



T R U D E A U M A N I A



Trudeaumania



PAUL LITT



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In reading the history of nations, we find that, like individuals, they have their whims and their peculiarities, their seasons of excitement and recklessness, when they care not what they do. We find that whole communities suddenly fix their minds upon one object, and go mad in its pursuit; that millions of people become simultaneously impressed with one delusion, and run after it, till their attention is caught by some new folly more captivating than the first.

CHARLES MACKAY, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, 1841

What a great show the guy had put on ... living in his Canada felt like participating in one big performance.

GEOFF PEVERE, "Requiem for a Northern Dream: On Canada, Pop Culture and a Gunslinger's Sunset"

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T R U D E A U M A N I A





Trudeau is kissed by an admirer at a campaign stop in St. Catharines, Ontario, June 14, 1968. Scenes such as this were repeated across the country and became emblematic images of Trudeaumania.

PRELUDE

Kiss Power!

He's really hunky! ...
It's like all time stops ...
I touched him on the back ...
I'd die for him ...
I didn't want to live anyway.

**CBC TV coverage of teenage girls
commenting on Pierre Trudeau upon his
arrival at a campaign event, 1968¹**



IN THE SPRING OF 1968, Canada was in the throes of passion. The new prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, fresh from a dramatic Liberal Party leadership convention victory in Ottawa, was on an election tour of the country, attracting adoring crowds wherever he went. He came into town like a pop star on a concert tour, arriving from the airport in a motorcade, waving from a convertible en route to a rally where people jockeyed to get his autograph, take a snapshot, or just touch him. As Trudeau mingled with the crowd, teenyboppers pogoed to catch a glimpse, fathers hoisted toddlers onto their shoulders, and camera shutters clicked all around. When he took the stage, hands stretched out from below to make contact. Then the crowd settled down to listen to his message of national unity and destiny.²

Another conquest behind him, the hero would jet to his next campaign stop while television crews rushed their footage off for broadcast. Those in attendance could go home and watch themselves on tv. The news would feature shots of Trudeau glad-handing through surging, effervescent crowds and kissing young women, then an obligatory line or two from his speech before the reporter signed off with details of his next appearance.

In the concert tours of pop singers, the tunes were sung by the star; in this case they were sung about him. Montreal folk singer

Allan J. Ryan wrote a song about the phenomenon, “PM Pierre,” that nicely captured the mod vibe Trudeau was generating:

There’s a new infatuation that’s been sweeping the nation
Shakin’ the roots in the ground
Of an old generation, a new inspiration
Takin’ a new look around
But he’s quickly disarming and utterly charming
Quite enough to make you let down your hair
In a Society Just, a society must
Check out PM Pierre
Pierre, with the ladies, racin’ a Mercedes
Pierre, in the money, find him with a bunny
Pierre, a little brighter than the northern lights
He oughta add a lotta colour to the Ottawa nights.
Charismatic and dynamic with a trans-Atlantic flare
Regardez PM Pierre.³

Ryan wasn’t alone in his musical tribute. A long-haired, bell-bottomed Quebec pop group called The Sinners recorded “Go Go Trudeau” (English on one side of the 45 rpm single; French on the other), and sold ten thousand copies in the first week following its release. “You’ve got the nation right behind,” called one. “Go ahead and blow their mind,” responded another.⁴

The fun had begun when a race for the leadership of the Liberal Party had gotten under way the previous December. Beguiled by Trudeau’s style, journalists had already pegged the minister of justice as an up-and-comer. When the Liberal leadership came open, they thought “what if?” and floated the idea of Trudeau as a candidate. As Trudeau himself later explained it, they dared the Canadian public to take a chance on a new kind of politician.

The response was more than they could ever have expected. A meeting of Quebec Liberals in Montreal in January was a “love-in” as Trudeau

sauntered down the escalators to the ballroom, followed by a crowd of pubescent youth, “Oohing” and “Aahin” every word. “I think this guy’s the greatest,” said one shocking-stockinged micro-bopper to her similarly decorated companion, as they happily trailed the jaunty figure along the corridor. They gambolled around him like puppies, laughing too hard at his jokes, asking cheeky questions and loving the firm put-downs they got.⁵

Trudeau was acquiring film-star glamour. By midwinter he was trailed by a gaggle of reporters and recording equipment that created a buzz of excitement and attracted crowds whenever he appeared in public.

1968 was a year of political and social tumult around the world, but in the imagined Peaceable Kingdom, love was all around. The day after Trudeau declared his candidacy for the Liberal leadership in mid-February, the front page of the *Toronto Telegram* pictured him with two bunnies from the Montreal Playboy Club in the “psychedelically-decorated” ballroom of the Château Laurier. The “swinger,” it reported, was always surrounded by women.⁶

Pictures of Trudeau being kissed by female fans became a staple feature of the news. “If it puckers, he’s there,” wrote George Bain of the *Globe and Mail*.⁷ Trudeau liked being seen as a ladies’ man. When asked whether he would have a hostess at 24 Sussex if he became prime minister, he responded saucily, “Could I change hostesses from time to time?”⁸ Since the public had a right to know, a reporter in Edmonton asked, “As an eligible bachelor, which do you prefer, blondes or brunettes?” “Any exciting party should have both,” Trudeau replied.⁹ “Perhaps 24 Sussex will become known as Pierre’s Pad,” speculated another journalist.¹⁰ When Trudeau called a federal election for June 25, the love-in went national, with regular television coverage of rapturous receptions for him across the country.

Love, Love, Love. “LUV THAT MAN TRUDEAU” declared a placard on his convertible in one motorcade.¹¹ Was it a confession or a command? Either way, the “luv” was physical, a contact sport driven by a compulsion to get some sort of proof he was real. Crowds



This May 4, 1968, *Toronto Telegram* cartoon by John Yardley-Jones depicts a mod Trudeau transforming 24 Sussex Drive into a swinging bachelor pad.

pursued Trudeau for an autograph or a kiss. One enterprising souvenir hunter managed to get his wristwatch. Others settled for swiping hairs from his head.¹² At a campaign stop in North York, Ontario, a zealous fan made a grab for Trudeau's lapel flower and nearly ripped the collar off his suit. "Perhaps I could have break-away lapels," he mused.¹³ A young woman whose attempt to corner him for a private chat was thwarted told a television reporter,

He's probably way above my head. His brain level is probably so far above me. This is it, he just passes right over me like a wave, you see. What I want to do is talk to him, and I don't see that I can have the chance, he's so busy. Oh. And yet I'd do anything for the chance.¹⁴

On one occasion, girls who couldn't get close to him settled for kissing the hubcaps of his car.¹⁵

"Like a cavalier among Puritans," Trudeau played along.¹⁶ When a television interviewer challenged him about all the frivolity, he downplayed it. "When some young kid pecks you on the cheek I think it's kind of sweet," he said. He regarded a kiss merely as a form of greeting, one somewhat warmer than a handshake. If people wanted to express their enthusiasm in that way, he was not going to rebuff them.¹⁷ Since he was an eligible bachelor and the kisses came from young women, others interpreted it differently. "Everybody was having orgasms every time he opened his mouth," exclaimed an unnerved Tory strategist.¹⁸

