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Canada: The Inconspicuous Silent Dreamer on the Other-side of the Americas

Le Canada : le reveur silencieux et imperceptible
sur l'autre côté des Amériques

Krisztina Kodó

Abstract

Canada and the United States share a geographical continent and a history which reaches back to the British Monarchy as its earliest origins and mother country. The US creates and formulates its very distinct American Dream, already embedded in its constitution and its cultural narratives. Canada has its own set of blood-linked issues with the French (Acadiens), the siege of Quebec (the Battle on the Plains of Abraham), the War of 1812, the Métis Rebellion and the execution of Louis Riel, but no revolution or civil war. The historical echoes in this case are, however, muted, silenced, and the attention of the outside world is directed toward the extrovert neighbour, the US. Why? Canada is the silent and introvert partner on the northern side of the continent. What makes Canada more or less distinct from the Americas? How much of the Americas is embedded in the Canadian psyche? Where is the “Canadian Dream”? The article aims to examine various literary and artistic sources in order to establish how these cultures are “strung together then woven into a tapestry and the design is what makes us [Canadians] more” (Shane Koyczan).

Keywords: American Dream, Canadian dream, being Canadian, identity markers

Resumé

Le Canada et les États Unis partagent un continent géographique et de une histoire qui remontent à la Monarchie Britannique, considérée comme pays des origines et mère patrie. Les États Unis ont créé et ont donné une définition du rêve américain bien particulière, incluse dans sa constitution et sa culture de la narration. Le Canada a ses propres tragédies sanglantes avec les Français (les Acadiens), le siège du Québec (la bataille sur les plaines d'Abraham), la guerre de 1812, la rébellion des Métis et l'exécution de Louis Riel, mais il n'a connu ni révolution ni guerre civile. Au lieu de cela, les échos du monde extérieur ont été dirigés contre les États Unis. Pourquoi? Le Canada est resté un partenaire silencieux et introverti au nord du continent. En quoi le Canada revêt une place plus ou moins à part aux Amériques? Dans quelle mesure l'idée des Amériques est-elle incorporée dans le psychisme canadien? Où se trouve « le rêve canadien »? L'essai veut examiner différentes sources



littéraires et artistiques aboutissant à ce que « strung together then woven into a tapestry and the design is what makes us [Canadians] more » (Shane Koyczan).

Mots-clés : Le rêve américain, le rêve canadien, être canadien, identité attributive.

The discovery and settling of the North American continent was a slow but gradual progress that presupposes surprising twists and turns during the course of history. The aim of this article is to examine when and where two great nations – the United States and Canada – that cohabit the North American continent evolved and how this development came to be as it is today. The American Dream has become a cultural narrative that still defines the American peoples, but does Canada have a Canadian Dream, too? And, broadly speaking, is Canada still considered the young adolescent and silent partner within this bizarre relationship that Canadian artists metaphorically envisaged? If not then how has Canadian identity come to define itself? Since multiculturalism and coming to terms with Canadian identity is still a rather prickly issue that remains on the agenda and continues to spark heated discussions.

Canada celebrated its 150th anniversary of Confederation last year just as Donald Trump became President of Canada's big southern neighbour. As a consequence, many have argued that the former "American Dream" since has moved north to become the Canadian Dream. The Canadian Dream has always been closer to what Jeremy Rifkin called the European Dream and hence he argues that Canadians are in the midst of a transatlantic debate: the American Dream of individual fulfilment (the "pursuit of happiness") versus the European Dream of community (Rifkin 2005). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (2016) speech in Davos also seems to support this. Justin Trudeau described Canada as "the first post-national state," with "no core identity, no mainstream" (Malcolm 2016) – which would lead us to the question: what defines a nation a nation in the 21st century?

Canada is, according to several international surveys, the most tolerant country in the world (CTV News). Canadians see themselves firstly as citizens of the world. In 1971 Pierre Trudeau, the current Prime Minister's father, described the Canadian being as follows: "There is no such thing as a model or ideal Canadian," continuing, "What could be more absurd than the concept of an 'all Canadian' boy or girl? A society which emphasizes uniformity is one which creates intolerance and hate" (Trudeau 1971). Many would disagree with this suggestion and argue that Canada does have a history of its own and values to support this image, as will be illustrated in what follows here.



