

# Banal Nationalism in ESL Textbooks

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## Author's Note

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## Abstract

Despite repeating claims that Canadians are less nationalistic than members of other nations, English as a second language (ESL) textbooks often participate in banal repetitions of nation-ness and nationalism. This banal nationalism takes the form of the marking of nation through flags, maps, routine deixis, and nationalized symbols. This study examines markings of nation in 24 ESL textbooks used in government-funded language instruction in Canada. This nationalized imagery is both taught and repeated, making the imagined community ubiquitous. Language teachers should be aware of and reflect upon the everyday nationalism that is performed in ESL textbooks.

**Key words:** banal nationalism, TESL, language instruction, identity

## Résumé

Malgré l'affirmation répétée que les Canadiens sont moins nationalistes que les membres des autres nations, les manuels scolaires d'anglais langue seconde (ALS) participent souvent à des répétitions banales sur le nationalisme et la notion de nation. Ce «nationalisme ordinaire» prend la forme d'une mise en valeur de la nation à travers des drapeaux, des cartes, et des symboles nationalisés. Cette étude s'intéresse à cette mise en valeur de la nation dans 24 manuels d'anglais langue seconde, utilisés dans les programmes d'enseignement des langues, financés par le gouvernement au Canada. Ces images sont à la fois enseignées et répétées, rendant la communauté représentée omniprésente. Les enseignants de langues doivent être conscients et réfléchir sur le nationalisme au quotidien qui est relayé dans les manuels d'anglais langue seconde.

**Mots clés :** nationalisme ordinaire, EALS, enseignement des langues, identité

### **Banal Nationalism in ESL Textbooks**

Canadians are proud of their country but most would not describe themselves as patriotic flag-wavers. (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1998a, p. 6)

While Americans tend to fly their flag at the drop of the patriotic hat, Canadians don't have quite the same knee-jerk reaction to the Maple Leaf. (Gaetz, 2006, p. 5)

English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks used in Canada construct an imagined community through banal repetition of the established tropes and symbols of Canadian identity. One such trope, ironically, is the claim that Canadians are not nationalist or, at least, are less nationalist than others. Such statements are ironic in that they positively construct a national identity through their denial of nationalism. Nationalism, such texts imply, is “a property of others” (Billig, 1995, p. 5).

Billig (1995) has noted that nationalist is a term generally reserved for those involved in the struggle to create new nations or secede from current ones. If one imagines a nation as it has already been imagined then one is not a nationalist. Billig (1995), however, argues that another form of nationalism predominates in many established nations—a cooler form of nationalism that he refers to as “banal nationalism.” Billig (1995) argues that “these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagged,' in the lives of its citizenry” (p. 6).

It is these banal flaggings of nation that I attend to in this article in order to tease out the irony in statements to the effect of, “We, as Canadians, are not nationalist.” I demonstrate that ESL textbooks used in government-funded language instruction in Canada, imagine Canada and frequently mark nation, thereby participating in a discourse that assumes nations to be objectively real and relevant to our lives.

### **Nation and TESOL**

Increasingly, researchers of the teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) see learners as socially implicated and learning as a social process, drawing upon critical and post-structuralist theories of subjectivity, language, and power (Block, 2007; Canagarajah, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Nelson, 1999; Norton, 2006; Pennycook, 1999; Ramanathan, 2005). When these critical theorists turn their attention to constructions of nation, they emphasise the ways in which nation is discursively constructed and negotiated rather than pre-existing and objectively knowable.

TESOL researchers publishing in Canada have debated the teachability of Canadian culture and the challenges to teaching “the Canadian way of life” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004, para. 1), one of the program rationale of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. Derwing and Thomson (2005) discussed the influence of this program rationale on textbooks in light of what they see as Canadian content that is stereotypical in nature. Courchène (1996) and Sauvé (1996) debated the challenge of teaching Canadian culture in light of the implicitness of much

cultural knowledge. Taylor (1997), Ilieva (2001), and Fleming (2003) have emphasized diversity and contestation regarding Canadian culture, arguing for a view of national culture that emphasizes conflicting and competing discourses.