Sex injected excitement into the formerly staid proceedings of federal politics. "When young girls with long hair and short skirts elbow one another to get close enough to the Canadian Prime Minister to touch him and, preferably, to kiss him, that is a phenomenon," wrote a seasoned observer. "There is no tradition in Canadian politics even of baby kissing, and the suggestion that nubile maidens could take to hurling themselves at the neck of the Prime Minister – any Prime Minister that ever was or was likely to be – would have been considered laughable a short time ago."¹⁹

The Conservatives countered on behalf of their leader, Robert Stanfield, with the slogan “Kiss me Pierre, but run my country Bob!” yet could not dispel the association between sexual and political potency.²⁰

While cases of a charismatic figure generating a devoted following can be found throughout history, in modern times rapid improvements in communications technologies allowed such phenomena to develop faster and spread further. In nineteenth-century North America, populist politicians inspired political rallies as passionate as evangelical revivals. William Jennings Bryan, a three-time Democratic candidate for the US presidency renowned as a spellbinding speaker, pioneered the national political tour in the 1890s. Those who’d never seen him in person knew of him ahead of time through newspapers, magazines, and partisan pamphlets. In the days before his arrival, circulars trumpeted his imminent appearance. Everyone from loyal followers to the merely curious would turn out and thrill to his rousing oratory and the excitement of the crowd.

Another American political legend, Louisiana governor Huey Long, used similar techniques to amplify his personality cult. Rising to prominence in the 1920s, he was an early adopter of radio to cultivate a following and sent sound trucks ahead to announce his arrival in a community. In Canada, both William Aberhart in 1930s Alberta and Joey Smallwood in 1940s Newfoundland used radio for political ends with great success. Then, just a decade prior to Trudeaumania, Progressive Conservative leader John Diefenbaker employed the new mass medium of television to advantage. In 1957 he projected the image of a caring, populist leader who offered a positive alternative to an arrogant, out-of-touch Liberal government. Canadian nationalism was burgeoning in the postwar period, and when Diefenbaker went to the polls again in 1958 he tapped into it, inspiring voters with his vision of equal citizenship for all and an independent destiny for Canada as a northern power. Greeted by wildly enthusiastic crowds on his leader’s tour, he

ended up winning the largest parliamentary majority in Canadian history.

A parallel history exists of performing artists generating a more sexualized version of celebrity worship. When the virtuoso pianist Franz Liszt toured Europe in the 1840s, women threw their garters at him and swooned. In the 1920s, film actor Rudolph Valentino inspired a similar adoration from female fans, and in the 1940s Frank Sinatra became a teen idol, moving hordes of adolescent girls to displays of infatuation. Public demonstrations of sexually charged adulation became a fixture of popular culture in the postwar West. The Elvis craze of the late 1950s again featured a male pop star rocketing to fame and being greeted by lustily enthusiastic female fans at his public appearances.²¹

In all these cases crowds were excited by the appearance, live in the flesh, of a celebrity whom they otherwise knew only through the media. An exalted being who had formerly been imagined now materialized, however briefly, in their everyday world. Fans were thrilled to be connected to something bigger than themselves, a more glamorous realm inhabited and personified by their idol.

In the 1960s, Beatlemania was the most spectacular example of this phenomenon. In 1964 the Beatles crossed the Atlantic to play *The Ed Sullivan Show* and a twenty-three-city North American tour. Fans were primed by saturation marketing that distributed millions of posters and stickers proclaiming “The Beatles Are Coming.” Disc jockeys were provided with reams of promotional materials, including prerecorded Beatle answers to their yet-to-be-asked questions. Fans began counting the days until the Fab Four arrived. Reports of near riots in England gave them a primer on how to behave – or misbehave – in the presence of their idols. Hysteria was part of the fun. Each concert was a mob scene, with girls’ screams drowning out the music.

By the late 1960s, this strain of popular culture was infecting politics. Bobby Kennedy’s campaign for the Democratic nomination for the United States presidency in 1968 generated wild crowd

scenes much like those that attended Trudeau's appearances. Midway through that winter, the media began using the term "Trudeaumania," adapted from "Beatlemania," to describe the enthusiasm Trudeau was generating.²² The term had all kinds of suggestive connotations. Was there really a mania, in the sense of an irrational enthusiasm that infected the populace? If so, was it a flash in the pan, an example of the superficial combustibility of popular culture now colonizing politics? Was this just a case of a successful political campaign being enhanced by an evocative label? Or was something more profound afoot? What exactly was going on in Canadian politics in the winter and spring of 1968, and did it matter?



Trudeau supporter at an election rally in Toronto, June 19, 1968.
The outfit was meant to attract attention, and it worked – this woman
became a favoured object of the media gaze that day.

INTRODUCTION

***Sex and
the Body
Politic***

"The whole country needs a cold shower."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR, *Maclean's*, July 1968



THE SEXUAL SIZZLE BETWEEN Pierre Trudeau and his adoring female fans in 1968 signalled a deeper impulse to revitalize the nation. For those caught up in the mania, 1968 was a historic turning point in which Canada left its dowdy colonial past behind and assumed a new autonomous identity as a model modern liberal democracy. They may have been deluding themselves, but since nations are fictions with real-world effects, Trudeaumania had lasting influence.

In Canada, as in many other Western countries, the sixties were marked by wide-ranging assaults on the consensus culture of the 1950s. Cold War technocracy, militarism, and paranoia gave rise to ban-the-bomb protests that morphed into the anti-Vietnam War movement. A new human rights consciousness, inspired by the Holocaust and invigorated by decolonization around the world and the civil rights movement in the United States, assailed the bigotry of Western societies, inspiring liberation movements for marginalized groups. Meanwhile, modern rationalist certainties were challenged by a new humanism. The latter half of the decade saw the emergence of lifestyle liberations that celebrated free love, drugs, and the animal spirits of rock 'n' roll, all widely publicized by a sympathetic media.

In Canada the feisty sixties spirit was further complicated and energized by a rising, expectant nationalism. Over the course of the

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decade, Canadians retheorized their national identity, updated official symbols, and participated in a series of grand nation-building exercises. Canada, nationalists proclaimed, was coming of age, its escape from colonial status in tune with the liberation ethos of the sixties. They sought to distance the country from both its British heritage and the influence of its superpower neighbour, while beating back the grave threat to national unity presented by the rise of separatism in Quebec.

Developments in the United States profoundly shaped this nationalist project. The glamorous Kennedy presidency had impressed Canadians deeply in the early 1960s, and they longed to see Canada updated in similar style. By the midpoint of the decade, however, the image of the US was tarnished by Cold War jingoism, nuclear brinksmanship, Vietnam, political violence, a radicalizing politics of race, and ghetto riots. America was showing its ugly side. Canada was not without its own problems, but for many nationalists the trials besetting their southern neighbour engendered a smug sense of superiority.

