Moments of Crisis

Religion and National Identity in Québec

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Introduction

From shortly after the arrival of French traders, missionaries, and colonists on the banks of the Saint Lawrence River in the early seventeenth century, the French-speaking people residing in what is now the Canadian province of Québec have engaged in an ongoing process of defining, asserting, and protecting their cultural and linguistic particularity in the face of a variety of social, political, and cultural challenges. In forging and protecting their identity as a people, they have engaged in shifting relations of differentiation from, and elective affinity and identification with, a series of others who they have encountered: people of the First Nations, French elite, English, Americans, and people of other groups who have migrated to the territory.

Although references to the Canadiens, as they were then known, as a nation date to the period following the 1760 English Conquest of New France, it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century that their identity and demands began to be articulated in terms of nationalism. Although the reasons given by scholars for the rise of nationalism in this period vary, they agree that it was during this time that "the bonds of birth, class, and station and the values of aristocracy, hierarchy, and deference" began to lose their dominance and "the ties of ethnicity began to exercise their pull" (Mann Trofimenkoff 1982, 50).

Since the first invocations of French Canadian nationalism by groups of Patriotes in the early nineteenth century, politics in Québec have been dominated by questions of national identity, sovereignty, and the place of Québec and French Canadians within Canadian federalism, North America, and the international state system. The nature of this nation and concern with its survival in the face of various threats have been ongoing subjects of discussion within the social sciences and political discourse.

Key to the definition of the French Canadian and later québécois nation has been a shifting conceptualization of the relationship of religion and the secular to national identity. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, religion was a crucial marker of identity, differentiating French Canadians from various groups with which they came into contact and in relation to which they derived their distinctive identity. Once a nation defined predominantly by and through its Catholicism, Québec has, in recent times, come to be seen, and to see, its national identity as secular. Catholicism has been transformed from a lived experience of the people into a historical relic representing the cultural heritage of the nation. In this sense, québécois society and the French Canadian people are often seen as a latecomer to, and an archetype of, secularization. The narrative of secularization provides a means to convey the historical continuity of the nation despite a radical transformation or even reversal of that which is said to be definitive of its way of life. This process has involved both transformations in the dominant self-understandings of national identity and shifts in the meaning of religion and the secular.

On November 7, 2013, the Québec government tabled Bill 60, *Charter Affirming the Values of State Secularism and Religious Neutrality and the Equality between Women and Men, and Providing a Framework for Accommodation Requests*. This bill, popularly known as the Charte de la laïcité (Charter of Secularism) or the Charte des valeurs québécoises (Charter of Québécois Values), was meant to provide a resolution to longstanding concerns about the accommodation of religious symbols and practices in the public sphere. The nature of such accommodations has been the focus of an ongoing, prominent, and heated debate in Québec since the early 1990s.

The debate to which the Charter of Values sought to respond was never simply one related to concerns about the interpretation of the

legal principle of reasonable accommodation. Both the content and the highly affective nature of this debate revealed that at its core were questions of the nature of québécois national identity. Indeed, since the early 1990s, questions concerning reasonable accommodation and the nature of québécois identity have had a near permanent presence as the focus of editorials, political debates, and talk-show conversations, becoming what Marie McAndrew has labelled a discursive "social happening" (Clément 1994) and a topic that has been debated "ad nauseum" (McAndrew 2006, 1). At stake in these debates has been the determination of the values upon which the boundaries of pluralism and, therefore, belonging in Québec are to be based. In other words, the debate surrounding the accommodation of religious practices in the public sphere is part of a larger consideration of the nature and limits of national identity and, therefore, of the nation itself.

The resolution to these debates offered by the Parti Québécois (PQ), which framed itself "as the guardian of cultural survival" (Cooper 2013, 26), was the Charter of Values. The PQ asserted that once enshrined in law, québécois values could officially serve as the foundation for future discussions and decisions related to pluralism. For proponents of the Charter of Values, an unbridled pluralism threatens to undermine the secular state, the progressive social values achieved through a history of struggle against the dominance of the Catholic Church, and the particularity of québécois identity itself. Consequently, what they consider the national values definitive of this identity – particularly secularism and women's rights – need to be immunized against this threat through their codification and enshrinement in law as fundamental values of Québec society. Those values deemed properly québécois are to serve as the basis upon which permissible difference, and consequently membership in the nation, will be judged.

