culture. Difference is encouraged and considered as part of Canadian and Australian identities, but it has its limits. A non-liberal group which would ask, in the name of cultural respect, that its practices of polygamy or female circumcision be included in the societal culture would obviously see its demand rejected. The fact that the Anglo-Celtic group still dominates that societal culture is also partly why French-Canadians in Canada and Indigenous people in both countries have constantly been against multiculturalism and the representation of national identity it conveys, which is quite different from the common culture these two national minorities would like to preserve. We also need to remember, again, that what we talk about when we talk about national identity is a representation and not an objective reality, and that this representation still competes with the traditional ones to gain pride of place in the imagined community of individuals which form the nation. Take for example the image that Australia still projects abroad through its tourist brochures showing bushmen and painted Aborigines, or the discourse of some conservatives like William Gairdner in Canada or Franck Knopfelmacher in Australia who deplore the loss of those traditional images and the values that they convey.[25] According to Knopfelmacher, for example, Australia remains "an anglomorph society, that is, its political, social and cultural institutions, its language and spirit, both religious and secular, are derived initially by direct population transfers from the British Isles."[26]

So the new representations of national identity conveyed through the institutions and the policy of multiculturalism raise quite a number of issues. First of all, they compete with the more traditional conception of the nation. They also fail to include everyone, as Indigenous people or French-Canadians have always claimed that their concerns were very different from those of other ethnic groups, and refuse to be represented in

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[24] Australia. Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, *Towards a National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia. A Discussion Paper* (Canberra: AGPS, 1988) 3-4.

[25] See William Gairdner, *The Trouble with Canada* (Toronto: General Paperbacks, 1991). Also see Franck Knopfelmacher, "The Case against Multi-culturalism," *The New Conservatism*, ed. Robert Manne (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982) 40-64.

[26] Franck Knopfelmacher "The Case against Multi-culturalism," *The New Conservatism*, ed. Robert Manne (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982) 40-64.

the multicultural picture on the same level as any other group. Indigenous Canadians have pointed out that "in our opinion, the attempts at putting Indigenous people in the same category as any other ethnic community constitutes a threat to our status and our experience as the first inhabitants of this country."[27] For their part, the Québécois state that "it must be acknowledged that Canada does not have one identity but many identities. The Federal Government's attempt at imposing one, unifying, globalising, will meet with the same obstacles, such as the fact that French Canadians, who become Québécois in Quebec, do not share the same symbols, do not have the same cultural references, and want the newcomers to integrate to a shared public culture which would unite all Québécois and Québécoises."[28] On a more theoretical level, this representation of national identity fails to recognise that the "common values" it promotes are still dominated by western liberal values, and that illiberal groups inside the country will inevitably have to compromise their culture and way of life in order to function in the societal culture. Moreover, it is difficult to know whether this societal culture itself is really capable of changing through dialogue and negotiation or whether it will remain a vehicle of Anglo-Celtic domination. The representation of national identity may be inclusive, but the common culture as it exists may not. The minor changes which have happened so far, such as the legal system taking into account the cultural background of offenders,[29] have been inconclusive. Finally, on a symbolic level, the new representations of national identity might not have the power of the traditional images to foster a real sense of distinctiveness among Australians or Canadians.

Canada and Australia seem to have traded their traditional representations of national identity for a story of nation-building and a description of their societies which are meant to be more attuned to the realities of the 21st century. This change has involved a reinterpretation of history, which has sometimes led to some controversy among historians themselves,[30] but which now takes into account the 5.5 million migrants who have entered Canada and the 5.6 million who have entered Australia since the Second World War.[31] With 40% of Canadians whose origin was other than French or British in 1991, and with 42% of Australians being either migrants or children of migrants in 1998, the image of both societies as being Anglo-Celtic in character were much too exclusive to be kept. The current representations of national identity have succeeded in promoting pictures of Canada and Australia as tolerant, dynamic, multicultural societies. They have transformed the relationship between the national Self and the Other, re-conceptualising difference as from what defined the

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[27] Canada, Chambre des Communes, Comité législatif sur le projet de loi C-63. Loi constituant la Fondation Canadienne des Relations Raciales, *Procès-verbaux et témoignages du Comité législatif sur le projet de loi C-63*, 2nd sess., 34th leg. (Ottawa: l'Imprimeur de la Reine pour le Canada, 1999) (my translation).

[28] Canada, Chambre des Communes, Comité permanent sur la Citoyenneté et l'Immigration, *La Citoyenneté canadienne. Des valeurs communes. Rapport du Comité permanent sur la citoyenneté et l'immigration* (Ottawa : l'Imprimeur de la Reine pour le Canada, June 1994) 54 (my translation).

[29] This was part of the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission, *Report n° 57. Multiculturalism and the Law* (Canberra: Law Reform Commission, 1992).

[30] In *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Keith Windschuttle thus challenges the revisionist accounts of the massacres of Aborigines on the Australian frontier by stating that the evidence of such massacres are based upon Aboriginal oral history, and are therefore unreliable. Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Paddington: Macleay Press, 2002).

[31] Jacques Portes, *Le Canada et le Québec au 20ème Siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1994). Australia. Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, *Australian Immigration. The Facts* (Canberra: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1998).

Other into what defines the Self. But this still remains on a symbolic level. Only history will show whether on a more practical level, the societal culture, still embedded with the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture, will manage to incorporate elements of others and thus become truly multicultural, while still being distinct enough to preserve the frontier between Canada or Australia and other liberal nation-states.