The radical challenges of the sixties caused a rift in the American political mainstream, splitting public opinion between a reactionary impulse to re-establish social order and a moderate openness to accommodating demands for change through incremental reform. As the forces of reaction and reform came to a fractious stalemate south of the border, nationalism skewed Canadian political culture towards a reformist response to the challenges of the decade.¹ The federal government was then putting in place social programs that would be the last major components of the Canadian welfare state. The political centre in Canada was further left than it had ever been (or would ever again be), raising expectations that Canada would over time become still more social democratic. In response to the spirit of the times and the nationalist imperative for a distinctive identity, Canada steered left of the United States. Sixties critiques of the US “establishment” pointed towards how Canada might be constructed as a comparatively humane society. Peaking nationalism at the height of the sixties

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forged the myth of a Peaceable Kingdom in the northern half of North America.

Celebrations of Canada's centennial in 1967 and the international acclaim garnered by Expo 67 generated collective energy, enthusiasm, and pride, but as the year wound down and the excitement faded, nationalists feared that the nation's potential had been glimpsed but not fulfilled. The opportunity for more substantial, permanent change came late that year with leadership turnover in the major federal political parties.

Pierre Trudeau came into focus as a potential leader that fall. One of the initial attractions of a Trudeau candidacy was that he had a refreshing no-nonsense approach to national unity that unapologetically defended federalism on the basis of high-minded principle. In addition, nationalists saw in Trudeau a cosmopolitan intellectual who could garner for Canada the type of international attention and status it had achieved with Expo 67. Better still, he was single, youthful, athletic, and fashionable, with a liberated lifestyle seemingly right in step with the times. His style exemplified nationalists' ambitions for Canada. Trudeau's image would be embroidered and enhanced through fashion, posters, pop songs, and other forms of contemporary popular culture that interacted in the mass media, amplifying the message and stimulating a mania. It was all rendered in a contemporary "mod" style that branded Trudeau as the man who would make Canada's Great Leap Forward a safe step to a stable new order – the status quo updated in the latest style. Trudeaumania would be characterized by a mod nationalism, with "mod" short for both modern and moderate.

The fusion of contemporary popular culture and Canadian nationalism that gave Trudeaumania its oomph was a transitory formation whose moment would soon pass. There was never a genus of "mod nationalist" Canadians who would have defined themselves as such. There was, however, an active network of communications about Canadian issues through which the compelling contemporary logic of mod nationalism exerted influence long enough to affect the course of Canadian political history.

The kiss was the perfect mod sign. Its power derived from the sexual revolution that both led and symbolized the myriad cultural liberations of the decade. As that revolution unfolded, it transformed sex from a topic that was largely off-limits in polite public discourse into a central obsession of a popular culture that exploited its power to titillate and sensationalize. Trudeaumania derived much of its sizzle from the sex-obsessiveness and sexism of the times.

Sexual liberation was all the rage by 1968. Progressive men found the conflation of their sexual pleasure with righteous politics profoundly seductive. Yet the sexual revolution was a double-edged sword for women, increasing their freedom to express and enjoy their sexuality but leaving them bearing the brunt of responsibility for its reproductive consequences. Double standards about promiscuity persisted as well.² In 1968, second-wave feminists were holding consciousness-raising sessions about these issues, but the mainstream press was not paying much attention to them or giving their critiques serious consideration.³ The women's liberation movement had yet to get its message out widely enough and with sufficient force to start changing the prevailing sexism.

Meanwhile, when a camera focused in on Trudeau seemingly besieged by crazed females, it was a male gaze that guided the shot. The editorial cartoonists who lampooned Trudeau's female admirers were all men. The producers and managers who directed the collection of news and also edited and interpreted it for consumption were also predominantly male. The masculine media's focus on female fans and its presentation of them as witless ciphers overwhelmed by the celebrity's charms were typical of the gender discrimination of the times. Male journalists felt free to portray women as airheads driven by their passions and trade on this stereotype as a reliable source of amusement. By infantilizing women they rationalized and perpetuated women's exclusion from power in the male-dominated public sphere.

In doing so, ironically, they displayed the same emotionalism and herd mentality that they ascribed to Trudeau's female fans. A



“As convenor of this meeting of the ‘West Toronto Housewives for Trudeau,’ I say let’s cut out all this nonsense and get down to business ... girls ... GIRLS!”

Pierre Trudeau’s status as a sex symbol was well enough known to provide the basis for this editorial cartoon.

strange passion swept the media ranks, precipitating an idolization of Trudeau akin to that of an ancient religious sect worshipping a fertility god. The factors driving this phenomenon can only be guessed at – excitement about taboos being breached by the sexual revolution; a vicarious enjoyment of the power they claimed Trudeau exercised over women – but whatever the motives, the male-dominated media exemplified the very irrationalism that they ascribed to women’s role in the affair.

Male journalists’ amusement with women’s public displays of emotion was boundless when women ventured from their proper sphere to kiss a politician. As they ridiculed this feminine incursion, they failed to appreciate that its girlishness was seditious. Women were exploiting one of the few entrées into the masculine political game available to them. Once in, they made fun of the pompous stolidity of male politics. Humour was an equal-opportunity weapon in the battle of the sexes.⁴ Accompanying all the fun was an assertion of power. Conventional gender roles assigned to middle-class women a special responsibility for cultural affairs. As domestic managers and “purchasing agents” in a consumer society, they were assumed to be particularly conversant in the current trends of popular culture that determined fashionable choices.⁵ When a woman kissed a pop star she was deploying her gendered agency to endow him with cultural currency.

On one level, women’s gender performance in Trudeaumania was new, part of the larger invasion of politics by popular culture. Yet it had venerable antecedents. The “rational male, emotive female” stereotype traditionally assigned to women the emotional labour of keeping the community together. Their contemporary political role could also be traced back to the nineteenth-century belief that women’s reproductive capability gave them responsibility for the biological continuity of the race and a special function in nation building.⁶ Though racial nationalism lost currency after the Second World War, the work of nation building continued to be gendered.

Underneath all the blithe sexism of Trudeaumania ran an undercurrent of meaning in which women's role in the mania was equated with renewal. In earlier eras, modernization was male, the product of masculine-coded fields such as technology, business competition, and affairs of state. But in the sixties that form of modernity was on trial. The forces of liberation were attacking the establishment, and challenging conventional masculinity was one of their tactics. Defenders of the establishment reflected the same gender assumptions by demonizing deviations from the norm as effeminate. It followed that those of a reformist bent, female or male, would generally welcome, even celebrate, the symbolic import of women's influence in the public sphere and the challenge to gender roles that attended it. All the frothy fun of fandom superficially associated with women's role in Trudeaumania disguised its substance. Through public displays of approval women anointed Trudeau as the leader who would update the nation.