Conversely, opponents of the Charter of Values argue that codifying national identity through the enshrinement of essential québécois values is tantamount to a closure of authentic contemporary québécois identity, a rejection of a modern, civic conception of the nation – a *citoyenneté québécoise* open to difference – and the institution of an inauthentic identity at odds with the lived experience of contemporary Québec. Moreover, they argue that it marks a return to an ethnic nationalism

that Québec society has been gradually attempting to move away from. For all sides, then, the debate surrounding the Charter of Values is one of upmost importance. The debate concerning reasonable accommodation is meant to address and resolve what has come to be seen as a crisis not only of governance but also of national identity, one that has come to be viewed by both sides as an existential crisis.

Commentators, including the leaders of the 2007 provincial commission formed to investigate and offer solutions to the question of reasonable accommodation, have dismissed the idea that Québec is facing a crisis of national identity (Bouchard and Roy 2007), with some deeming the controversy simply a "circus" (Heinrich and Dufour 2008) "manufactured" (Cooper 2013) by journalists and political leaders seeking to benefit from it. Indeed, many of the most inflammatory and cataclysmic statements regarding the threat that pluralism poses to the Québec nation have been voiced by individuals living in locales with largely homogeneous ethnically French Canadian populations, individuals who would have had little interaction with migrants or ethnic or religious minorities and who were therefore distanced from actual processes of integration. However, it cannot be denied that, whether manufactured or not, the debates surrounding reasonable accommodation have produced a reaction at the level of affect. Although it can be argued that certain members of the media and the political class have cynically deployed the threat of migration, pluralism, and "foreign" religiosity, this sentiment has resounded at an affective level with a portion of the population of Québec who feel that their identity is under threat and thus that the nation is in a state of crisis that needs to be imminently resolved.

The notion of a national crisis in Québec is not, however, unique to this recent period; rather, it echoes earlier, periodic pronouncements of threat and crisis and feeds into a notion that the québécois nation is particularly unstable – a "worrier nation" (Stasiulis 2013) prone to a melancholic form of nationalism (Maclure 2003) and bouts of self-doubt (Bouchard 2012; Mac Kay 1996). Even within dominant strains of Québécois nationalism, the Québec nation is considered to be in perennial, if not perpetual, crisis owing to historical events and geopolitical phenomena. This sense of crisis has been voiced with urgency at particular points in the history of Québec in response to perceived existential threats,

both endogenous and exogenous. As in the case of the debate over the Charter of Values, earlier moments of crisis involved the emergence of a perceived threat to the dominant, often taken-for-granted conception of national identity. In response to this threat, various solutions were voiced in the form of alternative conceptions of the nation, visions of national identity that claimed to be able to immunize the nation from the threat and thereby resolve the crisis.

In each moment of historical crisis, a threefold operation can be observed. First, there is a concurrent pronouncement of a threat and that which is threatened: the hegemonic conception of national identity and, consequently, the nation. In day-to-day experience, one is not faced with a crisis of national identity or required to provide a pure, unproblematic definition of the nation or its foundational values and characteristics. However, stating that there is a threat to the nation requires the simultaneous articulation of an understanding of that which constitutes the essential features of the nation. For the nation to be threatened by modernization, it must be defined as traditional. For the nation to be threatened by secularization, its essential religiosity must be articulated. In the same way, for the nation to be threatened by pluralism and the perceived regressive religious practices of minorities, a self-understanding based on notions of progress, secularity, and women's rights must be articulated.

Second, this articulation of a national essence opens a space for a questioning of this understanding of the nation and its capacity to contend with the threat, as well as for a coming to the fore of alternative conceptions of national identity that purport to be better able to respond to the crisis at hand. Thus the pronouncement of a crisis offers the terrain for a struggle over the definition of the nation. These new, or at least newly prominent, conceptions of the nation and its essential characteristics are often incompatible with the hegemonic conception of the nation, at times presenting the dominant conception as a threat in and of itself. Third, through this struggle, the hegemonic definition of the nation may be displaced by an alternative conception.

Thus, through a moment of crisis, the nation is both reconstituted and reproduced. However, it is not reproduced in an identical form. In a sense, then, this reproduction of the nation through crisis involves

the constitution of a new nation. As I argue throughout this book, it is in moments of crisis that the nation is articulated and rearticulated, reinforced and definitionally transformed, undone and consolidated, and thereby reproduced in novel form. It is this operation of crisis followed by reproduction, transformation, and reconsolidation that this book explores in relation to moments of crisis in the history of national identity in Québec.