Definitions of the Canadian being are many and varied, dating back to the decades before 1867 and up to the present time. The historical development of Canada goes hand-in-hand with that of the United States of America. Why? Simply because we are speaking of one continent, that of North America. Though the two countries have taken a manifestly different path during the course of history, its earliest origins are the same. In order to understand when and how the two countries began to diverge and create separate nations, in what follows I think it essential to provide an overview of the distant past.

The earliest immigrants to this continent were the Aboriginal Peoples, who are thought to have crossed the Bering Land Bridge some fifteen thousand years ago, or even earlier on the basis of archaeological findings, by following the migrating animal herds. These nomadic tribes did not create permanent settlements, but gradually dispersed and in separating continued their slow but gradual migration further north, west and south. These tribal Indian and Inuit nations lived virtually undisturbed until the arrival of the white man from the European continent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The great geographical discoveries began during the European Renaissance era. This age opened new horizons in the intellectual development of Humanism, education and the individual human world view. We all know some of the most noteworthy adventurers whose names and achievements have come to be identified with the discovery of the North American continent: John Cabot, Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain, Giovanni da Verranazo, and, of course, Christopher Columbus. These men came not only to see and experience, but ultimately to claim the lands they have discovered in the name of the monarchy that financed their expeditions. These land claims by the great European monarchies laid the foundation not only for future settlements, but also for the oncoming power struggles that led to further conflicts, wars, revolutions, displacements and further immigration north and south within the continent.

The historical developments that constituted the settling of the North American continent clearly show a common origin. But by the end of the eighteenth century, with the War of Independence in 1776, the American colonists gradually diverge and the Canadian and American colonists move in opposite directions. According to James W. Dean and Vivek H. Dehejia, “Canadians are the original anti-Americans; the ones who rejected the American revolution, stayed loyal to Great Britain and continue to insist on their distinctiveness from their southern partner” (2006, 314). Loyalty to the mother country and the Crown is strengthened by the historical fact that tens of thousands of loyalists migrated to British North America between 1783 and 1784. Thirty thousand Loyalists settled in the Maritime Provinces alone (Canadian Encyclopedia). This sole fact illustrates that for many thousands,



regardless of their nationality, a symbolic attachment to the Monarchy meant security and stability.

The American colonies achieved independence and the Declaration of Independence (1776) comes to contain those Puritan ideas that are considered the root of the American Dream. The most significant part that is still retained in cultural memory is embedded in the opening clauses of the Declaration: «We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness». These thoughts represent America's creative destiny. "For the Founding Fathers the 'pursuit of happiness' meant action in the public and private spheres in order to create a better society" (Dean and Dehejia 2006, 365). How was the American Dream achieved? The historical facts themselves highlight this general optimistic improvement through the discovery and exploration, the settling of the frontier, and the major inventions (e.g. the steam engine, railroads, the automobile, building of bridges, the motion picture camera, space rockets, etc.) (Stiuliuc 2011, 366). This phenomena certainly influenced the average American and even added a further boost to his/her self-esteem. The American Dream came parallel with the tradition of conquering frontiers, first from Europe to America, then from the east coast to the Wild West, and from nature to that of civilization, enabling man to overcome his own limitations and boundaries (Stiuliuc 2011, 370).