Where Thomson and Derwing (2004) noted “little or no substantive Canadian content” (p. 23) in ESL textbooks, I find textbooks saturated with a positive valuing of nation-ness and nationalism. A column of maple leaves running down the margin of a textbook banally flags the nation. Nationalized narratives and trivia such as a story of Laura Secord, discussions of eating habits, the color of mailboxes, and stories about the royal family (Thomson & Derwing, 2004), discursively mark nations in ESL textbooks in ways that make nation seem objectively real and important to know about. Such texts are interesting in that they articulate and repeat imaginings of the nation. The selection and presentation of certain facts and values as Canadian is a discursive construction of a community who knows these things and who is made known by them to a group of others. The textbooks’ readers are positioned as those who need to know these Canadian<sup>1</sup> facts and values. The same texts that Thomson and Derwing (2004) discount as “relatively superficial and generic in nature” (p. 23) are of great interest to research that sees nations as not being represented by texts but constructed through them.

### **Nations and Nationalism**

Theorists of nationalism have long challenged the apparent objectivity of nations (Anderson, 2006; Bhabha, 1990a,b; Billig, 1995; Renan, 1882/1990). Renan (1882/1990) challenges the belief that nations are naturally occurring and correspond to geographic, ethnic, or linguistic boundaries. A nation’s existence involves both “a daily plebiscite” (p. 19) whereby the nation is affirmed to exist and a process of strategically forgetting the particular aspects of the origins of the nation. Anderson (2006), drawing upon Renan, refers to nations as “imagined communities” and emphasizes the role of media and narrative in the imagining of nation. By imagined communities, Anderson is referring to the ways in which nations are constructed as limited and sovereign. Bhabha (1990a, 1990b) studies how these narratives operate through textual strategies that homogenize the heterogeneous, attempting to lay claim to a locality through displacement and delineation of national communities.

For Anderson (2006), Bhabha (1990a, 1990b), and Renan (1882/1990), forgetting is an aspect of the constructions of nation, but the daily remembrance of nation is also crucial. Billig (1995; 2009) examines the ways in which the nation is remembered through little reminders that say little about the nation but affirm its existence. He calls these reminders “banal flaggings” and the ideology that they stand for “banal nationalism.”

To say that a nation is an imagined community should not be taken as implying that it is an imaginative community. These imagined communities “are reproduced as nations and their citizenry as nationals” (Billig, 1995, p. 6) on a daily basis through the repetition of “a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices” (p. 6). Contrasting banal nationalism with its “hot” varieties, Billig (1995)

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, when I refer to Canada and Canadians, I am referring to them as discursive constructs.

argues that nationalism is neither peripheral nor exotic. He draws attention to the everyday performances of nation-ness and the ubiquitous ideology of nationalism that is ignored when nationalism is seen only as a property of others.

For Billig, one's own nationalism operates mindlessly precisely because it is so everyday. Billig (1995) writes:

National identity in established nations is remembered because it is embedded in routines of life, which constantly remind, or 'flag', nationhood. However, these reminders, or 'flaggings', are so numerous and they are such a familiar part of the social environment, that they operated mindlessly, rather than mindfully. (p. 38)

The "daily plebiscite" through which a nation is affirmed (Renan, 1882/1990) takes place through the largely unconscious and automatic or routine performances that indicate consent to one's position vis-à-vis nation and nationality. A sense of national identity is "greatly enhanced by the widespread acceptance of collective symbols such as the flag, anthem, or national holiday whose meanings may change over time but whose forms remain relatively fixed" (Smith, 2009, p. 25). These banal flaggings, while often unremarked, remain in the background, ready to be waved, ready to signal the articulation of nationalist discourses or performances.

### **Identifying Banal Nationalism in ESL Textbooks**

As part of a larger investigation into ESL textbooks and the imagining of Canadian-ness undertaken as doctoral research (Gulliver, 2009), I conducted a survey of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) teachers in Ontario to determine which textbooks they used and examined 24 ESL textbooks for the ways in which they banally imagine Canada. To qualify for the LINC program, students should be "newcomers to Canada," which are defined as "permanent residents and those whom Canada intends to land" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003, p. 28).