That which defines the essence of the nation can, and does, change. Yet within both sociological and nationalist narratives, the nation is required to have a continuous history, one in which, despite these definitional differences, it appears as a continuous transhistorical entity. The nation must be seen as a like object despite the sometimes radical disparities in that which is historically said to define it. A nation must be seen, and crucially felt, as an enduring entity. Therefore, for a narrative to be successful in maintaining a sense of identity, it must be able to account for changes in the nature of the nation over time. It must be able to point to what is common despite temporal (or sometimes spatial) transformations. Crucial to this process is the development of narratives of continuity such as modernization, secularization, maturation, and the gradual realization of authenticity. In these narratives, the national subject is transformed, sometimes radically, both through the abandonment of characteristics once thought and felt to be essential and through the institution of new fundamental characteristics, without these transformations being felt as an abandonment or loss of identity.

The dominant narrative device deployed in accounts of transformations of Québec society is secularization. For the most part, accounts of secularization in Quebec involve one of two narratives. The first narrative explains secularization as an accomplishment realized through the efforts of a small group of enlightened intellectuals to combat backwardness, superstition, and the clerical control of society and, thereby, to bring about the modernization and secularization of society (Behiels 1985; Dion 1993). The second narrative portrays secularization as the product of a socio-historic process linked to industrialization, modernization, and capitalization (Guindon 1988; Linteau, Durocher, and Robert 1979; Young 1994). It is through the narrative device of secularization that a continuous transhistorical identity can be forged between a historical

nation once defined by its essential religiosity and a contemporary society for which secularity is deemed a fundamental value and social form.

In each of the moments of crisis that this book investigates, religion and the secular prove crucial to conceptions of québécois identity. The centrality of the religious and the secular to historical understandings of québécois identity and the prominence of secularization in narratives of transformations of the Québec nation provide a valuable entry to analyzing moments of crisis, struggle, and transformation in québécois identity and are revelatory of both the fragility and endurance of national identity.

Crisis

In recent years, we have been inundated with what commentators have come to refer to as "crisis talk" (Tazziolo and De Genova 2016, 8). Not only are we said to be in the midst of crises of national and "civilizational" identities (Morrison 2013a, 2014), but we are also faced with a multitude of social, political, cultural, economic, humanitarian, environmental, medical, spiritual, and moral crises. Among the many contemporary declarations of crisis, democracy is said to be in crisis due to a rise in populism and authoritarianism and a shrinking of the public sphere/ subject. The academy is said to be in crisis due to neoliberal reforms and anti-intellectualism. Humanity is said to be facing a crisis of antibiotic resistant bacteria and rapidly declining male fertility. The world, or at least human civilization, is said to be facing a crisis of environmental degradation owing to global warming. As "an omnipresent sign in almost all forms of narrative today," crisis appears as both "the defining category of our contemporary situation" (Roitman 2012) and, due to its seemingly counterintuitive normality, "utterly banal" (Tazziolo and De Genova 2016, 2). We are, although not for the first time, said to be witnessing an age of crisis.

Yet, despite its apparent omnipresence, in the sense that the term "crisis" is deployed in much academic and popular discourse, it is understood as an exceptional state. The term is used to designate an aberration – an abnormal state of affairs marked by an instability that threatens the existence of that which is thought to be experiencing crisis. This exceptional condition is said to be the result of error, corruption, or contamination, in the absence of which the imperilled entity, institution,

or phenomenon would have continued to operate unproblematically. For instance, the global economic crisis of 2008 is often deemed to be the consequence of some combination of poor policy decisions, deregulation, financialization, securitization, irresponsible consumer behaviour, and the unethical or criminal actions of bankers. Thus the roots of the crisis are not located in capitalism itself but in individuals and institutions whose actions and decisions put capitalism at risk of collapse. Similarly, the migrant or refugee crisis that Europe is said to be facing is professed to be the consequence not of the nation-state system but of phenomena in the countries that the migrants are fleeing (e.g., war, revolution, oppressive governments, the persecution of minorities, natural disasters, and poverty), in the countries to which they wish to migrate (e.g., lax or overly robust border controls and inefficient methods of integration), or in the moral or cultural failings of individuals (e.g., profiteering human smugglers, inassimilable or dishonest migrants, and xenophobic, overly permissive, or naive host populations).