Throughout the centuries the United States has been referred to as a melting pot for all its immigrants. According to James Truslow Adams the belief of the American Dream for the individual man "was not a logical concept of thought, [but] a religious emotion, a great act of faith, a courageous leap into the dark unknown" (Adams 1931, 198). In this simplified or simplistic narrative, Americans are clearly adventurers whose fearless endeavours in conquering the frontier produce outstanding heroes. How do the Canadians tackle the adventurous and reckless feature of their closest neighbour? Canada's sense of security was its connection with the Monarchy; nevertheless, sharing a continent with the US urged Canadians to create a constitution of their own, which was only achieved in 1867. The decades before and after 1867 stimulated Canada to establish its own identity and create heroes of its own making. And in the meantime they are simply worried onlookers in this silent game of power struggle as the US evolves into an ever growing power on the North American continent. As Robertson Davies said: "This is not a country you love, it is a country you worry about" (Gray 2016, Loc 62). Obviously, the insecurity that characterizes the Canadians in a general sense keeps them in check. This inevitably allows an inferiority complex to surface, namely, the notion of being second-rate beside the United States. No wonder the metaphorical analogy of Canada as an adolescent emerged of which perhaps the most popular example is Earle Birney's poem "Canada: Case History: 1945". Here,



Canada is metaphorically drawn as a “high-school land” highlighting the features that characterize a teenager as

This is the case of a high-school land,
deadset in adolescence;
loud treble laughs and sudden fists,
bright cheeks, the gangling presence.
This boy is wonderful at sports
and physically quite healthy. (Birney 1977, 40)

But the irony continues as he gives prominence to the mixed family relationships with unmistakable references to the US as the “Uncle,” his Quebecois “French mother” and “He’s really much more like his father” being an undoubted implication of England. Nevertheless, the overt message of a Canadian dream that Birney conveys is that “He [Canada] wants to be different from everyone else and daydreams of winning the global race” (Birney 1977, 40). But Canada needs to grow up first.

And has Canada grown up since? That is a matter of perception, naturally Canada has undergone many improvements and developments since 1867, and has “grown into its own” (Cohen 2015). But Davies also added that “we’re a rather plain-headed race on the whole as compared, for instance, with, probably, the Americans, but inwardly we’re all coloured bright red with big dobs of purple” (Drainie 1979, 177). Here, Davies is obviously referring to the “WASP stock” as being perhaps seemingly “plain” on the surface, but inwardly with a lot of zest and bravado. This certainly suggests that there is more to Canadians than meets the eye, something that according Davies even they do not seem to recognize: “we’ve got a fantastic sort of fossilized past here. We always talk about ourselves as a country with a great future, but we never talk about ourselves as a country with a sort of living past” (Cameron 1971, 75). Canada’s past, however, is hardly known outside Canada’s borders and this may be one of the reasons why Canadians constantly compare themselves to others. This notion of Canadian history being unknown outside Canada is also alluded to by Robert Cohen in his documentary, *On Being Canadian*. Pierre Trudeau’s famous comparison that “once likened Canada to a mouse sleeping with an elephant, who fears that the tiniest move of the elephant may crush him” reflects on the Canadian-American relationship (Dean and Dehejia 2006, 314). This metaphorical relationship of the two countries has been a source that many writers adhered to in the past decades.

The American Declaration of Independence gave the Canadians an added boost in wanting to secure their own territories; nevertheless it took almost a hundred years for this to take shape. In 1867, the “British North America Act sailed through



Westminster Parliament, and the Canadian Confederation became a legal entity” (Gray 2016, Loc 463). In London George-Étienne Cartier said the following:

We have founded a great empire which will extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean; we intend that all that immense territory will be well governed not merely as a selfish principle as applied to, but in order to add to the power and to the prosperity of the Mother country. (2016, Loc 464).

