**Philip Resnick – Thinking English Canada (1994)**

**Thesis:**

English Canada constitutes a sociological nation, albeit one that is largely unaware of itself. English Canadians must recognize this, and begin to grapple with their identity without illusions. The Canadian constitutional conversation will be more coherent and likely to be settled, and relationships with Quebec and Aboriginals less conflictual if English Canada comes to grips with its own nationhood.

**Main Arguments:**

Political community and national sentiment need not coincide. The more willing we are to embrace sociological diversity in our understanding of nationality, the greater the possibility of making progress in resolving conflicts that national differences engender. Imagining, as English Canadians do, that Canada is a single nation means there is no room for discussion of recognition of Quebec or Aboriginals, and puts us in a zero-sum game in which the survival of Canada seems to be endangered by concessions to minority nations.

The crises facing multinational federations are clearly a result of attempts to repress national sentiments which always end up blowing up when the powers of coercion weaken. English Canadians can contribute to renewing the constitution and preventing such disasters by recognizing themselves as a nation.

The English Canadian sociological nation is defined by language and culture. English Canadian political culture is marked by a particular blend of conservatism, liberalism and social democracy. The nation draws its identity from the cultural creativity of recent decades. The 1960s constituted a re-birth for English Canada much as it did for Quebec.

Multiculturalism is positive up to a point, but English Canadians should not deny themselves the ability to imagine their own nation. English language must be given primacy, there should be at least a minimal sense of collective past and history, and there must be a sense of place. Also, despite regional identities, English Canada should not be thought of as a community of communities. There should be a prevailing unity of English speakers in the country.

English Canada should seek a vehicle to build common citizenship and shared values (for English Canadians). This could be an Estates General with representatives from the 9 English-speaking provinces, as well as the English minority in Quebec. Unitary political organization is appropriate for English Canada when Quebec is taken out of the equation. By constructing the English Canadian sociological nation and finding an institutional form for it, we can advance the Canadian conversation by demonstrating the multinational nature of the country.

**Method//Approach:**

In part, Resnick takes a comparative approach, considering the problems facing contemporary multinational federations in general at the outset of the text. There is also a theoretical discussion of what constitutes nationhood. The bulk of the book is an interpretive essay about the history and culture of English Canada.

**Contributions**

This is an important work in the development of the concept of multinationalism in Canada (and thus, a justifiable inclusion amongst works on Quebec). Subsequently, the Quebec-Canada conversation has become subsumed within the theoretical and empirical literature on multinationalism and this was a first step in that direction. Resnick helped move the conversation away from *sui generis* *-*type arguments about the nature of Canada towards multinationalism more broadly. This shift from dualism to multinationalism (at least at the level of rhetoric) is also reflected towards the end of the McRoberts text. With Gagnon and Iacovino, that transformation seems to be complete.

It's a rare text in its focus on multinationalism from an English Canadian perspective. Other scholars, including Will Kymlicka, McRoberts and a variety of Quebecois writers, have been influenced by Resnick's contention that English Canadians need to be come more nationally self-conscious. Gibbins and Laforest, in the edited collection Beyond the Impasse: Reconciling the Solitudes, advance a vision similar to his “Quebec-Canada Union” which takes English Canada as a partner national unit.