If a crisis is understood to be an exceptional event brought about by externalities or inessential corrupted elements of that which is said to be in crisis, it follows that there exists a normal, noncrisis state of affairs from which the state of crisis can be differentiated and that the crisis threatens not only to disrupt but also to annihilate. In line with such a perception of an imminent, existential threat, invocations of crisis are often accompanied by assertions that "we are reaching the point of no return," or they make use of imagery of "contamination," "the barbarians at the door," "tidal waves," or "being swamped." Moreover, although intervention leading to the restoration of pre-crisis normality may be possible, the threat is understood to be so dire that steps need to be taken imminently or restoration will not be possible. To make use of the biomedical analogies often at play in depictions of crises, it may be possible to save the host through radical interventions – excisions, expulsions, and prophylaxis – but such measures must be undertaken before the illness has become terminal. Moreover, if the crisis is successfully averted, steps can be taken to immunize the host against future crises.

Therefore, at risk in crisis as it is understood above is not mere transformation but transformation understood as loss. For example, in the case of the financial crisis, the risk was not that capitalism would be

transformed by the crisis but that capitalism would cease to be. Similarly, in the case of crises of national identity, the fear is not that the demographic makeup, institutions, or values of the nation are changing but that such changes represent the collapse of national identity and, consequently, of the nation itself.

It is the dread of impending loss that allows for declarations of crisis to operate strongly at the level of affect. Although declarations of crisis may or may not be a response to fear, they reflect or are invoked in order to provoke a deep sense of urgency and anxiety. Consequently, declarations of crisis can be deployed as a powerful tool to achieve political or ideological purposes and, therefore, are often greeted with skepticism (Klein 2007). Engin Isin (2004) has highlighted the use of crisis talk in the formation and governance of what he refers to as "neurotic citizens," subjects who are governed not through calculating rationalities but through fears, anxieties, and insecurities. As has often been noted, neoliberalism operates through a perpetual invocation of crisis – whether of individual firms, sectors, or the economy as a whole – and attendant demands for downsizing, rationalization, marketization, and/or austerity to resolve each crisis, which in a short time is met with further declarations of crisis requiring further downsizing, rationalization, and so on. Similarly, critics of the "war on terror" assert that fear of perpetually impending attacks is stoked in order to justify the expansion of the state's security apparatus and the limitation of the rights of citizens and migrants.

The invocation of crises of national identity, such as those in Québec, can be seen in such a light. Whether truly believed or merely deployed cynically, arguments are often made that group identity and, consequently, the group itself are threatened by the presence of outsiders and/or the introduction of cultural elements that are at odds with or undermine what individuals and groups hold to be core national values. In response, measures are offered to remedy the situation by restoring the identity to its proper, authentic form and thereby defending the group. As mentioned earlier, the PQ and its supporters claimed that the introduction of the Charter of Values was necessary in order to contend with a crisis of national identity owing to increased pluralism and demands for the accommodation of religious practices in the public sphere. Champions of the Charter of Values felt – or deemed it politically

useful to argue – that changes in the composition of Québec society and the move toward a civic conception of nationhood, unless grounded in properly québécois values, threatened the existence of the Québec nation. They contended not only that the nation was changing but also that this change would eventually amount to a loss of the nation. With the exception of a few marginal voices on the far right, the Québécois did not articulate fear of the physical or demographic elimination of a people but fear of the extermination of the nation through the loss of culture and identity. In other words, migration and the move toward a pluralistic, civic conception of nationhood were seen to fuel the disappearance of fundamental aspects of group membership. A similar feeling of impending loss was articulated by opponents of the Charter of Values who felt that the codification of official québécois values would amount to the loss of a civic, modern form of identity and belonging and a move toward an artificial identity not representative of lived experience in Québec.

Although crisis is most often articulated as a disruption of the normal and desirable, it can also, as Janet Roitman (2012) asserts, be "mobilized in narrative constructions to mark out a 'moment of truth' ... instances where 'the real' is made bare." Understood in this way, moments of crisis allow for a glimpse of the true, fundamental nature of the phenomenon or entity. For instance, as Hannah Arendt's (1951) and Giorgio Agamben's (2000) seminal analyses of the figure of the refugee make clear, the plight of refugees, particularly the stateless, is not fundamentally the consequence of the failure of international actors and international law to adequately enforce human rights; rather, the refugee is a product of, and lays bare the nature and limitations of, the international system of nation-states. Given that, within the nation-state system, rights are granted on the basis of citizenship within a nation-state, this system does not permit access to rights on the basis of the status of being merely human. Consequently, a refugee crisis is not one that can be resolved by reforming international law or by choosing to enforce existing law. Approached in this manner, the crisis of the refugee is one that exposes the fundamental truths of the nation-state system, truths that are obscured by international human rights discourse.