With Confederation Cartier achieved his goal and created a country, which was a “political unity where the different peoples could cohabit and protect their own culture” (2016, Loc 479). G. E. Cartier’s main concern was to see French culture, tradition and language given a firm and permanent basis on which it could strengthen and expand without any obstacles. In time this would become a template for federalism beyond Canadian borders. Interestingly, Cartier argued that the “unity of races was utopian,” therefore impossible (2016, Loc 485). This seems to suggest that Cartier saw the drawbacks of the American ‘melting pot’ system, and as a Frenchman, the idea of giving up his culture and language was inconceivable. Hence, Cartier wanted to ensure that French language and culture remain intact and not be “melted into” the WASP base stock of mid-nineteenth-century Canada. In 1867 the Dominion of Canada was still not an entirely independent country since the British Monarchy remained the Mother country. Canada had no say in its foreign affairs and remained in British hands until the Westminster Statute of 1931. And the country was a patchwork of English-speaking and French-speaking peoples, coupled with many and sundry marginalized Indigenous groups, and above all “had a neighbour that was waiting for the Confederation to fall apart” (2016, Loc 538). The *New York Times* stated that the Dominion will surely “fail” and when that does occur “a process of peaceful absorption will give Canada her proper place in the Great North American republic” (Gray 2016, Loc 542). The threat of an American expansion seems to have been an acute concern on the part of the Canadians, who felt the need to stabilize their political position. In this context, one crucial issue was the creation of the Confederation, which would circumscribe Canada and give it a legal format while, furthermore, providing the newly-established nation with its own set of symbols to enforce its individual status and also its symbolic links with the mother country, the English Monarchy. One obvious and unique symbol, according to Charlotte Gray, that was to be found everywhere from east to west across the Dominion, was a picture of Queen Victoria as a sturdy image of Canadian federalism (2016, Loc 546). This was obviously one of the most important differences between Canadians and Americans, and one image of the “fossilized past” that Robertson Davies refers to in his previous quotation. These emblematic features strengthened the ties with the Monarchy on the one hand, but on the other hand they



were essential for the majority of the WASP population to ensure that they in fact belonged and could identify with a greater symbolic establishment.

But there were other notable images with which Canadians could identify from the time of its earliest settling, among them, the distinctive features that defined the landscape, geography. The immense spaces highlighted and enhanced the physical strength and power of nature as a dominant feature of the landscape. The North, the Wilderness and the endless geographical spaces became a myth that man strove to conquer. This was, however, not the American frontier. The image of the sturdy Canadian, according to Margaret Atwood, is linked to survival, which she explained in the following:

our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back, from the awful experience – the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship – that killed everyone else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival. (Atwood 1972, 265–66)

The concept of sheer physical survival when confronted with the natural elements affirmed Canada's uniqueness in its depictions of its rugged landscape and the many references to the country as the "Great White North" or the "True North." These are references that came into being in the nineteenth century during the time of Confederation when an identification with the landscape was necessary in order to develop the image of a race of men with the strength of iron and steel (Berger 1966, 84). The depiction of a landscape that was empty, barren, and overpowering, in contrast to the well-tilled fields of Europe, urged artists and painters to approach their portrayal of the Canadian landscape from a different perspective that showed no evidence of an Indigenous presence and hardly any trace of urbanization or industrialization. Presentation of an empty landscape, therefore, helped to highlight the immense power and spirituality of the natural elements. Notable artists of the early twentieth century as Emily Carr and The Group of Seven were looking for that particular vision in their portrayal that would differentiate Canada not only from the Americans, but also from European trends and standards that were considered outdated. As historian Daniel Francis states, "The Group claimed to be creating not just art but a new national consciousness...In this respect, the Group perfectly matched the spirit of their times" (Francis 1997, 141).

These artists were in fact looking inward while providing Canada and the Canadians with an outward identity. Carr's images ideally reflected the huge dense, dark and sombre forests of British Columbia – such as *Tree Trunk* (1931), *Zunoqua of the Cat Village* (1931) or *Strangled by Growth* (1931) ("Emily Carr Expositions")- on the one hand, but later also gave way to portraying the vast, light, open skies



that virtually opened up to the universe as the *Edge of the Forest* (1935), *Strait of Juan de Fuca* (1936), and *Above the Gravel Pit* (1937) (“Emily Carr Expositions”). Each painting created an individually unique depiction of western Canada. The landscape portrayed by Carr and The Group of Seven, therefore, depicted the regional attributes of the country illustrating that there are different regions to this vast land. Carr’s home terrain was the great British Columbian forests, while The Group moved gradually northward to Algoma country (northern Ontario), north of Algonquin Park, above Georgian Bay and east of Lake Superior. Another region the artists enjoyed exploring and found inspiration was the north shore of Lake Superior. In their exploration of Lake Superior they were able to discover new sources of visual inspiration. The artists of The Group believed that nature was more than simply a visual feast of form and colour, and sought in their work, like other landscape artists of similar belief, like the English Romantics (J. M. W. Turner and John Constable), to transcend mere physical description of the outside world. They regarded nature as a powerful spiritual force. Through their art, the Canadian landscape and the natural elements were rediscovered and elevated to heights that clearly labelled nature and geography as a distinctive marker of identity. Paintings such as Emily Carr’s *Forest, British Columbia* (1931–2), Tom Thomson’s *The Jack Pine* (1916–17) or Arthur Lismer’s *September Gale, Georgian Bay* (1921), accordingly, became an expression of Canadian identity, a steadfast and unique depiction of the geography that defines this land.¹