Canadian nationalism was central to Trudeaumania, making an appreciation of the nature of nations and nationalism critical to an understanding of the phenomenon. A nation is not quite the same thing as a state or a country. Rather, the idea of nation invests such entities with romantic notions of collective identity, cultural solidarity, and shared destiny. Nationalism is an ideology that celebrates the nation and assigns it primacy in political affairs. Recent decades have seen a vigorous and illuminating scholarly debate about the origins and nature of nations and nationalism. It includes three schools of thought: primordialists, constructionists, and perennialists.⁷

Primordialists believe nations are the natural way in which humanity is organized into its largest sovereign political units. For primordialists, nations have always existed. They are sociological facts from which political consequences logically follow. In a sense, primordialists do not think about the nation at all. For them, the nation and its corollary, the international community of nations, are givens – integral, taken-for-granted parts of the way the world functions. Primordialists tend to further naturalize nations by

endowing each with a unique personality, life trajectory, and rights analogous to those of individual human beings.

Constructionists offer varying genealogies of the nation, but in general share the belief that it is a cultural construct arising out of modernization, the profound changes that began with the decline of feudalism and the rise of liberal capitalist democracies in the West. “Modernity” is a general term that encompasses the shared characteristics of Western societies in the wake of this great transformation. Modernization was driven by the mutually reinforcing interaction of capitalism with a scientism born of the Enlightenment that produced a deep-seated faith in progress through rational mastery of the world. It led to profound social changes such as industrialization, urbanization, state formation, and bureaucratization, as well as a democratization advocated by a rising capitalist class to wrest power from feudal elites. With the decline of absolute monarchies, the legitimate basis of sovereignty was no longer the crown but the people, which created the need for a counterweight to the anarchic potential of individualized loci of power. Nationalism was just such a communal principle. Since the bourgeoisie advocated liberal democracy with one-man-one-vote for its class but fretted about its extension to the masses, Marxist constructionists see nationalism as a form of social control, an ideological feint deployed to win mass acquiescence to elite leadership.

Perennialists acknowledge that the modern nation is a powerful new force, but do not think it unprecedented in history. While also a varied group, they generally trace the ways in which different ethnic groups have understood their collective identities over time, noting continuities and fluctuations. An important strain of nationalism theory that is common to both constructionism and perennialism holds that while biological notions of kinship or race underpin definitions of ethnicity, such beliefs are sustained not by blood but by culture, and that a complex of myths, symbols, and other such communicative devices evokes memories of an ancient core ethnic group as the basis for collective identity.⁸

The social control interpretation of constructionists has been challenged by scholars who see nationalism as having bottom-up as well as top-down dynamics. With modernization, the constituent elements and internal relationships of relatively small, geographically compact, and personally mediated premodern communities were reconstituted on a mass scale. These changes came quickly – indeed, constant, bewildering change became a distinguishing feature of modernity. In the process, the face-to-face interpersonal relations that distinguished premodern communities were transcended, leaving the individual vulnerable to the modern malaise of alienation, the product of anonymity amid the masses, of social, geographical, and employment mobility, and of the perceived artificiality of a mass-mediated apprehension of the world.⁹ The nation can be seen as a symptom of its members' desire for meaningful community amid all these dislocations. In other words, the nation helped humanize modern mass society.

The constructionist and the perennialist approaches to the nation share an emphasis on its discursive character. The nation is a cultural construct, dependent on the circulation of ideas sufficient to instill shared understandings. When Benedict Anderson famously defined the nation as an “imagined community,” the term quickly became a catchphrase because it so aptly captured the notion of the nation as a consensual belief sustained by ongoing communication within a collective. This communication can range from grand spectacles, staged rituals, or invented traditions down to quotidian signs and symbols.¹⁰ The intangible character of a nation does not make it any less real; on the contrary, a nation is a product of that most human of powers, the ability to manipulate symbols to create a shared understanding of the world.

The shared beliefs that underpin the nation include particular formulations of space and time. According to nationalist ideology, a people have a claim to a land based on their historical occupation of it. Over time a way of life has arisen out of the people's engagement with the unique geography and climate of their homeland,

and this is the wellspring of their distinctive national identity.¹¹ The nineteenth-century French political philosopher Ernest Renan famously declared that a nation is a group of people who have done great things together in the past and have a will to continue doing so.¹² Invoking the nation's past experience lends it immanence in the present and a temporal momentum that projects it into the future.

The importance of temporal momentum to the sense of nation, and to its discursive construction, led Homi Bhabha to describe nations as narrations.¹³ Narrating the nation's past is indeed necessary to sustain its existence, but it is not sufficient. To be useful, the narrative must change along with shifting present-day conditions. The flux of past, present, and future requires continual negotiation of the national destiny. This negotiation takes place through communication within the public sphere aimed at building a consensus, a process in which different voices interact to form public opinion.¹⁴ A nation is thus an ongoing conversation that renegotiates communal identity and goals in accord with constantly changing circumstances.¹⁵

The coherence of modernity's emergent large-scale communities was attributable to mass communications as well as to their elites' modern epistemology. A dawning recognition of these dependencies and their insufficiencies eventually generated critical perspectives on modernity that would be grouped under the term "postmodernism." For some the term implies a shift to a new cultural era that supersedes modernity. Others regard postmodernism as a set of critiques of the internal contradictions of the modern condition, some of which were starting to come into focus by the mid-twentieth century. Modernity endures, but since the 1960s postmodernism has accompanied it like an annoying younger sibling, asking embarrassing questions.¹⁶

Postmodernism has convoluted origins and has been defined in multiple, sometimes contradictory ways. There are, however, three postmodern perspectives that are useful in understanding

Trudeaumania. The first is encapsulated in Jean-François Lyotard's description of postmodernism as "incredulity towards meta-narratives."¹⁷ The point of questioning metanarratives was not to expose them as patently false, but rather to suggest that they had become modes of thinking that shaped consciousness to an extent unwarranted by their basis in reality. One of the most fundamental modern metanarratives was the belief in progress. It was underwritten by bountiful evidence of the power of technique, informed by science and driven by capitalism, to generate wealth. As the nation-state became the primary guarantor of the emergent liberal democracies of the West, a powerful metanarrative of national progress developed, consisting of the nation-state according its citizens ever-greater liberty and democracy. In Canadian nationalist thought of the 1960s, this narrative was embedded in the story of Canada's progress from colony to nation.

Another postmodern insight is exemplified by Jean Baudrillard's concept of the simulacrum. In contrast to the conceit of modern epistemology that it built with technocratic expertise to precise specifications on a solid grounding in reality, Baudrillard pointed out that modernity was, in its most distinctive characteristics, anything but. As mass print was supplemented by electronic media, the mobilizations of modernity were enabled by abstractions circulated in the ether. It was a cliché that the West had by the late twentieth century entered an information age. Ephemeral images shimmered on screens, projecting symbols to be decoded by audiences initiated into the arbitrary rules of interpretation that governed their meaning. Knowledge of modern mass society depended as much on pixellated representations as direct experience of reality.