Similarly, within Marxist analysis, capitalist economic crises are not understood as the consequence of accidents or errors but are seen as the

product of contradictions inherent to capitalism itself. Karl Marx (1894) and subsequent Marxian economists argue that, as a consequence of the tendency of rates of profit to fall, the capitalist system must periodically engage in the destruction of the value of capital in order to restore profitability. In contrast to Keynesian economics, Marxian analysis asserts that the boom and bust cycle of capitalism, as inherent to capitalism itself, cannot be alleviated through government intervention. As a result, crisis is a fundamental characteristic of capitalism, and moments of crisis provide an opportunity for us to observe its inescapable instability.

The Crisis of Identity
Reflecting on the increased centrality of identity as an object of analysis in socio-cultural studies and political scholarship in the early 1990s, Stuart Hall (1996, 1) noted "a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of 'identity.'" In contrast to the promised final victory of a stable, liberal international order at the end of the Cold War, in the period referred to alternatively as postmodernity, late modernity, or advanced or late capitalism, the intensification of globalization in its various forms – economic, political, institutional, technological, and cultural – was accompanied by the seemingly paradoxical consolidation and fragmentation of identity. Ethno-national and religious identities and the accompanying phenomena of ethnic conflict and fundamentalism appeared to be on the rise. At the same time, what had been the dominant forms of group representation and identification, particularly those associated with the modern nation-state, were becoming fragmented, giving rise to the increased prominence of what would come to be known as identity politics. Consequently, identity became a topic of greater political importance, recognized as being both in crisis and the cause of crisis.

In the writing of Charles Taylor (1994), Zygmunt Bauman (1996), and other prominent scholars of identity of the period, identity is portrayed as a modern invention. Not only is identity deemed to be a product of modernity, but so too are its crises. As a modern phenomenon, identity – like modernity – is always in flux, with markers of identity, such as gender, class, or nation, increasingly unable to serve as a singular frame of reference within late modernity (Maclure 2003, 9). Yet "at no time did

identity 'become' a problem; it was a 'problem' from its birth – was *born as a problem* (that is, as something one needs do something about – as a task), could exist only as a problem" (Bauman 1996, 18–19). Stripped of the certainties of the fixed identities determined by one's proper social position in traditional or premodern societies, the task of what Bauman refers to as the "disembedded" subject of modernity was "to find escape from uncertainty" (19). However, this task of identity formation is made difficult by the nature of modernity itself.

The first of the difficulties noted in this literature involves the social aspect of the process of identity formation. Identity, as an individual's or group's sense of self, is not forged in isolation; rather, it is influenced by relations of recognition through the images of oneself that are presented to one by others. As Taylor (1994, 35) asserts, what is distinctive of modern identity "is not the need for recognition but the conditions in which the attempt to be recognized can fail." Questions of identity did not arise in premodern times because the fixed social categories that situated all members of society were both accepted and taken for granted. Therefore, recognition operated unproblematically. With the advent of modernity, as Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848, 111) famously note, "all that is solid melts into air." Modernity continuously undermined all traditional categories, beliefs, and institutions that failed to accord with its own logics. With the dissolution of traditional hierarchies and the givenness of social categories in modernity, recognition came to be a problem. Freed from traditional social categories, recognition was no longer certain. The problem then became how to maintain an identity in the face of the unsettling force of modernity. In the words of Bauman (1996, 23), "whatever you may build in the sand is unlikely to be a castle."

Moreover, in the eighteenth century, identity came to be intimately associated with notions of authenticity (Taylor 1994, 28). Identity was no longer limited to how one was identified within traditional social categories; rather, one was called upon to express one's true self, an identity that may not have accorded with the manner in which one was identified. As Taylor writes, not only is it individuals who are called on to be true to themselves and who suffer the damage of mis- or nonrecognition, but it is also a people who must do so: "Just like individuals, a Volk should be true to itself, that is, its own culture" (31). In modernity,

then, recognition and identity became the site of individual and group struggles for self-fulfilment and self-determination.