The 24 ESL textbooks I selected include the 12 most commonly used textbooks in the LINC program in Ontario according to my survey respondents and 12 less commonly used textbooks in order to see whether discursive constructions can be seen in a variety of texts. By randomly sampling from some of the less commonly used textbooks, I hoped to ascertain whether banal nationalism was also prevalent in a wide range of textbooks or only those most frequently used by LINC instructors. This random sampling from less widely used textbooks is important as it opens up the possibility that more marginal perspectives can be included. *Table 1* lists the textbooks selected and the total number of respondents who mentioned each identified textbook. I will refer to all 24 of these textbooks collectively as "identified textbooks" throughout this study.

Table 1

*Identified Textbooks*

<b>Twelve Textbooks Selected Due to Widespread Use</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
<i>Canadian Concepts 1</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a)	20
<i>Canadian Concepts 2</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997b)	20
<i>Canadian Concepts 3</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997c)	20
<i>Canadian Concepts 4</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997d)	20
<i>Canadian Concepts 5</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1998a)	20
<i>Canadian Concepts 6</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1998b)	19
<i>Ontario Reader 2003</i> (Zuern, 2003)	12
<i>Ontario Reader 2005</i> (Zuern, 2005)	12
<i>Ontario Reader 2007</i> (Zuern, 2007)	15
<i>Basic English Grammar</i> (Azar & Hagen, 2006)	11
<i>Fundamentals of English Grammar</i> (Azar, 2003)	12
<i>Understanding &amp; Using English Grammar</i> (Azar, 1999)	11
<b>Twelve Textbooks Selected Randomly from Remaining Textbooks</b>	
<i>Amazing! Canadian Newspaper Stories</i> (Bates, 1991)	5
<i>Being Canadian</i> (Cameron & Derwing, 2004)	4
<i>Canadian Snapshots: Raising the Issues</i> (Kingwell et al., 2005)	2
<i>A Canadian Conversation: Book 1</i> (Carver et al., 1993)	3
<i>Listen to the Loon</i> (White, 1997)	4
<i>Side by Side 1</i> (Molinsky & Bliss, 2001)	10
<i>Amazing Stories to Tell &amp; Retell</i> (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1999)	1
<i>Canada Coast to Coast</i> (Acosta, 1995)	1
<i>Look Again Pictures</i> (Olsen, 1984)	1
<i>The Oxford Picture Dictionary – Canadian</i> (Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999)	1
<i>The Good Grammar Book</i> (Swan & Walter, 2001)	1
<i>Word by Word Picture Dictionary</i> (Molinsky & Bliss, 1994)	1

I thoroughly scanned the identified textbooks for markings of nation including flags, maps, and the presentation of some symbols as Canadian symbols. In Gulliver (2009), I examined nationalizing representations of social actors, nationalizing representations of social events, and nationalizing representations of social space in ESL texts. In this article, I am attending solely to the nationalizing representations of social space, specifically the marking of a space as Canadian. I analyze the ways in which these banal flaggings make the imagined community visible and mark the territorial claims of nation.

In light of recent critiques of Billig's concept of banal nationalism (Hearn, 2007; Jones & Merriam, 2009; Skey, 2009; see also Billig, 2009), a disclaimer is in order. I do not make claims about how the flaggings of nation are taken up or contested in classrooms, whether teachers critique or invite critique of these markings of nation, or what other forms of community are endorsed in textbooks and language classes. I do not assume that the audience is homogeneously receptive to national representations as Skey (2009) suggests Billig (1995) does. While I concede that "banal signifiers of official nationalisms can be viewed by members of minority groups or nations as symbols of oppression to be resisted and subverted" (Jones & Merriman, 2009, p. 166), I track only the performances of the text, not their reception or negotiation in the classroom.