Think of Times Square, in which pulsing neon promotes brands with characters concocted on Madison Avenue, and you already have multiple layers of simulation. The circulation of meaning in modern mass-mediated society involves reproducing such representations multiple times in different contexts to the point that any connection with an underlying reality is beyond recovery. To drive home his point, Baudrillard wrote of the simulacrum, the

“perfect reproduction of a non-existent original,” an example of simulation taken to its logical extreme. Beneath the seductive surface there lies no substance, yet consensual acceptance of the illusion allows everyone to work with it, producing an operative virtual reality that substitutes for a reality based on direct experience of the tangible world.¹⁸

A third useful postmodern critique questioned the Enlightenment view of the individual as a rational creature with a fixed character. In the nineteenth century, respectable character was idealized, and men of solid moral values were accorded great public esteem. Yet in modern mass society, success was increasingly dependent upon negotiating with strangers and adapting to constant change in urban geography, social hierarchy, bureaucratic organization, and other discrete contexts. In this new world, the successful individual was the shape-shifter who could adapt easily to different milieus. The modern belief in a whole, stable self, knowable both to oneself and to others, was at odds with modern conditions that encouraged a contingent, situational self, always adapting to circumstances, always performing in accord with anticipated expectations. Success meant standing out in a crowd, so character gave way to personality, a simulacrum of the individual that was mutable according to circumstances. Whereas character had been described by terms such as “self-sacrifice,” “honour,” “duty,” and “integrity,” personality was linked with adjectives like “fascinating,” “charismatic,” “dynamic,” and “masterful.”¹⁹ Accordingly, the burgeoning celebrity culture of the twentieth century privileged seductive personality over reliable character.

Trudeaumania occurred at a particular stage in the emergence of these postmodern perspectives. Whereas from today’s point of view the nation appears to be a metanarrative worthy of skepticism, Canadian critical discourse at the time included no such insight. In terms of nationalism theory, all the players in 1968 were good primordialists. Although some had in mind a different project, the Québécois nation, the same nationalist ideology prevailed. When it came to notions of simulation and the self, however, there

were glimmers of a postmodern consciousness in the making. People wanted to have leaders of character, but the politics of image was too obvious to ignore. People believed in the nation, yet knew it primarily through its representation in the mass media. Indeed, the media were a critical constituent part of modern mass society.²⁰ In a country such as Canada, with a relatively small population dispersed across a large territory and a history coincident with the rise of the mass media, their role was all the greater.

Tracing the development over time of the relationship among politics, nationalism, and the mass media in Canada suggests how tightly they are intertwined. At its outset, Canada was heir to a parliamentary system of government whose antecedents stretched back through centuries of English history. Transplanted to North America and eventually adapted into a federal system at the time of Confederation in 1867, the system was supposed to work by having different districts elect members to Parliament to represent their local interests at the centre of power. The Member of Parliament was nominally the primary medium of political communication between the people and the centre, and Parliament was the forum in which political issues were debated and leaders emerged. The system originally assumed a restricted franchise, limiting the vote to upper-class men with a stake in the system and denying it to the unwashed masses, who were presumed to be too witless or self-interested to play an enlightened, constructive role. Thus a responsible minority of the population would elect to the House of Commons an exemplary representative who would contribute to its decision making – including the selection of a prime minister – based on his informed judgment of the best way to reconcile his constituency's interests with those of the larger political community.

Party politics and partisan newspapers were an entrenched feature of Canadian politics by the time the federation was established, so from the start Canadian representative government did not function according to the theoretical ideal. And the context in which it operated was transformed radically in the ensuing

century. The same democratic logic that the bourgeoisie had used to wrest power from feudal elites worked inexorably to extend the vote to formerly excluded groups, making politics more populist.

The price of mass democracy is an electorate in which the majority of voters are only sporadically engaged. It is unrealistic to ask them to pass rational judgment on complex matters of public policy – doing so only makes them feel guilty about their inability to exercise their vote responsibly. Besides, even the idealized citizen of earlier eras – the educated, propertied, presumably politically engaged burgher to whom the franchise was limited – had been expected only to send to Parliament a man of character to make such judgments. The expanding modern electorate gradually grew less concerned with the character of the local representative and more attentive to the personality of the national party leader. The prime minister's power rested decreasingly on his effectiveness in Parliament and increasingly on the support he could win in a general election.

The politics of image was boosted further by developments in culture and communications. With the rise of public schooling, literacy, and mass print, newspapers became less partisan, more popular, and far more widely circulated. Film, which first appeared at the end of the nineteenth century, simulated reality in moving pictures that were eventually accompanied by a soundtrack. The subsequent development of radio permitted simultaneous shared experience for the national citizenry from coast to coast. The arrival of television made the audiovisual attribute of film available in a broadcast medium, delivering it to a wide audience with an enhanced immediacy that suggested simultaneity. In modern Canada, the mass media gradually eclipsed Parliament as the main forum within which issues were debated and leaders selected. As the leader's personality became critical to the party's electoral success, leadership conventions were transformed into popularity contests staged as media-friendly spectacles.²¹

These developments also had significant consequences for Canadian nationalism. In positing shared cultural characteristics as

constituent of a “people” whose popular will legitimized the sovereignty of the state, nationalism invariably encountered contradictory demographic realities and accompanying resistance. This was true even in the Western European context in which nationalism flourished from the late eighteenth century on, but in Canada the disparity between conditions on the ground and the ideology’s quest for a shared homegrown essence was greater still. Canada came to the game relatively late and was trying to transplant an ideology of European origin to North America. The persistence of its Indigenous peoples, French Canadian *survivance*, the distinctive colonial histories of its constituent provinces, the contrasting ways of life of its disparate regions, and the influence of its not-so-different southern neighbour were all incommensurate with the nationalist drive for bounded homogeneity. For generations Canadian nationalists tried to apply nationalist ideology to a recalcitrant Canadian reality. But the modern nation-building project was at odds with the modern epistemology of building empirically from the facts on the ground.

By the late 1960s, simulation facilitated the former by transcending the latter. In a print and electronically mass-mediated community, the nation was much easier to imagine in real time than it had been at the time of Confederation. The modern Canadian nation was a national simulation – a “simunation” – the only kind of nation possible under the circumstances.²² Trudeaumania was a symptom of this condition, an exercise of the national simulation required to foster community under conditions of modernity.

In imagining community to compensate for the alienation of modernity, nationalism and celebrity fandom have a lot in common.²³ The celebrity community transcends mundane existence, hovering above the everyday world like Jonathan Swift’s Laputa. In the sixties, media outlets were relatively few in number and sought broad audiences, big-tent, national parties were still the ideal, and the leader’s personality provided a human interest angle through which to present politics. For the average Canadian, federal

politics were conducted by a group of politicians who, if not quite celebrities, were at least well-known across the nation. Party leaders were luminaries of the Canadian public sphere.