The movement from a physical space to that of a mental one, as illustrated above on the basis of landscape art, shows that space, as Atwood said, reflects the “state of mind, as the space you inhabit not just with your body but with your head” (Atwood 2004, 18). Atwood’s observation is an obvious distinguishing marker that highlights the differences that characterize Canadians and Canadian mentality. Furthermore, it is not only art that projects the state of mind but, according to Atwood, also literature, which “is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as the product of who and where we have been” (Gray 2016, Loc 2690). The metaphorical “map” that Atwood alludes to defines the Canadian image with the intention of distinguishing it from other nations’ images, especially that of the United States.

These ideas illuminate the fact that Canadian identity is still considered a problematic issue, and has been ever since the time of Confederation when Canada made too much of an effort to try and define itself. How may one go about formulating the Canadian dream? Can we speak of it at all? We always speak and refer to the American dream, which we try to understand and define over and over again, and realize that it has developed different layers of meanings since the original seventeenth century ideological concept

1) To view paintings please see Works cited section for appropriate internet links.



defined as the “Protestant work ethic.” This is no surprise since each and every culture undergoes continual and constant change as it formulates itself.

In the case of Canada an interesting and thought provoking reference is Peter C. Newman’s quip, “This is the only country on earth whose citizens dream of being Clark Kent instead of superman” (2016, Loc 70). This idea suggests favouring the second rate, the insignificant, and even hints at hiding behind the image of a great figure, hence “superman” in this instance. And to continue this line of thought, Newman ironically points to the introvert feature of the Canadian compared to the extrovert American, hence the metaphorical figure of “Superman.”

Another analogy that may be linked to Newman’s reference is the Prufrockian image of T. S. Eliot’s famous modernist poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Prufrock is the insignificant protagonist, who remains in the background:

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool. (Eliot)

And this is because of his insecurity, inferiority complex and low self-esteem. These are generally considered to be Canadian attributes. The image of “the Fool” in Eliot’s poem is, to quote from the poem, “politic, cautious and meticulous,” but also “at times ... ridiculous,” like the figure of the Fool who hides his uncertainty and mediocrity by presenting another face to the outside world (this is the funny and pleasant Fool).

Being funny, pleasant and humorous is also a Canadian characteristic, which may be linked to one of the questions raised in Robert Cohen’s film, *Being Canadian* (2015), namely, “what is it about Canada that creates so many funny people?” (Cohen 2015). Some of the major points brought up were that Canadians are altogether pleasant individuals, that they use humour at the cost of themselves, through humour they can strike back at the Americans, and to top it all curling is considered the national game, which is “cold, polite, and boring” (Cohen 2015). It is then no coincidence that Canada has produced some of the best international comedians,² in the past decades.

2) Just a few of the funniest Canadian comics and actors, who have won international acclaim outside their native country: Dan Aykroyd, John Candy, Jim Carrey, Leslie Nielsen, Mike Myers, Eugene Levy and Russell Peters (“Canadian comedians and comic actors”).