Bauman (1996, 18) argues that although postmodernity does not give rise to the "problem of identity," it transforms the nature of the problem: "If the modern 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open." Within modernity, individuals and groups struggled to discover and maintain their authentic particularities in the face of universalizing forces of capitalization, rationalization, and colonialism in its various guises. However, despite the intensification of these processes in postmodernity, Bauman asserts that "well constructed and durable identity turns from an asset into a liability" (24). He attributes this transformation to the late-capitalist requirements of flexibility. The neoliberal economy has largely done away with stable jobs-for-life. As a result, the postmodern subject will not develop strong attachments to, and identifications with, particular workplaces, colleagues, or professions. Combined with increasing geographical mobility, this circumstance also means that throughout life one will not have stable social, cultural, or professional circles but will constantly be forming, discarding, and re-forming relationships and attachments to people and places. Because one cannot know how long a personal or professional relationship will last, deep attachments or identifications are disadvantageous. The modern anxiety over health – "of keeping the standard stable and unscathed" – is displaced by the postmodern preoccupation with fitness – "the capacity to move swiftly where the action is and be ready to take in experiences as they come" (24). To this account of the changes wrought by postmodernity, we can add the increased number of possible forms of self-identification and venues for recognition offered by travel, migration, and communication technologies. The result of this proliferation is said to be a hybridization of identity and a decentring of those identities that had gained the most prominence and seeming stability in modernity, central among them national identity.

In his valuable contribution to the study of identity in Québec, Jocelyn Maclure observes that since the early 1990s, Québec has been "in the throes of an exceptionally intense interrogation of its own identity."

This "fascination in Quebec with identity issues" is attributed to what he labels "identity indeterminacy," a phenomenon experienced by "every citizen ... on a daily basis" (Maclure 2003, 4). Unlike the commentators mentioned earlier, for whom this questioning of identity is considered a reflection of the perpetual québécois fixation on, and anxiety about, issues of identity, Maclure argues that intense questioning of identity emerges when dominant conceptions of identity become inoperative (8). Identity, then, "is not an objective, natural condition" but "a narrative project or a 'persuasive fiction'" – the product of particular narratives (9).

Approaching the question of identity through the method of Foucauldian archaeology, Maclure attempts to understand the limits imposed on conceptions of national identity by the two dominant discourses of identity in Québec, what he labels melancholy nationalism and anti-nationalist liberalism. Through this analysis, he hopes to make it possible to "go beyond" such narratives in the construction of a new form of national identity (Maclure 2003, 12). He attributes the cause of the crisis of identity in the early 1990s to the inability of these dominant conceptions of national identity to contend with globalization and Québec's "problematic status within the Canadian federation" (5).

In attributing the crisis of identity in Québec in the early 1990s to a narrative failure owing to disruptive exogenous and endogenous factors, Maclure's analysis is consistent with the approach of Bauman, Taylor, and the broader constructivist school of national identity, discussed in detail in the following chapter. These disruptive factors contribute to what Maclure (2003) labels "the challenge of pluralism," a challenge that provoked a re-evaluation and reinterpretation of dominant conceptions of *québécité* and that is made more difficult to contend with as a consequence of the limitations imposed on national identity by the prevailing narratives of the time. Cultural and economic globalization, including the phenomenon of mass migration, has resulted in a hybridization of identity for those living in Québec, one of multiple identifications and feelings of belonging, which has displaced the centrality of, and attachment to, a single national identity based on a shared territory and historical memory. At the same time, within Canadian federalism, Québec has continued to be subject to mis- or nonrecognition, which has limited the scope of national sovereignty and, until recently, prevented official

recognition of Québec as a nation. In other words, Canadian federalism did not provide the Québécois with a vision of Québec that corresponded to an authentic self-image, prompting the need for the articulation of an identity other than that imposed by Canadian federalism (4–8).

Identity, Crisis, and Reproduction

The "identity indeterminacy" that Maclure refers to is portrayed as a product of increasing transnational or subnational identifications that create problems for both the stability and centrality of national identity resulting from the dynamics of postmodernity. Maclure's analysis, despite repeatedly referring to the persistence of the importance of the nation as a fundamental source of identity, does not account for the enduring and highly affective nature of national identity in the face of the fluidity of modernity and the fragmentation of postmodernity. As a result, although he provides a compelling account of the nature and limitations of dominant discourses of national identity in Québec at a particular moment, his account does not demonstrate why, despite being "detranscendentalized" (Maclure 2003, 10), national identity continues to produce strongly affective attachments and responses.