### Flagging the Nation: Analysis of Identified Textbooks

Identified textbooks often participate in both banal flaggings of the nation and imaginings of community. The majority of the identified textbooks (14 out of 24) claim to provide factual or helpful information about Canada (Acosta, 1995; Bates, 1991; Berish & Thibaudeau 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1998a, 1998b; Cameron & Derwing, 2004; Carver, Fotinos, & Cooper, 1993; White, 1997; Zuern 2003, 2005, 2007). They claim to contain “Canadian terms and information” (Carver et al., 1993, p. ix); “Canadian vocabulary and references” (p. x); Canadian content with information about Canadian culture, controversies, government, geography, history, people, places, rights and responsibilities, and politics (Cameron & Derwing, 2004; Zuern, 2003, p. v); and stories about life in Canada (Zuern, 2003, p. v). They claim to be “about Canada and Canadians” (Bates, 1991, p. xiv) and to feature “ordinary Canadians” (p. x). They draw much of their material from Canadian sources, particularly newspapers but also television and radio (Kingwell, Bonkowski, Stephenson, & Holmes, 2005; Zuern, 2003, 2005, 2007). They do these things because “our students want to learn about Canada” (p. x) so as to facilitate their cultural integration and prepare for life in Canada. Or, they may make no such claims to Canadian content but still participate in banal imaginings of nation and an ideology of ubiquitous nationalism (Azar, 1999, 2003; Azar & Hagen, 2006).

Those identified textbooks that do not declare themselves to be teaching about Canada are often American or written for an international audience (Azar, 1999, 2003; Azar & Hagen, 2006; Berish & Thibaudeau, 1999; Molinsky & Bliss, 1994, 2001; Swan & Walter, 2001).

#### Flagging the Nation Unflaggingly

The flags that I refer to here include both the literal sort, i.e., national flags, and other flaggings of the nation: maps, currency, landscapes, cityscapes, national symbols, nationalized images, routine deixis, and discursive markings that ensure the nation is constantly marked and yet unremarkable. Through these banal flaggings, identified textbooks introduce student readers to Canada as an already imagined community. These flaggings naturalise Canada, presenting it as uncontested and identifiable.

**The maple leaf.** The textbooks repeatedly flag Canada through the display of the maple leaf. Of the 24 identified textbooks, all but three of them contain images of flags marking nation-ness in general or of maple leaves or the Maple Leaf marking Canadian-ness specifically. Only a few textbooks do not contain any national flags (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1999; Olsen, 1984; Swan & Walter, 2001).

The flag is waved, explained, planted, and saluted within identified textbooks and accompanying images. In some identified textbooks, the maple leaf is identified as a symbol of Canada (Bates, 1991, p. 75; Cameron & Derwing, 2004, p. 132; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 115).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cameron and Derwing (2004) also introduces the Fleur-de-Lys flag as “a symbol of Quebec” (p. 132) in a section titled ‘Canadian Symbols.’ While not in as prominent a position as the Canadian flag on the same page, the Fleur-de-Lys’s appearance hints at alternative claims to nation not often apparent in these texts.

The flag itself or the maple leaf appears as a recurring graphic. A photograph of four Canadian flags snapping in the breeze introduces *Canada Coast to Coast* (Acosta, 1995, p. 3). Falling maple leaves decorate the cover of *Cameron and Derwing* (2004) and are used occasionally as a background inside.

The flag is also incorporated into other illustrations. In illustrations of daily life, the flag often hangs limply in the background. Flags hang in the corner in depictions of classrooms (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 20, p. 33), auditoriums, courtrooms, army bases (Carver et al., 1993, p. 35; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 32, p. 99); they are plastered on the walls of immigration offices and provide a backdrop for citizenship ceremonies (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 59; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 24, p. 114); they wave in the breeze outside of City Hall, universities, and especially schools (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 26, p. 89, p. 104; 1997b, p. 71; Carver et al., 1993, p. 35; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 4, p. 5, p. 27, p. 89, p. 112). (Schools, these banal flaggings seem to suggest, are a place in which students learn to stop noticing the ubiquitous flag in the corner.) They can be seen on stamps, post offices, Canada Post mailboxes, and on pictures of social insurance cards (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 102; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 96). The flag hangs unsaluted in the background of the public lives of the characters present in these identified textbooks.