Yet those who identified with celebrities, political or otherwise, were troubled that the mediated community with which they identified was somehow artificial. Even as it unfolded, Trudeaumania was distinguished by a self-consciousness about the very process that enabled it. Contemporary commentators fretted terribly, regularly, and publicly about whether the media were subverting the democratic process. Modern mass media allowed direct communication between leaders and voters, bypassing the traditional constituent-MP relationship and patron-client networks. People watched politicians on television and came away with the impression of knowing them personally. Were they right? Could television's flickering images be trusted? Did the politics of image pervert the democratic process by eclipsing substantial issues? The national conversation was attended by an anxiety about its mediation that brought its legitimacy into question.

Pierre Trudeau was particularly well-suited to the needs of the sixties simunation. It was said that he had an inner reserve and was hard to get to know, and, indeed, his personality fascinated Canadians then as it has ever since. Competitive and disciplined, he tested his mettle in various prized realms of modern life – politics, travel, sport, the arts and letters, romance – exhibiting his prowess in each. Even though he was in his late forties, his hip lifestyle projected youthfulness in a popular culture that celebrated youth. Raised in the big band era, he had no problem “frugging” to sixties rock 'n' roll. His adaptable personality showed in the way he could be both a cosmopolitan and a backwoodsman, an intellectual and an athlete, proving himself in terms of different sets of expectations in diverse settings. He performed for television superbly, speaking articulately with a screen actor's mastery of expression and gesture, and providing plenty of the action shots demanded by the medium. His unique genius as a political campaigner, however, lay in his propensity to take a detached perspective on the media



Trudeau performs an athletic stunt for the cameras at a stop in Saskatoon during the spring 1968 federal election campaign. It would be hard to imagine Robert Stanfield or Tommy Douglas (let alone John Diefenbaker or Lester Pearson) doing anything similar. Visual representations of Trudeau, whether in television footage or still photography, played an important role in the construction of his image.

that acknowledged the emergent postmodern anxiety about them. In expressing his awareness of voters' concerns about mass mediation, he signalled his own authenticity and won their confidence.

The similarities between showbiz celebrities' cross-country tours and political campaigning helped as well. Canadians' expectations of Trudeau were primed by months of media coverage of his emergence from relative obscurity to vie for the country's highest political office. The dictates of an election campaign made it likely that he would at some point appear in a nearby locale live in the flesh. Trudeau would step out of the screen and into their world. Knowing that they were in the media spotlight, the crowd acted accordingly. Then Trudeau quickly disappeared, resuming his place among the simulation's screen celebrities. This mediated/unmediated two-step, which might be called a reel-to-real synthesis, soothed anxieties about the artificiality of the simulation, making its representations all the more potent.²⁴ The excitement of Trudeau rallies generated intense emotions that imbued crowd members with a lively sense of group solidarity that could easily be conflated with belonging to the nation.²⁵ The reel-to-real synthesis made the national community whole, authentic, and meaningful.

While the above discussion provides some concepts and context with which to make sense of Trudeaumania, this study is historical in sensibility and methodology. It interprets Trudeaumania in terms of the unique time and place in which it arose, explains this context as the product of the interaction of a variety of causal factors over time, provides documentation from extant sources from the period, and contextualizes its discussion within relevant historical scholarship.

There is already an extensive secondary literature on Trudeau that includes coverage of his rise to power. While it provides much useful information and analysis, its emphases are different from those of this study. Much of the existing literature focuses on Trudeau the person: his life and times, his character, and his thought. Another stream emphasizes the behind-the-scenes machinations that brought Trudeau to power. This study is not as concerned with

who Trudeau was as with his public image in 1968 and its relationship to the context of the times. And while Trudeau's "backroom boys" astutely played the politics of image, this study eschews revelations of conspiratorial manipulations and concentrates instead on how Trudeaumania exploited and gratified a Canadian nationalism shaped by the tumultuous sixties.

Cultural history that grapples with nebulous objects of inquiry such as nationalism and the "spirit of the times" is rife with methodological challenges. It is difficult to know what people were thinking, either individually or collectively, in times past. It is impossible to prove that ideas have agency, let alone the extent of their influence. To generalize about such matters requires connecting the dots between scattered fragments of proof. These challenges, however, do not constitute an excuse for abandoning the field. An interpretation based on limited direct evidence, contextual knowledge, and informed speculation is better than nothing at all.

This account relies heavily on primary sources from the 1960s, many of which were produced by the media, including newspaper articles, cartoons, photographs, advertisements, and television and radio shows. Media sources provide information not just on events themselves but also on the style in which they were presented and how they were interpreted at the time. Trudeaumania was considered so remarkable as it unfolded that it generated significant critical commentary in the form of opinion columns and feature articles in newspapers and magazines, public affairs show punditry, instant books by journalists, and even scholarly studies. The last two types of sources in particular provided background information and context, tried to weave events into a coherent narrative, and interpreted the meaning of the phenomenon, giving them more depth than the media's quotidian reporting and commentary.

While substantial media sources about Trudeaumania are accessible today, documentation of other expressions of contemporary public opinion is harder to come by. Traces can be found in the views expressed in letters to the editor, man-in-the-street interviews, and media reports on audience responses to Trudeau's

appearances. At times snapshots of general patterns are revealed by political polling or election results. Yet most of this information still comes to us through surviving media sources. We remain highly dependent on the media for clues to the content of the national conversation. The constraints of the available evidence dictate that one must see through these sources, however limited the view beyond. This method is not perfect, only the best available. The upside of this predicament is that the media were deeply involved in the national conversation and left sources rich in description, opinion, and analysis. The downside is that the bias of the archive can easily exaggerate their significance. The historian cannot presume that the media represent Canadian society accurately or fully.

This predicament makes the nature and extent of the media's influence a critical methodological question. After much debate, media scholars have come to two main conclusions on this issue. First, media messages are interpreted variously depending on the receiver's biases. Often they are simply ignored, and at other times they are radically reinterpreted to conform to the recipient's prejudices. People tend to accept uncritically only those messages that confirm their existing views. The second insight is that the media's main power lies in agenda setting. Agenda setting may seem a weak form of agency, but it can be very effective. These two main forms of media power combined suggest that the media can exercise considerable influence by putting an item on the public agenda and presenting it in a way they anticipate will prompt a particular response. In the case of Trudeaumania, for instance, they put Pierre Trudeau on the agenda in a manner that resonated with an influential segment of the public.

Yet this formulation does not fully encompass the extent of media influence in Trudeaumania. The conclusions noted above apply to single instances of one-way, media-to-audience messaging that have been isolated for the purposes of study. Communications scholars have extended this analysis by conceptualizing a circuit of communication that includes audience feedback to the media, yet

even this remains a relatively simplistic model that fails to capture the complexity of information flows through networks. To represent a conversation such as that through which the media helps constitute the simulation would require a model that captures multiple participants of varying influence at innumerable locations within a web of connections. In practice such an approach is frustrated both by its complexity and by the paucity of evidence from sources beyond the media.

The resulting heavy dependence on media sources makes it all the more important to be alert to their biases. Some of these are easy to identify. To begin with, those who worked in the Canadian media in 1967-68 generally were more educated, urban, and prosperous than the population as a whole. They were also overwhelmingly white, middle-class, Euro-Canadian males educated in the Western humanist tradition. More specifically, a substantial percentage of the media figures who promoted Trudeau were modern in sensibility and nationalist in outlook.