In other words, although Maclure's analysis offers an important account of the reproduction of an ongoing questioning of the nature of national identity in Québec since the mid-twentieth century, it does not provide an account of the reproduction of national identity itself in the face of such questioning and crisis. Thus, although Maclure (2003, 12) suggests that the goal of his analysis is, following Michel Foucault, "to 'free ourselves from ourselves,' to *become other*," this cannot be accomplished unless we also examine why we tend to reproduce ourselves in particular forms. We cannot adequately think beyond our attachment to a certain narrative of the nation if we do not first examine why and in which ways we reproduce ourselves as national subjects.

Adopting an approach similar to the critical analyses of crises of capitalism and the nation-state system described above permits such an examination. By giving primacy to the nature of national identity rather than to particular expressions of national identity and moments of crisis, we can engage with questions of national identity in a manner that allows us to appreciate both its inherent fragility and the way that

it endures despite this fragility. In doing so, we can avoid reducing crises of national identity to the consequence of either the features of a given nation that make it prone to crisis or the exogenous factors that act on and disrupt the nation. Instead, these features, events, or forces can be treated as phenomena that may, at particular moments, allow symptoms of crisis to become conscious.

Recent claims of national or civilizational crises in Québec and elsewhere, which portray a need to protect already secularized societies from the threat of "foreign" religiosity, engage in what Jacques Derrida (1992, 1995, 1996, 2003) refers to as a logic of immunity. According to Derrida (1995, 73n), "the immunitary reaction protects the 'indemnity' of the body proper in producing antibodies against foreign antigens." Such immunity processes are present in all attempts to produce or maintain what he refers to as "ipseic" definitions of discrete, binary identities. As Derrida and others have demonstrated in their investigations of various oppositional structures, such as between nature and culture, faith and knowledge, man and animal, the religious and the political, the national and the foreigner, and the European and the non-European, such definitions function through the construction of borders demarcating the unified self from its external other. Within this logic of immunity, religiosity is depicted both as an impediment to the integration of foreigners into secular Western societies and as an element that, if not contained, poses a threat to these societies. As a result, religion appears not as an endogenously generated entity that must be cleansed from the social body but as a contaminant that is external to an already purified, secularized West (Morrison 2013a, 153).

The logic of immunity presupposes the pre-givenness of both an identity and its other. The only difference acknowledged within the logic of immunity is that of the exterior. However, as the discussion of identity and alterity in the following chapter explains, difference is not that through which we can identify the particularities of already existing identities or communities; rather, it is the condition of possibility of all identity. A nation, like all identities, is not a thing-in-itself that encounters other predetermined identities. It is always involved in a relation of supplementation with what Derrida (1992) refers to as "the other shore," that which is constituted as non-national. As a result, "there is no culture

or cultural identity without this difference *with itself* " (9–10). Otherness is always present within the self. Thus, as Julia Kristeva (1991) famously asserts, we are all "strangers to ourselves." The self is composed of various antagonistic elements that can never be integrated into a unified, ipseic identity.

The contentious debates about the Charter of Québécois Values, similar to those concerning attempts to formulate a definition of Europe to be included in the various proposals for a European Constitution (Morrison 2013a, 2014), are demonstrative of the conflict inherent to all identity. Not only have these debates involved competing thick (ethnic) and thin (civic) definitions of the collective, but the thin definitions themselves are also composed of internally antagonistic elements. A civic nationalism is defined on the basis of citizenship and in opposition to a nationalism that is grounded in ethnic belonging. However, a nation, like all forms of identity, is constituted on the basis of differentiation from others. As a result, a civic nationalism cannot be grounded in universalism. Although the basis of membership may be legal and territorial, the values underpinning the vision of citizenship must refer to particular national values, themselves the product of particular acknowledged or unacknowledged ethnic histories. As a result, civic nationalism contains elements of that against which it attempts to differentiate itself.

The only difference that ipseic definitions of the nation permit or acknowledge are those of the exterior. Immunitary processes attempt to protect the self from internal contradictions through denial, by exteriorizing one of the contradictory elements of the self, or by attempting to create an identity or continuity between these contradictory elements. However, a unified, ipseic national identity cannot be realized. The question of national identity cannot be resolved by buttressing its immunity against external antigens or by resolving internal contradictions.