However, “Canada’s love-hate relationship with the United States” does exist (Cohen 2015). There is a strong sense of fear of being second rate, which is perhaps the reason why Canadians constantly compare themselves to others, hence mostly Americans (Cohen 2015). These are national character stereotypes, according to which “Canadians are nice, Americans are brash, the French are arrogant” (McIntyre). To what extent this actually represents the individual is questionable, but the usual answers are “as Canadian as possible under the circumstances,” or “we’re not Americans” (Cohen 2015). This also involves a certain stance with regard to the significant component of the other-side that overpowers and dominates. Hence the well-known analogies to Canada being a child or adolescent teenager, who still has a lot to learn about the ways of the world. To further enlarge the Prufrockian analogy, one needs to also mention a general attribute, namely, that Canadians from a standard, general view are considered boring and unimaginative compared to the ever active and agile Americans. With so many negative labels attached it is no wonder that Canadians have been more or less marginalized on the continent. But authors do tend to imply that there might be a definition of Canada if “we just got over our loser mentality and tried a bit harder” (2016, Loc 74). Canada, therefore, seems to defy definition, as it does not seem to have a “master narrative for Canadian history” (2016, Loc 74). And what Canada lacks must obviously be made up for by giving its identity, and soul greater attention.

This soul, however, as Elspeth Cameron argues, is to be found in the music, literature, painting, history and popular culture of this country (Cameron, back cover). The soul or souls that define Canada as a country are the outstanding individuals who may be defined as heroes or icons, or simply people who made and make things happen, those who search for a vision that changes and mould national identity. The list of great personalities is long; however, the names that are chosen in each case varies from author to author. Charlotte Gray in *The Promise of Canada*, chose for instance individuals who helped shape the country as George-Etienne Cartier (1814–1873), Samuel Benfield Steele (1848–1919), Emily Carr (1871–1945), Harold Innis (1894–1952), Tommy Douglas (1904–1986), Margaret Atwood (1939–), Bertha Wilson (1923–2007), Elijah Harper (1949–2013), and Preston Manning (1942–). The list is obviously subjective, nevertheless, well illustrates that Canada does have its set of heroes and icons whose individual stories highlight the evolution of Canada over the past 150 years.

Is Canada then the inconspicuous silent dreamer on the northern half of the North American continent? The word, inconspicuous, meaning invisible or hardly visible, is perhaps the most appropriate in this instance, because beside the extrovert US there really is no space left for two extrovert nations on the continent. And because there is an American cultural narrative, the American dream, should the Canadians as the



simple image of the “mouse” just copy the “elephant”?! Would it be worthwhile at all? In their outlook Canadians are similar to Western countries, but in the collective consciousness they require their individual heroes and the natural elements. This is what ultimately makes Canada what it is today.

Nonetheless, the idea that the “country might fall apart remains one of the few binding national myths” (Gray 2016, Loc 125). This emerged most strongly during the time of the Quebec referendums on Sovereignty in 1980 and 1995. As a logical conclusion of the above ideas I find that it is basically impossible to define the Canadian being and the Canadian dream, as both entities are in a continuous development and change. But the collective self is defined by the individual artists, writers, sports personalities, who are able to capture the momentum.

An initiative that was highly successful and focused on highlighting Canadian culture and way of life were the advertisements of the Canadian beer company Molson. The company launched two marketing schemes, the “I Am” (1993) and the “Rant” (2000) campaigns, which “highlights and refutes a number of characteristics stereotypically associated with American perceptions of Canadian life,” while simultaneously “represent stereotypically Canadian perceptions of Canadian life” (Wagman 2002, 85). The text of the “Rant” is simple, and very pointedly specifies the identity markers:

Hey. I'm not a lumberjack, or a fur trader... and I don't live in an igloo or eat blubber, or own a dogsled... and I don't know Jimmy, Sally or Suzy from Canada, although I'm certain they're really, really nice.

I have a Prime Minister, not a President. I speak English and French, NOT American. and I pronounce it ABOUT, NOT A BOOT.

I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack. I believe in peace keeping, NOT policing. DIVERSITY, NOT assimilation, AND THAT THE BEAVER IS A TRULY PROUD AND NOBLE ANIMAL. A TOQUE IS A HAT, A CHESTERFIELD IS A COUCH, AND IT IS PRONOUNCED 'ZED' NOT 'ZEE', 'ZED!' CANADA IS THE SECOND LARGEST LANDMASS! THE FIRST NATION OF HOCKEY! AND THE BEST PART OF NORTH AMERICA!