**“Home and native land.”**As one of the recognized patterns of nation-ness—along with flags and currency—by which nations represent themselves to each other, anthems “not only fit a common pattern, but it is part of their symbolism that they are seen to do so. They flag the nation as a nation among nations, as flags themselves do” (Billig, 1995, p. 86). The playing of the national anthem at the end of a television broadcast day or before a hockey game is an affirmation both of nation and of the ideology of nationalism.

Several identified textbooks contain the words to “O Canada,” the Canadian national anthem (Bates, 1991, pp. xx; Cameron & Derwing, 2004, p. 42; Carver et al., 1993, pp. 165-166; Zuern, 2007, p. 43). It is one of the first texts student readers encounter in Bates (1991). Carver et al. (1993) includes the anthem at the back of the book along with the lyrics for “The Royal Anthem” (p. 165), “God Save the Queen” (p. 165), and “Jingle Bells” (p. 166).

### **Mapping the Nation**

Identified ESL texts also participate in this banal marking of the nation in physical space through repeated depictions of nationalized boundaries, architecture, and landscapes. Through nationalizing weather, the natural world, and cities and towns, they convert all space into nationalized space. Of the 24 identified textbooks, 12 contain maps of Canada or world maps.

**Maps.** Billig (1995) proposes “in the modern nationalist imagination, one national territory does not shade into another. Nations stop and start abruptly at demarcated borders” (Billig, 1995, p. 74). Maps become a way of representing this nationalist ideology. They show the clear lines through which a nation is demarcated without any suggestion of the contested nature of this representation. There are no grey areas on these maps; no undemarcated spaces outside of ubiquitous nationhood. Through such mapping, “space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization is inscribed” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p. 34). While

in openly contested and emerging nations, maps in textbooks may anticipate or assert claims to a territory (Joshi, 2010; Kosonen, 2008; Nasser & Nasser, 2008), in established nations, the map represents land as it has already been nationalized in accordance with the legitimizing consensus of established nations (Anderson, 2006). Regional perspectives or understandings, legal battles for the control of space, and symbolic intrusions of othered imaginings on national spaces are not mapped.

The outline or silhouette of the nation—the “map-as-logo” (Anderson, 2006, p. 175)—becomes recognizable as a symbol of the nation. The map’s assertion of a claim to a territory remains latent. While the map-as-logo naturalizes the claim to territory to the point where the territory itself disappears, the boldness of the assertion to a territory can be made strange again by mapping practices such as those suggested by Hurren (2004). Poetic and creative interventions into the naturalization of maps “can be called to disrupt official versions of the world” (Nash, 1999, p. 273), denaturalizing the marking of space much in the same way that Billig’s (1995) enumeration of the banal flagging in a daily newspaper makes strange again the national panoply.

Identified textbooks incorporate:

- maps of Canada (Acosta, 1995, pp. 4-5, p. 7, p. 53, p. 55, p. 60; Bates, 1991, p. xvi, p. xviii; Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997c, p. 106; Cameron & Derwing, 2004, p. 3; Carver et al., 1993, p. 159; Zuern, 2007, p. 83),
- maps of North America (Molinsky & Bliss, 1994, pp. 4-6; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 17, p. 122; Swan & Water, 2001, p. 260),
- maps of the world (Bates, 1991, p. 53; Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 5; Carver et al., 1993, p. 159; Molinsky & Bliss, 2001, pp. 7; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 124-125),
- maps and globes in classrooms (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 4; Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997b, pp. 10-11; Molinsky & Bliss, 2001, pp. 8-9),
- maps to teach students the names of nations (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 63),
- maps to teach the regions of Canada (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, pp. 98-101),
- maps to teach the time zones of Canada (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 83; Zuern, 2007, p. 81),
- maps to teach the order in which provinces and territories joined Canada (Acosta, 1995, pp. 4-5),
- and maps to teach about travel within Canada (Acosta, 1995, p. 53, p. 55; Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997a, p. 83; Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997c, p. 117; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 17; Zuern, 2007, p. 81).