Unlike immune processes, which seek to protect the host body by defending it against that which is foreign to it, "the process of auto-immunization ... consists for a living organism ... of protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system" (Derrida 1995, 73n). The concept of autoimmunity reveals that each identity contains a force that promotes its self-destruction. It is this "internal-external, non-dialectizable antimony" (Derrida 2003, 35) that works against, and

makes impossible, any ipseity. Thus the logic of autoimmunity upsets the oppositional structure of interiority and exteriority. Rather than exteriorizing or resolving the difference at play in national identity, it acknowledges the undecidability at the heart of seemingly contradictory identities.

The question of national identity is at once perpetual and always the product of a particular immanence. The integrity of any unified conception of national identity is always under threat from the autoimmune processes that work to undermine the dualistic structures upon which the conception rests. As a result, a closure or final resolution of national identity is never possible. As a unified, ipseic national identity can never be realized, the nation will always be subject to periodic crises (Morrison 2013a).

In this sense, unlike in the work of developmental psychologists such as Erik Erikson (1968, 1980) and the historical analyses of Québec's abnormality or immaturity discussed in Chapter 3, identity crisis is not understood as a pathological deviation from normal patterns of maturation or as a predictable period of ontological uncertainty, such as adolescence or midlife. If identity is a site of incessant struggle, contending with the crisis of identity is not a matter of "working through" moments of crisis once and for all and thereby developing a healthy personal or national narrative that accords with a given reality; rather, in accepting crisis as a basic feature of identity, we are called to find ways to reorient our relation of attachment to the threatened object so that change need not feel like a devastating loss.

In contrast to an understanding of crisis as abnormal and resolvable or as an epiphenomenon of other social processes, this alternative approach to studying crisis allows us to question the relationship between crisis and that which it is said to threaten. In this way, it asks us to question whether crisis is an external or inherent feature of a given system, entity, or phenomenon and, therefore, whether crisis is something that can or should be eradicated. In other words, we must question the necessity and desirability of that which is given or to which we have developed a form of affective attachment that Lauren Berlant (2011) labels "cruel optimism."

National identity, like all identity, is fundamentally riven by latent internal conflicts that may become manifest in periodic moments of

crisis. The ever-present conflictual nature of identity, which may be repressed through the successful deployment of narrative devices, becomes manifest when a given narrative is made inoperative as the consequence of certain events, encounters, or forces. However, crisis is not the product of the failures of a particular narrative but a fundamental feature of identity that moments of narrative failure allow us to glimpse.

The recent declaration of national crisis in Québec provides an opening through which it is possible to engage with the nation as an aspect of our historical way of being. It offers an opportunity to explore the limits of this way of being and to understand and re-evaluate our attachments. With the declaration of a crisis of national identity, the inherently conflictual nature of the nation and identity, which may have previously functioned at a low level of visibility, is exposed. As in the case of Québec since the early 1990s, the failure of a narrative of the nation, announced as a crisis, provokes a questioning of the grounds for identity. When we articulate the threat faced by a nation, the nature of what is threatened, which is often taken as self-evident, must also be voiced. The hibernating assumptions of national identity must be articulated and illuminated. As a result, they are moved out of the shadows of the background and into the light of the foreground, permitting an interrogative spotlight to be shone on them. This exposure enables us to probe the parameters not only of particular conceptions of national identity but also of the fragile yet enduring nature of national identity.

Through an examination of moments of crisis in national identity in the history of Québec, this book provides an alternative historical narrative of the nation, one in which crisis serves as the locus of dissolution, transformation, and consolidation. In doing so, it does not attempt to determine an institutional or legal solution to questions of pluralism. Unlike the authors of much of the already existing analysis of current debates in Québec, I do not propose a framework for a reasonable, adequate, just, or efficient response to the presence of religion or the religious in the public sphere. In other words, I do not attempt to determine the proper limits of freedom of religion or propose an ideal model of the public sphere or subject in order to make possible or maximize cohesion, equality, toleration, or justice; rather, through an analysis of

the nature of national identity, the book explores and problematizes the assumptions on which such debates rest. In doing so, it opens up a space for, and reveals the challenges of, developing alternative forms of community, belonging, and identity that, rather than trying to solve the problems of the fragility of national identity, are open to the possibilities that this fragility offers.