



Canadian symbols

Summer 2023

The importance of national rituals

- “Rituals and rites are most often associated with the realm of the sacred, but a number of social theorists have made a convincing case that ritual, and in particular the ‘interaction ritual’, remains the ‘basic social event’. Rituals lie at the heart of social life, sustaining social bonds among members of the community through their repeated performance. Among the **rituals and rites of citizenship** can be included the **affective recitations of national anthems**; the raising of **flags**; the public pledges and **oaths** of allegiance to the **sovereign**; and the celebrations of national holidays and the parades, plays, firework displays, street parties, family dinners, and so on, that mark these” (Thobani 2007: 79)
- Rituals of social life are based on the theories of social interactions (Goffman, 1990)

The construction of a Canadian identity

- The relationship to a nation : an imaginary signification (category that people inherit)
- The imaginary signification of society (Castoriadis, 1998)

Imaginary signification = **emotions / social representations / intention**

Identification with a collective.

“A flag is a symbol with a rational function, a sign of recognition and for rallying round, which quickly becomes what one **can and must die for**, and what sends shivers down the spine of the patriots as they watch the military parade pass by” (Castoriadis, 1998: 131). A nation is an imaginary signification (the idea of Canada in that sense).

Model of **loyalty** to the nation (theory of Hirschman). Explanation of the following model: either you are loyal to the nation, or you opt for an **exit** or you opt for a critical take (**voice**)

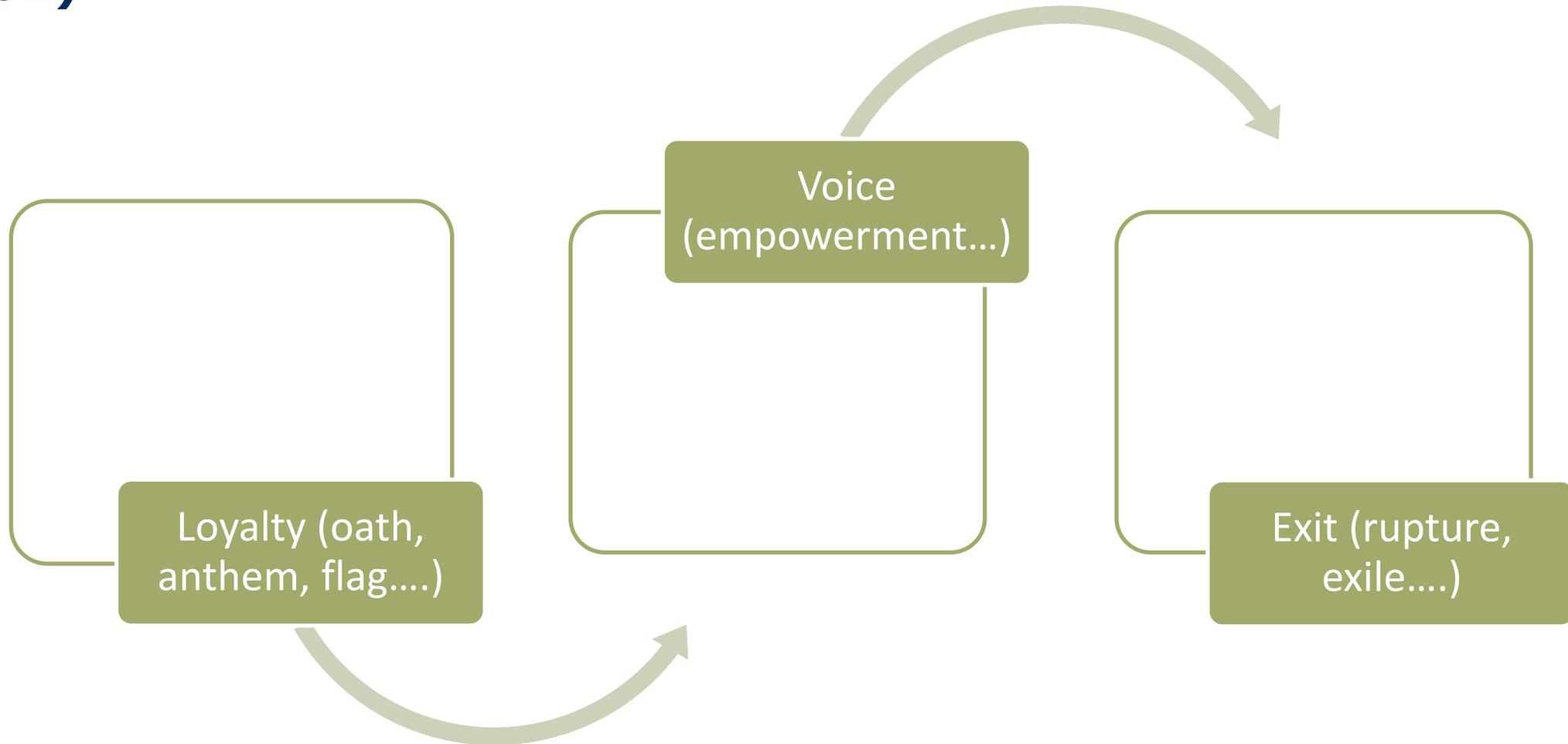
The construction of the Canadian identity