Teachers are encouraged to bring maps with them into the classroom, including:

a large world map, a large map of Canada, a map of your province or territory, an atlas, several maps of your city, and pictures from various regions of Canada to supplement the readings. (Cameron and Derwing, 2004, p. 1)

Canadian geography sometimes seeps into the layout of the book with the chapters becoming provinces (Bates, 1991; White, 1997) allowing student readers to travel



through Canada as they progress through the book. Berish and Thibaudeau (1997a) contains a graphic in which the geographic outline of Canada is bordered by faces representing a racially diverse population (p. 37). This representation of racial diversity draws a connection between Canada, the geographic space it claims, and the value of multiculturalism through which Canadian nation-ness is legitimated the clearest example of “map-as-logo” in any of the identified textbooks.

### **Beautiful places: Landscapes and cityscapes.**

Imaginations of the nation as a physical space impart both landscapes and cityscapes with symbolic meaning. The rivers, mountains, and lakes are imbued with almost mystical significance as the wellsprings of national values. Francis (1997) notes that the mythologizing of the wilderness has been a consistent theme in Canadian self-definition: “Our wilderness, on the other hand, is our own. It is a unique landscape which imparts to us a unique set of characteristics” (p. 150). The images in the text depict a harmony of humanity and nature, urban living and rural recreation adjacent to one another. Through the invention of this uniqueness, the natural wilderness becomes part of a mythology of Canada: “The urban middle class which, no longer having to struggle with the wilderness on a daily basis, has elevated it to the level of romantic myth” (Francis, 1997, p. 151).

These ubiquitous images offer a potential for teachers and students to initiate critical discussions of environmental policies and practices, some of which may bring into question imaginings of Canadians as environmental stewards. Images that mythologize the past, particularly when contested or the focus of public debate, “potentially offer an opportunity to examine how people are thinking about their collective pasts and, thus, how they seek to position themselves for the future” (Seixas & Clark, 2004, p. 147).

The places that are represented do not need to be specific and identifiable by name to be flags for Canada. Canada is flagged by images of the Parliament buildings in Ottawa through their symbolic position as the seat of the federal government (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997c, p. 108); Cameron & Derwing, 2004, p. 132, p. 133; Shapiro & Adelson-Goldstein, 1999, p. 114) and by the CN Tower as an identifiable landmark of the Toronto skyline (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997c, p. 26; Zuern, 2005, p. 65, p. 69). Canada is no less flagged, however, by images of a canola grain elevator in Holland, Manitoba (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997d, cover). Canadian cities are repeatedly represented through images of urban beauty often in harmony with nature: the snow-covered roofs and decorated streets of Rue St. Louis, Quebec City (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997b, cover); the skyline of False Creek with mountains behind and sailboats and green space in front (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1998a, cover); and bicyclists riding down wide streets in Victoria, BC, “one of the warmest cities in Canada,” where, student readers are told, “there are flowers almost all year round” (Cameron & Derwing, 2004, p. 7). Canada is also ‘flagged’ through images of wide open rural spaces—a winding road in Prince Edward Island, the Rocky Mountains, a quiet lake in Banff (Berish & Thibaudeau, 1997c, p. 108); the Rocky mountains in winter, farms dotted across the prairie landscape, the countryside in Quebec, remote and rocky Newfoundland, and Baffin Island (Cameron & Derwing, 2004, pp. 7-10).

### The Flag Saluted

Billig (1995), discussing Barthes' (1957/1973) essay *Myth Today*, distinguishes between a flag being saluted by a soldier (as depicted on the cover of a magazine) and a flag on the cover of a magazine, which it would not be necessary to salute. The flag "waved" requires a salute from the soldier, but those passing the magazine stand would not need to salute the "unwaved" flag on the cover of a magazine. The flag remains at hand to be waved on certain occasions reproducing hotter forms of nationalism (Çirakman, 2011).

**Teaching the flag.** The maple leaves in the corners of textbooks, the maps, the images of Canada's Parliament, and the coins in our pockets are unwaved flags, requiring little from us and giving us little in return other than the reminder that the nation is still with us. It is in this sense that Billig (1995) characterizes flags as banal. While these flaggings of nation are banal, they also have a pedagogical purpose: identified textbooks present these images as symbols for Canada. The repetitive flaggings participate in the process through which the symbolism may become unremarked and unremarkable.