Yet another media bias was metropolitan. Though a far-flung network, Canada's national media were concentrated in Toronto, home to its biggest and most influential newspapers, headquarters of the national radio and TV networks, and the centre of Canadian book and magazine publishing. The professoriat, a significant portion of which was headquartered at the University of Toronto's downtown campus, provided the media with big ideas, while news of the latest trends came from Canada's fashion, advertising, and public relations industries, most of which huddled together for warmth and comfort in Toronto as well. Inputs from these sources were mashed together in the Toronto media, processed, packaged, and marketed nationwide.

Exceptions to this Toronto-centricity included the national press gallery in Ottawa, an outpost necessary to extract information about national political affairs at the source of the raw material. Another exception was Montreal, a metropole with considerable cultural heft in its own right. Its contribution to Canadian

nationalism was less than Toronto's, however, because its cultural producers were divided between an English Canadian minority and a French Canadian majority, with a significant portion of the latter prioritizing Quebec nationalism over Canadian nationalism.

In the discussion that follows I will be using the term "Canadian nationalism" to denote the nationalism that energized Trudeau-*mania*. While its original impetus came from English Canada, it was not an exclusively English Canadian phenomenon. True, contemporaneous Quebec nationalism had goals that were often in direct contradiction to Canadian nationalism. Yet identities and allegiances, like the self, are not fixed. A French Canadian nationalist could be torn between Quebec nationalism and Canadian nationalism and support both in different degrees, either simultaneously or under different circumstances. A French Canadian nationalist who prioritized cultural survival over political sovereignty might feel at home with Trudeau's promise to accommodate French Canadians with bilingualism and a charter of rights and freedoms. Given the choice between an ethnic Quebec nationalism and a Canadian nationalism that, however ethnocentric it had been historically, now espoused a modern pluralistic Canada, she might opt for the latter.

It was also possible for Quebec nationalists who were not avowed separatists to admire Trudeau as an exemplary representative of French Canada. Since nationalism seeks the status of external recognition as well as internal unity and identity, Trudeau's success on the Canadian and international stages greatly gratified French Canadian nationalists. On the other hand, some French Canadians, like Trudeau himself, opposed nationalism generally and the rise of neonationalism in Quebec in the wake of the Quiet Revolution in particular. Those who saw the true legacy of the Quiet Revolution to be modernization rather than nationalism took great pride in the fact that Trudeau, one of their own, now exemplified the cutting edge of modernity in the wider Western world. His promise to protect the rights of French Canadians and

give them a greater stake in the larger Canadian national modernization project was attractive. For French Canadians outside of Quebec this option was far preferable to the province becoming a nation-state that would exclude them.

The journalists, anglophone or francophone, who mattered most in Trudeaumania were those who covered the federal political scene.²⁶ It was their job to follow, analyze, and opine on the federal government. In that role they liked to style themselves as representatives of the people, dedicated to ensuring that power operated in the public interest. Far from being stand-ins for ordinary Canadians, however, they knew more and cared more about this politics than most of their compatriots. This bias was reinforced by their sources of information. As facilitators of debate in the public sphere, journalists voiced, either directly or indirectly, the opinions of officials, politicians, academics, pundits, and other authorities. When national media reached out to sources across the country, they were frequently dealing with local elites – the grasstops rather than the grassroots – who had national connections and interests. Since these sources were also invested in federal politics, their contributions reinforced the media's national bias. Even if these voices numbered in the thousands, they would still be a relatively small proportion of Canada's 1968 population of 20.6 million people.

The media were susceptible to thinking nationally for other reasons as well. By manipulating the cultural symbols that discursively constructed communities – local, regional, and national – journalists addressed and trained their audiences as markets to be sold to advertisers, thereby creating economic value for their employers. For those who worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the national interest was an explicit part of their mandate. Yet private broadcasters also worked within a national framework. Licensed by the state, private radio and television stations belonged to networks that had markets congruent with Canada's territory.²⁷ A similar complicity with the nation was evident in

other media as well. Though not state-regulated, newspapers sold national news. Domestic magazines, like the electronic media networks, also served the national market. The media complex of print, radio, and television thus naturalized and popularized the nation, continuously reinforcing it by providing the populace with simultaneous shared experiences that sustained a sense of belonging to a national community. Though Canada was also inundated with American media, Canadian media supported a separate political culture, chronicling the imagined life of the very simulation they constructed discursively on an ongoing basis through their own cultural work.

The idea of a mania was very seductive for such nationalist cultural producers. The notion that Canadians could collectively experience the same psychological state and act on it with a singular purpose suggested the existence in the populace of the type of shared characteristics that were the *sine qua non* of nationhood. It also played to their weakness for novelty. Having something like a mania to report on was in their interests – it was news. Being in step with the times was something of a professional imperative for media workers, even more so given recent developments within their field. The intellectual formation of most media practitioners had been in print culture, and now a screen medium, television, was rising to ascendancy. Fears that they would be caught out as obsolescent made it all the more important for journalists to identify with the latest thing. The media were biased towards the modern.

While media workers played a leading role in the national conversation, they were by no means the only participants. The discourse of nation circulated within a complex ecology of cultural producers and consumers. As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, many occupations outside the media proper involve manipulating symbols to create and communicate meaning.²⁸ This observation is particularly pertinent to Trudeaumania because it was powered not just by the circulation of information among different media, but by

the interaction of text and image. Producers of the latter, such as photographers, artists, and fashion designers, generated a rich visual culture of Trudeaumania.

Even so, their efforts would have had limited impact had they not been picked up by the media and disseminated widely across the land. Artists and photographers knew what would sell. Particular images were selected from among other possible representations by editors before being disseminated through the media. With Trudeau the media bias was to show him being adored by fans, performing physical feats, modelling fashionable clothes, or striking other admirable poses. During the Progressive Conservative leadership convention in September 1967, a photograph of leadership candidate Robert Stanfield eating a banana in the stands circulated widely in the media. With Trudeau, in contrast, the mundane, the goofy, or the embarrassing did not make it into mass circulation.²⁹

Cultural producers exercised more influence than mere consumers, yet in the context of an election, members of the politics-consuming media audience were producers too insofar as they voiced their opinions, participated in election events, and voted. At a minimum it is safe to say that media literacy and consumption were prerequisites to full participation in Trudeaumania.³⁰ Trudeaumania found its strongest support among the professional managerial class, an occupational group that had arisen over the previous century to provide efficient administration of a complex modern capitalist society. Its *métier* was mastery of ideas and information, knowledges that could then be deployed in the name of progress in the economic, social, and cultural spheres.

