

## CULTURAL NATIONALISM AND AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL PRIDE IN *CARTOONS*

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**Abstract:**

*The concept of nation implies a large community of people with apparent difference in language, culture, ethnicity, and history; who share a singular identity with a territory or government. Nation and culture are inseparably linked and is a common way of life which unites people together. A contested identity of a multicultural nation is of currency in literature today and 'nationalism' has been looked upon from different positions. The concept of a nation is emotionally associated and therefore imagination has a vital role in defining or describing a nation. Works of art which are treasured by the readers accompanied by imagination play a key role in the transmission and dissemination of national images, memories and myths. Culture is one of the building blocks of a nation and the culture of a nation often serves as the national culture which ultimately shapes a nation. Recently, nationalism became an ideology which is directly linked to the notion of sovereignty. Australia is believed today as the warmest and most welcoming home of different cultures but with strong cultural nationalistic ideologies. 'Real Australian' stories are made by Australians, for Australians, using only Australians, and only in Australia. These Australian stories are questioned clearly through cartoons. The production of Australian multicultural stories is spirited enough to question the 'cultural pride' in the country. Australia assures equity of status to all cultures, but let us not fool ourselves that there is any solid logic to this.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural Nationalism, Ethnicity, Australian Diaspora, Cultural Pride and Multiculturalism.*

The concept of nation implies a large community of people with apparent difference in language, culture, ethnicity, and history; who share a singular identity with a territory or government. Nation and culture are inseparably linked and is a common way of life which unites people together. A contested identity of a multicultural nation is of currency in literature today and 'nationalism' has been looked upon from different positions. The concept of a nation is emotionally associated and therefore imagination has a vital role in defining or describing a nation. Works of art which are treasured by the readers accompanied by imagination play a key role in the transmission and dissemination of national images, memories and myths. Culture is one of the building blocks of a nation and the culture of a nation often serves as the national culture which ultimately shapes a nation. Recently, nationalism became an ideology which is directly linked to the notion of sovereignty. Australia is believed today as the warmest and most welcoming home of different cultures but with strong cultural, nationalistic ideologies. 'Real Australian' stories are made by Australians, for Australia. These Australian stories are questioned clearly through cartoons. The production of Australian multicultural stories is spirited enough to question the 'cultural pride' in the country.

This article takes its subject matter as the images which represent the concept and policy of Multiculturalism in Australia. These images represent specific aspect of the superiority of white Australians. Their racist attitude, political outlook, and cultural democracy can be assumed as the voice of the 'True Blue Aussie'. The article sets out to read these images in two ways: through the art as spectacles of aesthetics; and secondly, as it mirrors the interspaces between cultures. The object is to understand the everyday assumptions - about Multiculturalism in Australia, about its working, about political and

governmental policies - which the cartoonists shared with their audience, and which facilitated to shape into abstractions like class, culture and nation. I also endeavor to interrogate the 'cultural pride' that cartoonists or artists found in terms of cultural identity. The rich visual material contained in these cartoons and the politics behind its representations concerned with issues of class and cultural identity are analyzed.

The political cartoonist, John Ditchburn represents the bifurcation in the Australian society regarding cultural pluralism. Ditchburn exposes the decaying of multiculturalism as well as the xenophobic pulsations among the whites. In the image, 'RIP' to Multiculturalism is displayed and a Muslim and a White Australian are going opposite direction tearing the flag of Multiculturalism. The white man represents a group called 'Reclaim Australia' and now they are called as 'True Blue Crew' formed in 2015 are described by academics as displaying "overt white racism, xenophobia and social conservatism aimed at bolstering male values and privilege. They understand themselves as Australian patriots preserving and protecting white, Anglo-Saxon heritage against particular groups including Muslims, Jews, immigrants and indigenous Australians" (180). The 'True Blue Crew' were attempting to arrange vigilante patrols to monitor the 'out-laws' in the society like the Muslims and young African men. The Africans were placed in the lower strata in the 'invisible' multicultural pyramid. But here, Ditchburn is focusing on the intolerance of Aussies towards Muslims. Muslims became the subject of fear and threat as some Australians assume an inherent connection of terrorism with Islam. The very fear is politicized to fend off Muslims from the multicultural land. Ditchburn clearly delineates the slow death of multiculturalism and an emerging nationalism based on white culture.