These texts also, however, teach the flag to student readers—teaching its appearance, its origins, and the appropriate thoughts Canadians should have when it is planted on mountaintops or gazed upon. The explanation of national symbols varies from the unremarked flaggings that are often referred to as banal nationalism; they are not, however, examples of the hot variety of nationalism. The brief moments of pedagogical nationalism within these texts are no less banal than the unexplicated flaggings in that they reproduce nation while taking it for granted and assuming no challenges to the ideology of nation.

Bates (1991) tells the story of Sharon Wood, "the first Canadian woman to climb Everest" (p. 71), and depicts her and a colleague planting a Canadian flag on the summit (p. 70). Student readers are reminded that pride is the appropriate feeling to accompany the raising of the flag: "She and Dwayne felt proud as they placed the Canadian flag on top of the world" (p. 71). Through the flag, the heroic Canadian is able to represent an imagined community "on top of the world" (p. 71).

Bates (1991) follows that story with a reading exercise that explains the flag's significance:

Canada became a country on July 1, 1867, but Canadians didn't get their own flag until 1965, almost one hundred years later. You may want to know why. The reason is that many Canadians remembered Britain as their homeland and wanted to fly the British flag called the Union Jack.

After the First and Second World Wars, Canadians felt more independent and wanted their own flag. The only problem was that some people wanted a flag with a small Union Jack on it, and others wanted a truly Canadian Flag. The government looked at thousands of different flags and finally decided on the red and white flag we have today. The maple leaf, in the centre, is a symbol of Canada. Canadians think of their country whenever they see it. (p. 75)

The passage positions the reader as someone who may want to know about nation and represents nation as worth knowing about. It speaks of Canadians who desire nation,

investing themselves in its symbols. It opens up a moment of contestation between Canadians who remembered Britain and those who wanted to be “truly Canadian,” which it quickly resolves with the flag “we have today.” The text marks the nation as a community of members who desired their nation-ness.

Bates (1991) asserts that “Canadians think of their country whenever they see [the maple leaf]” (p. 75). Billig (1995), however, argues that members of a nation do not think of their country whenever they see its flag. Flags, being so familiar and numerous, ensure that nation is remembered but not “mindfully” so (p. 38). Nation becomes always present, always marked, but seldom consciously attended to.

**Performing nationalism.** The anthem is also *taught*. Student readers of Cameron and Derwing (2004) are invited to sing the Canadian national anthem. This anthem is presented as something that might be learnt in preparation for ceremonies marking the awarding of citizenship:

Canadians sing the national anthem (see lyrics to *O Canada!* at the side) at hockey games, rodeos, baseball games, and other sporting events. They also sing it at citizenship ceremonies and on Canada Day. As a class, sing *O Canada!* (p. 42)

Cameron and Derwing (2004) invite students to share “the national anthem of your first country” (p. 42), reaffirming the universality and perceived importance of nationhood. Zuern (2007) presents the anthem beside an article on becoming a Canadian citizen, the pedagogical purpose of learning the anthem thereby being made clear. Bates (1991) invites student readers to “Sing Canada’s National Anthem” (p. xx) and, later on the same page, to “sing your country’s national anthem to the class” (p. xx), which is either redundant or reminds student readers that Canada is not “your country”—an example of the routine deixis through which little words say a lot (Billig, 1995, p. 106).