Over the course of the twentieth century, many occupations of the educated middle class had professionalized with degrees of success that varied according to their capacity to demonstrate quantitatively their contribution to material production, monopolize knowledge in their fields, or otherwise exert economic leverage.³¹ Cultural producers tended to be less successful in finding such professional security because their labours had less direct

demonstrable economic benefit.³² Many found a place in the modern economy as teachers, professors, journalists, television and radio personalities or producers, artists, filmmakers, designers, or public relations and advertising creators. Some made a living by arbitrating taste, an alchemists' trade in which they managed transubstantiations between cultural, financial, and political capital. Others lacked a regular paycheque and a feeling of useful engagement in contemporary society. Even those who enjoyed provisional job security nevertheless could harbour the imposter's fear that they didn't deserve it and could easily lose it at any time. Their economic marginality stood in stark contrast to the technicians of their class, who rarely lacked employment, earned more, and enjoyed upward mobility through the ranks of corporate management. The artsy precariat was particularly susceptible to the lure of nationalism because it had the potential to connect their expertise in culture and communications with the interests and power of the state. Their knowledge and skills could be useful in nation building, and in return they stood to gain a reliable patron and public prestige. More articulate in pronouncing their altruism than comparable demographic cohorts, they were the natural apologists of nationalism.

The Second World War had brought big government to Canada, and after the war the public sector grew rapidly with the expansion of the welfare state and a boom in education. The numbers and influence of this professional managerial class, and its identification with the state, grew apace. These new members of the middle class were disproportionately engaged and influential in the national conversation that facilitated Trudeaumania. They owed their existence to modernization and they lived in a modern world of high labour and social mobility, large-scale productive and communications systems, and fast-paced social change. The more modern one's way of life, the more traditional, local, or ethnic allegiances were attenuated, and the more likely one was to identify with the community of nation. The most influential voices in the national conversation were those of these educated, middle-class urban

denizens of modernity. The cultural producers within this group were particularly vocal because communicating was their forte and they had a vested interest in promoting nationalism. Catered to and given voice by the media, a powerful estate that they dominated, they carried the conversation that propelled Trudeaumania.

The modern and modernizing Canadians who favoured Trudeau wanted change, but they were not radicals. They faced the classic political dilemma of how to expedite desirable reforms while preserving social order. Amid the welter of experimentation in sixties popular culture, they gravitated towards a stylistic mode that suited their purposes. Mainstream cultural industries had already channelled the rebellious spirit of the decade into profitable enterprises. One of the hallmarks of this process was a strain of contemporary popular culture defined loosely as the “mod” style. The term had originated as the name of a subculture of fashion-conscious British youth, but by the midpoint of the decade had developed into a general term covering a prominent form of presentation in the advertising, fashion, and media industries.

Mod was exuberant and fun. It invited indulgence. It mocked the buttoned-down, sober rationality of the establishment, signalling its solidarity with the sixties spirit of liberation by promoting a risqué hedonism and destabilizing established ways of knowing with disorienting sensory inputs – vibrant colours, bold graphics, futuristic fabrics, and discordant sounds. Yet mod emphasized the aesthetics and titillation of rebellion without concern for any of its messy political implications. Ultimately its credo of freedom and experimentation was simplistic, shallow, and incoherent. Its transgressive thrills came at the expense of residual and expendable cultural values rather than any underpinnings of the political or economic status quo. Indeed, mod’s valorization of change for the sake of change accelerated stylistic obsolescence in the service of consumer capitalism.

Mod’s lack of political content did not mean that it was without political utility. The style offered an effective means by which to promote a candidate like Trudeau as a risk-free way to update the

nation. Mod could distinguish Canada as more “with it” than the United States by emphasizing soft values rather than tampering with fundamental institutions. Trudeau supporters would use a mod vocabulary to communicate and coordinate their political activism because it was the contemporary pop culture idiom best suited to their project. Trudeaumania applied the mod sell of popular culture to politics.

The media, cultural, and political literacy of Trudeau’s supporters also facilitated Trudeaumania. Media literacy allowed them access to the same information at the same time and enabled them to provide feedback in the public sphere, giving them an inordinate influence on public opinion. Cultural literacy meant that they were attuned to the fashion cycle of modern popular culture – how trends emerged, grew, and faded in a wave pattern. They were adept at picking up the lingo of the latest fad and using it to define a group identity for themselves. Political literacy was important because political events had a definite structure. Leadership campaigns and general elections were established rituals with predictable stages, clear timelines, and dramatic climaxes through which specific issues were resolved. Those in the know could easily anticipate how things would unfold.³³ These three competencies interacted in a mutually reinforcing fashion. Elites did not need to conspire behind the scenes – they had what it took to get their way through open democratic process.

Trudeamaniacs shared a belief in a Canadian nation, a regard for its fate, and a rough consensus about its current condition and immediate needs. The nation was a common object of concern around which their opinion coalesced, giving its imagined existence a discursive reality.³⁴ Theirs was a decolonization project through which a virtuous young nation would shed its past subordination to Britain, parry the contemporary threat of US hegemony, transcend sectionalism, find itself, and assert its autonomy in the international community. They worked together to make this happen by exploiting a happy conjunction of opportunities. Political events triggered predictable electoral processes through

which they could see a way to effect the change they desired. They discovered an appropriately protean personality, Pierre Trudeau, to represent their project. Drawing on the media's agenda-setting power, they presented him to the public, using a mod vocabulary drawn from sixties popular culture to identify him with the spirit of the times in a way that would appeal to like-minded Canadians. They made his candidacy for the leadership of the Liberal Party possible, helped him win and become prime minister, and then backed him in the spring 1968 federal election.

Trudeaumania consisted less of a widespread contagion than it did of a depth of devotion among those infected by it accompanied by a compulsion to operationalize it publicly. Trudeau's supporters were consolidating their modern group identity and projecting it onto the nation as a whole. More urban, prosperous, educated, and young than the broad Canadian population, more modern in sensibility, and more plugged into the national discourse of 1968, they dared their fellow Canadians to take a chance on a novel candidate.

While the trendy image of the Great Leader papered over major fracture lines in the body politic, it profoundly divided Canadians by setting traditionalists against progressives.³⁵ For the former, Trudeau's trendiness made his character suspect. He was a risk not worth taking. The latter, however, were willing to leave the old Canada behind to otherwise unite and modernize the nation. They created an image of Trudeau calculated to consolidate support along these lines, pushed it hard, and ended up getting their way. Their gamble paid off, securing a majority mandate for national modernization.

Trudeaumania had more lasting effects than most election campaigns. Trudeau would be prime minister for close to sixteen years, and his approach to national unity, identity, and the constitution shaped late-twentieth-century Canada. His attempts to define Canada along these lines were helped by the fact that he came to power at a formative historical moment when nationalism fused the sixties zeitgeist with Canadian identity in an enduring fashion. It was a moment when nationalists intoxicated by the

transformation rhapsodized about the nation coming of age. Young baby boomers were imprinted like baby ducklings with ideas about Canada that would still be reflected in public opinion surveys in the twenty-first century. The neoliberal counterdiscourse of subsequent decades inexorably eroded this consensus but never enjoyed the opportunity of a similar transformative conjuncture through which to successfully reformulate national identity. In this sense, Trudeaumania was the birth of a nation. The kiss of the mod man would linger.