This cartoon appeared in the editorial of 'The Herald' by Peter Lewis in April 2105 regarding the 'Reclaim Rally' in New South Wales. Lewis looks at the concept of 'Reclaim Australia' from the indigenous perspective. It also captures the protest of 'True Blues' against immigration and multiculturalism. They are struggling for the claim of Australia for 'Pure Australians'. At the same time the indigenous couple in the image also wish if they could claim their Australia which was branded as 'Terra Nullius' by the forefathers of these protesting white Aussies. It was the land of Indigenous people who were called by the Whites as aboriginals or Abos. Their long struggles to reclaim their own land went in vain. The cruelty meted out to the natives by the whites can never be forgotten or forgiven by them. With their land, they lose their identity and now struggling to place themselves among the multicultural space in Australia. Those who claimed the land from the indigenous people are clamoring for it by the reason of their 'racial purity' and it seems to be awkward.



Matt Parrott pictures the ironic situation of the most promised aspect of multiculturalism: right to perform racial and cultural identity. The white man's comment, "we are a very tolerant society", itself is a statement of superiority and it gives the implied meaning that they are civilized and empathetic towards migrants and at the same time they want the immigrants to follow the 'Aussie way of life'. This image represents the racist attitude of White Australians that they will accept and accommodate those who live according to the 'white standards'. Through this cartoon, Parrott satirizes the hypocrisy of the whites.



Chris Wildt, the cartoonist expresses his idea about how diversity works in Australian multiculturalism. It is a much thought provoking one and it satirically portrays the definition of 'diversity in Australia' in 2015. Here Chris states that they have attained diversity and now they have to compartmentalize the diversity marking every boundary clearly visible and in that way amalgamating all cultures. That's is exactly what happens in the multicultural world of Australia. Australia finds it hard to make out the 'unity in diversity' and the efforts rather makes it a 'categorized diversity'. It offers nothing but a catalogue of different cultures and nationalities. The core of multiculturalism is diversity and its success is determined by the harmony among the multiplicity. The image demonstrates that Australian society had attained diversity but they cannot make it 'United, Strong and Successful' as they claim in their latest Multicultural Government Policy Statement which was released in March 2018.



Ditchburn's another cartoon which depicts how Australians celebrate their national pride. Ditchburn tries to unearth the truth that Australians assume full of pride about their Nation than other immigrants. The Australians try to project their cultural pride as National one. The Artist shows that their national pride shifts soon from a 'multicultural pride' to a 'True Blue' pride.



The same flag acts as a weapon of violence towards the non-whites. Australian national pride is projected not as the pride of the diverse ethnic groups from across the globe; but as the pride of Anglo-Saxon racial pride. It indirectly hints towards the 'One Nation' policy propagated by Pauline Hanson. Hanson's 'One Nation' Policy promised to drastically reduce immigration, particularly Asian immigration and to abolish discriminatory policies attached to Aboriginal and multicultural affairs. Hanson and her followers believed that multiculturalism is a threat to the very basis of the Australian culture and values, 'One Nation' spirit against immigration and multicultural policies can be traced from the image. White Australians possess a

cultural pride and they associate it with their national pride. As Brendan O'Leary believes "Nationalism is a very strong force in the modern world, in most cases it prevails, and it does set the standard for what constitutes a modern state... Nationalism implies that loyalty to the nation should be the first virtue of a citizen" (203). In this context, whether the immigrant Australian citizen's loyalty towards the nation is questioned and threatened in the multicultural Australia. White Australian Cultural nationalism, as Edward Alden observes "is exclusionary, arguing basically that the country should circle ... around the white man's world" (108). John Ditchburn implies that some Australians are using nationalism to justify racial violence.

Amy, a non-white seven year old child from New South Wales speaks at great lengths about Multicultural Australia. Amy illustrates how much hesitant are the white men to become assimilated into social harmony. This image gives a glimpse about the conversation between an Indian and an Australian. How culture and language affects the social cohesion in Australia is well depicted here. The image narrates that the Indian English is not accepted or looked down upon by the White Aussie. Though the Indian speaks in English, the other man mocks and asks him to speak 'his English'. The White man is shown as a confident and smart and on the other hand, the Indian is depicted as diffident and apprehensive. The White man's T shirt bears the inscription "IF YOU DON'T LOVE IT LEAVE". 'Love



Australia or Leave' is an Australian political party registered for federal elections since October 2016. The party platform includes opposition to immigration and Islam in Australia, founded by Kim Vuga who had appeared in a television documentary in 2015 called 'Go Back to Where You Came From' which sought to expose the interests of ordinary Australians towards refugees and asylum seekers. She used the slogan 'Love Australia or Leave' which has become the name of her party. Thus the insecurity of a seven year old child in Australia is revealed through this image. Amy represents younger generation in Australia and in her eyes, multiculturalism seems to be unsuccessful. It reveals the apprehension of non-white migrant in Australia to get accommodated and accepted in a white society. It points to the threatened status of multiculturalism in Australia. Mutual respect and recognition in a multicultural society can be achieved through 'mutual exchanges' as observed by Pinto,