- Northrop Frye (1912-1991)
- « Total literary history moves from the primitive to the sophisticated, and here we glimpse the possibility of seeing literature as a complication of a relatively restricted and simple group of formulas that can be studied **in primitive culture**. If so, then the search for archetypes is a kind of literary anthropology, concerned with the way that literature is informed by pre-literary categories such as ritual, myth and folk tale » (Frye, 1963: 12).
- Structuralism of Frye to study the mythological patterns in literature

The construction of the Canadian identity

- “It seems to me that the essential cultural and imaginative feelings in Canada are **regional and provincial**. There is Newfoundland, turned outwards to the sea; there are the Maritime provinces, with their gentle **pastoral landscape**; there is Quebec with its strong **pays feeling**, with the small farms spread out along the **St. Lawrence**; there is Ontario with its curious contrast of the urban, mixed farming and summer cottage areas; there are the **prairies**, where the individual human being, especially when riding a horse, feels as though he ere the highest point in the universe; and there is the **British Columbian** coast, with its tremendous mountains and trees. There are also great diversities within these groups: the **Acadian French** in the Maritimes, the English enclave in the Eastern Townships and Westmount, the mix of Ukrainian and Icelandic groups in Winnipeg that give such an unusual musical direction to the life of that city” (Frye, 2002: 267)

Hirschman's model on social organizations (Premat, 2020: 261)



The creation of the Canadian flag (1960-1965)

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/culture/canadian-identity-society/anthems-symbols/national-flag.html>



The creation of the Canadian flag

- The topic dates back to the parliamentary discussions between 1925 and 1945 (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2015)
- Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson put the issue on the political agenda in 1964 and the final design was chosen on 15 February 1965.
- Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963 (Thobani, 2007: 144). "The commission was given the mandate 'to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of equal participation between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by other ethnic groups. This mandate reproduced the colonial erasure of Aboriginal peoples as the original presence in the country » (Thobani, 2007: 144).

The Canadian anthem

- O Canada!
Our **home and native land!**
True patriot love in all of us command.
- With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The **True North** strong and free!
- From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
- God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
- O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Canadian anthem

- Composed by Calixa Lavallée in 1880. Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier wrote the lyrics in French
- " On January 31, 2018, legislation was passed to change the English lyrics from "True patriot love in all **thy sons** command" to "True patriot love in **all of us** command," to make it gender neutral." (<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/anthems-canada.html#a11>)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwDvF0NtgdU> (Last visit 12 June 2023)
- Jully Black performed the anthem (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N90FQUXpr8g> – last visit 12 June 2023)

The Canadian anthem

- Jully Black changed the lyrics (« our home and native land » became « our home **on** native land »)
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64722763> (Last visit 12 June 2023). William Shatner already dealt with the idea of « on native land » (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRTwPyIzY4A>, 26 July 2011; last visit 13 June 2023)
- National anthem sung in the Cree language (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqPwjwmDWgQ>, last visit 13 June 2023). Asani (Aboriginal womens a cappella group from Edmonton, Alberta)

The remembrance day in Canada

- Canadian veterans (11 November – pause)
- “I think the war with Russia and Ukraine has brought that a little closer to the front for people who go, ‘Oh, ya that’s not just the **First World War or the Second World War or the Korean War.**’ That’s something that’s happening today with technological advances, media participation, in the sense of social media, and (brings) that a little more to the forefront. We are not experiencing that in Canada and hope we never do, but we need to remember, and I’ve seen so much of that done by communities to remember those people who do wear the uniforms and support us in keeping **our country secure and safe.**” *The Canadian Press*, 8 March 2023 (Source: Nexis Uni)

Conclusions

- Discussion on the Canadian symbols important when regional and local identity is particularly powerful (the East-West unity of the country)
- The discussion became especially important for the 100th anniversary of the nation
- Controversies on the lyrics of the anthem
- The erasure of the natives?
- Alternative anthems that are sung in other languages

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