MY NAME IS JOE! AND I AM CANADIAN!

Thank you. (Molson “Canadian”)

The advertisement begins with “Joe Canadian” acting somewhat shy and uncertain as he steps on stage, which seems to be a movie theatre. The Canadian flag can be seen



on the screen behind him. He begins listing the stereotypes, then gradually raises his voice and the tone becomes more forceful (this is marked with the capitalization of the text). When he reaches the “social” elements (“diversity not assimilation”) he becomes more demonstrative and the final elements raise the pitch of his voice to a maximum as he virtually screams the final words. After pronouncing his name and nationality Joe whispers “Thank you” and the Canadian beer cap, a stylized maple leaf appears on the screen (Molson). The popularity of the ad was awe-inspiring and brought Jeff Douglas, the actor playing “Joe Canadian,” astonishing fame. What did Molson achieve? It was a highly effective marketing strategy on the one hand, but also a “strategy of alignment with important signifiers of the Canadian way of life” (Wagman 2002, 87). The ad made Canadian culture visible and audible, the “fossilized past” Davies spoke of became a concrete cultural entity that identifies the Canadian being.

The Canadian dream as such, therefore, does not seem to exist, though many and varied expressions of the Canadian being do. A more recent example on identifying the Canadian is a piece by Shane Koyczan, a poet and spoken-word artist, who performed his poem *We Are More* at the opening ceremony of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. This performance is still available on YouTube, in which the Yellowknife-born poet appeared on the Vancouver stage surrounded by literally thousands of people from all over the world. Then a few moments of silence followed and he began in a voice that was somewhat awed and mesmerizing:

But we are more
than genteel or civilized
we are an idea in the process
of being realized
we are young
we are cultures strung together
then woven into a tapestry
and the design
is what makes us more
than the sum total of our history... (Koyczan *We are More*)

As in the previous example, the language is very simple and direct; Koyczan lists some of the main clichés and stereotypical elements of Canada, including the obligatory hockey, fishing, maple syrup, tree planting, and whale-watching. This stereotyping is so effective that by the time he reaches the final line the audience is roaring in ecstasy. The shared sense of national well-being that he was able to trigger was a rare moment for Canadians. This collective enthusiasm is extremely moving as



you watch the performance on YouTube. But the effect is again similar as it manages to magnify the major Canadian cultural entities. This straightforward poem is able to connect with each individual and trigger the kind of response in the Canadian collective consciousness that creates a strong sense of Canadian wellbeing. And this, in the end effect, goes beyond that of an American Dream.

Conclusion

Canada, the “inconspicuous silent dreamer” has undergone many changes since 1867, in terms of what Canadian identity signifies, and perhaps even more than the Fathers of Confederation ever conceived. This country, then, cannot boast with a cultural narrative, like its southern neighbour, since it does not have a Canadian dream, a collective dream. However, based on the many and varied examples presented in the article tends to suggest that perhaps Canadians do not even require this at all. What is it that Canadians do have? They have their own individual dreams though these may be silent and inconspicuous dreams that reflect upon the individual cultural desires of the many cultures, which are introvert and basically indistinct to the outside world. These are the silent dreams of the individuals, who look inward and “derive their identity from their sense of self rather than the dominant culture” (Gray 2016, Loc 4724). And as Koyczan states, this is a “tapestry” of “cultures strung together,” a colourful tapestry that signifies the different cultures rather than blending them into one cultural entity, which distinguishes Canada from the US or any other country in the world. What makes Canada distinctly Canadian on the other-side of the Americas? The various bits and pieces of uniquely Canadian paraphernalia given expression through its art, literature, music, advertisements, etc. that are loaded with meaning for Canadians, and only Canadians. And this is what Douglas Coupland defines as the “secret handshake” conveying the singular history and self-image of Canadians (Gray 2016, Loc 4754). The inconspicuous silent dreamer on the other-side of the Americas has in fact become a force, therefore, that is able to create a bridge to the collective unconscious in order to raise a strong sense of togetherness, hence identity, in its Canadian peoples.



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