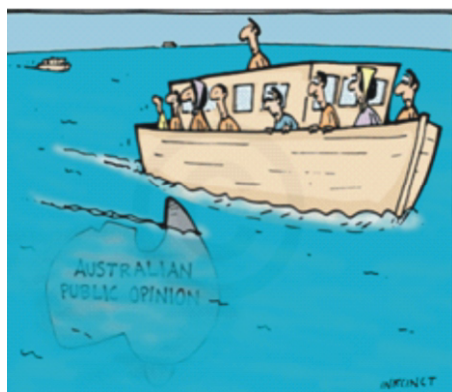
Individuals shape their cultural identity in the process of dialogue, and they aim at getting recognition for it from society. This process of dialogue is also a process of struggle for recognition. In other words, people do not simply receive recognition for the way they form their cultural identity. They have to win it through exchange. This process can also fail. People do not receive recognition from society for every life choice. (703)

Australian multiculturalism sometimes fails to receive the recognition for ethnic migrants. Their struggles to affirm and perform a particular cultural or ethnic identity creates intricacies and in some way it fixes an inferior status among the "true Aussies".

The next image is a cliché image of the depiction of cultural difference in terms of outfits by Karsten, Schley. Schley gives the impression that the Whites believe that their outfits make them superior and they are proud in their dressing. They look down upon other's dressing. Meital Pinto analyses that "claims of offence to feelings as claims of offence to integrity of cultural identity... the more one's cultural identity is vulnerable, the more severe is the offence to the integrity of his or her cultural identity" (697). A distinct dress code cannot be practical in a multicultural country and it is very close to the cultural identity. People those who use head wears and long dress as a part of their religious identity is also debated, especially the Muslims in Australia. Pinto also argues that "every individual has a prima facie right to be protected from all acts that offend the integrity of his or her cultural identity. In particular, minority members with vulnerable identities require state protection from offensive acts if substantive equality is to be achieved" (698). But how far this is probable is to be analyzed.



Now let's have a look at Australia's policy on "Boat People" or the illegal immigrants in Australia. This image is also caricatured by John Ditchburn. He clearly articulates that the majority of Aussies are against the 'Boat people'. The asylum seekers are not welcomed in Australia and are perceived as criminals. The Aussies view them as a threat to their white-values and customs. They seemed to be blind against the



question of survival of these asylum seekers. The Australian public opinion acts as a shark to devour the asylum seekers. The asylum seekers will not be allowed to settle in Australia. BBC News in 2017 October reported that those who reach Australia by boat are sent to "an offshore processing center. Currently Australia has one such center on the Pacific island nation of Nauru and another on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. Even if these asylum seekers are found to be refugees, they are not allowed to be settled in Australia." (Australia Asylum: Why is it Controversial). The plight of asylum seekers can be understood from this. Ruby Hamad holds the opinion about the reason behind the rejection of 'boat people' in Australia:

This cultural and language gap is one way in which our politicians have secured public support; *they are different, they can't speak English, they could be a threat, we are better than them*. English is the marker that separates the desirables from the undesirables. As such, this scene flips the first days of colonial settlement and Terra Nullius on its head, where the Aboriginal population's lack of English was all the justification the British needed to claim the land. (Boat People: Why It's Getting Harder To Look Away)

The asylum seekers have to go a long way to get recognized in the Australian society which has deep rooted backing in the Anglo-Saxon heritage.

My approach here follows in understanding the images used in these cartoons as an aspect of idealization of 'the people' or identification of 'the people' with the nation and the nation with the 'Australian white culture'. It leads to a conceptualization of the ideal Australian as the White Anglo-Saxon Australian. These cartoons can be read in the other way around; like it reflects a rejection of those racial others whose difference threatens the 'true blue' Australian race. As Martyn Bond considers, that multiculturalism is "in some ways the term confuses more than it clarifies" (14). This paper tries to analyze the meaning of Multiculturalism articulated through cartoons. These political cartoons help to cognize how these 'Australians' and their institutions functioned within and against a range of class structures. The graphic images narrates the complexities of abstractions like cultural pride and its relationship with nationalism. In O'Leary's words, "Though nationalism often comes packaged with fairy-tales, its myths are no less plausible than those of social contracts, class struggles, wars between the sexes, immemorial traditions, intimations, or the natural harmony of interests" (219). Australian Nationalism, in that sense is packed with fairy tales of multiculturalism, equity of status, social cohesion and cultural harmony. It is evident that Australian multicultural stories endorse a kind of 'mono-cultural pride' in the country. Australia assures equity of status to all cultures, but let us not fool ourselves that there is solid logic to this.

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