**Divergent performances.** If the repeated performance of particular national anthems makes them banal, divergent performances become moments of contestation and renegotiation of nation. The appearance of “The Royal Anthem” in Carver et al. (1993) and its lack of inclusion in other identified textbooks suggests the extent to which competing understandings of Canada exist. While both French and English versions of the lyrics appear in Carver et al. (1993), only the English versions appear in Cameron and Derwing (2004) and Bates (1991). Cameron and Derwing (2004) mention debate over the lyrics of *O Canada*:

Some people feel that the third line in *O Canada*—“True patriot love in all thy sons command”—should be “True patriot love in all of us command” to reflect all Canadians. Other people think that the word “sons” refers to soldiers who have given their lives for Canada. They believe it would be disrespectful to change the words. What do you think? (Cameron and Derwing, 2004, p. 42)

With the choice offered between two differing lyrics for the national anthem, student readers are given the opportunity to critique particular constructions of nation while nationality itself remains uncritiqued. Within the banal nationalism of the text that

assures us that Canadians sing the national anthem, the authors make room for the imaginings of gendered nation-ness to be mildly challenged, opening the door to the possibility of future reimaginings. These expected reimaginings, however, remain within the terrain of valuations of nation.

### Summary and Implications

The identified textbooks inundate readers with flags that are meant to remain unsaluted symbols of nation. Some identified textbooks also point to the flag and remind readers that it is to be saluted at times, teaching student readers that to be Canadian, one should feel the occasional surge of pride upon seeing the flag, and stand and sing the national anthem. The textbooks acknowledge moments in which the imagined community of Canada has been contested, but always do so within the frame of an ideology of nationalism. Readers are invited to discuss which words for the national anthem to sing, but not whether national anthems should be sung.

The constant flagging of nation in texts is not surprising or unexpected. Given the ubiquity of the notion of nation, the teaching of specific nation-ness is both powerful and interested knowledge. The constant flagging of the nation, however, is not accompanied by a recognition of its contestedness and interestedness. As such, the banal nationalism of these texts participates in the naturalising of the idea of nation and of the established imaginings of Canadian-ness.

These texts do more than teach the symbols of Canada: they teach the emotions one should feel about Canada, legitimise Canadian claims to nationalized space, and they imply a community of Canadians who share a set of beliefs and practices. The representations of nation not only inform students about how Canada is marked but make an argument for how Canada *should* be marked. Student readers are taught to read the maple leaf, the loon, and the anthem as representing Canada and Canadian values. They are taught that the world is divided into discrete nations, each with particular instances of the universal nation-ness. They are taught to value nation and taught to imagine some people—those people who understand, read, and reproduce these performances of nation—as members of that nation. Finally, they are taught that if they wish to become members of that nation, they should also understand, read, and reproduce these performances.

The nationalizing representations are banal, particularly for those thoroughly familiar with the many ways of flagging of Canada, but they are not necessarily benign. Student readers of these textbooks may have differing experiences with nation and nationalism. Their previous encounters with nationalist ideologies may have been disconcerting or painful. They may be seeking a form of community that is not centred on an ideology of nation. They may see the imagining of national communities as an over-reaching claim to moral legitimacy that often supports policies and practices that cannot be otherwise justified. Alternatively, they may strongly desire the particular representations and discourses that are often imagined as uniquely Canadian and may fully embrace the symbols and images that flag Canada.

This article is not accusatory. While the term nationalism is often applied only to those who believe in nations that lack discursive legitimacy, I have argued that discursive markings of Canada are a form of everyday and banal nationalism. That ESL textbooks

can both engage repeatedly in the reproduction of national tropes while disowning any nationalist intentions belies the extent to which this form of nationalism predominates in contemporary society.

As educators, we are often encouraged to reflect upon our practices and the complicated ways in which they may participate in the reproduction, contestation, and transformation of social norms. When we introduce nationalizing representations to our students, we should recognize them as such and consider the extent to which competing discourses may exist. We should introduce, acknowledge, or allow for competing claims to nationhood within the geographic area known as Canada, competing subject positions upon which one might constitute an identity, and competing social groupings around which one might imagine community.

I have no doubt that student readers of these textbooks may benefit from an understanding of how Canada is imagined and the symbols and ideas that the imagined community of Canadians claim as their own. Teachers should remember, however, that newcomer students may be struggling to establish identities that reference local, national, online, or global communities (Lee & Hébert, 2006; Jones & Merriman, 2009; Saunders, 2006; Skey, 2009). Teachers should recognize (and many, no doubt, do) that these representations of nation are a form of nationalism, remembering that when “we” speak “as Canadians,” we are engaging in everyday nationalism.

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