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Echoing in the Silence of Redemption
Discourses of nationhood and identity in Quebec

Michelle Gagnon

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Communications

Presented in partial fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 1994

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ISBN 0-315-90834-3

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ABSTRACT

Echoing in the Silence of Redemption:
Discourses of nationhood and identity in Quebec

Michelle Gagnon

For the last thirty years, Quebec has been in a constant state of political upheaval. Whether locked in constitutional sessions with the federal government or busying itself at home with the more domestic issues of sovereignty and independence, the political and social conjunctures of this period have bred a complex system of governmental, economic and cultural interpenetration. Outlining and employing the two key concepts of governmentality and l'identitaire to cut into the complexity of this system, this work represents a criticism of this system's articulation of a collective québécois identity predicated on the restrictions of nationhood. The domains of narrative television and cultural policy are analysed as key sites of this system's production of singular versions of culture and identity that function to close down possibilities much more than they foster a sense of belonging or develop the ground for future cultural development.

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Introduction

*Il n'y a pas de lucidité sans
infractions.*

Fernand Dumont

This is probably the most opportunistic sentiment I've encountered throughout my research. And it's also the most useful way of explaining some of the choices I've made in writing what follows. Whether this makes me opportunistic as well, I'm not quite sure. It doesn't matter very much to me either, because if in trying to clarify a few things, I've pushed against the grain or rubbed some the wrong way, there has been reason, some necessity to mucking around a little.

In looking at specific aspects of québécois society, in thinking about particular contradictions and trying to decipher how they developed and what they imply, I've necessarily omitted a few others. I make no pretence to offering a comprehensive portrait, but just aspire to being comprehensible; I can't presume the consequential character of what follows, but can strive to say something of consequence. So somewhere between being opportunistic and attempting to say something, there is a reason for my appreciation of Dumont's justification of infraction. Which is that crossing a few lines was the only way I saw fit to proceed.

Any project of this scope either starts from personal investment or at least demands it once begun. In hindsight I've decided that, in this case, it proceeds from it.

Without going into my personal genealogy and boring everyone to death from the word go, I'll limit my explanation of implication to the fact that the particular political conjuncture that has existed in Quebec during my lifetime has made it a place of commitment.

You need a reason for being here.

Maybe more so now than before, now that Montreal has been declared the poorest city in Canada, beating out Fredericton and St-John's in a battle we might have been happier losing. Or now that this January was declared the coldest month ever on record in Quebec, which makes it the chilliest thirty-one days in about a hundred years. So either you have a job or you like skiing; you're born, bred and raised; you're French, so it's your home; you're English, so no one is going to drive you from your home; your family is here; you recently immigrated here; or, simply, you just can't get out of here, however hard you try. Regardless, you still need a reason.

And that's because Quebec has been in a state of rather constant upheaval for the last thirty years. Whether locked in constitutional sessions with the federal government or merely in contradiction with itself, whether being contrary or contested, it isn't the easiest place to live. Sure, apartments are cheap and it's actually possible to live on rather little. The crime rate is fairly low. Medicare, unemployment insurance and welfare ensure a certain level of

necessity that isn't insured in many other countries. Economic disparity is wide, but not yet productive of the social ills besieging major American cities. And our poverty is only poverty in relativistic terms. In relation to more than half the world, it's a very good place to live. But Quebec's global situation isn't my point and relativism is a somewhat compromised analytic framework. The point is, then, that once you're here, it's just not always that easy.

The language laws that demanded that nothing but French adorn our storefronts and direct our traffic until last year still dictate language of education according to rather byzantine criteria. A complicated history of governmental reappropriations has functioned to assert a certain level of provincial autonomy which, however, doesn't come without the cost of a certain bureaucratic dualism. Double income tax, double service tax, double the bureaucracy. And, partly due to the technocratic nature of Quebec's assertiveness, Quebec has developed a bureaucratic system which flows through corporate endeavours and down to insinuate itself into almost every aspect of daily life. Add to this the machinations of municipal governments, a police force in Montreal that has a bad reputation for abusing its authority and shooting the wrong guy, and the whole becomes rather overbearing.

It's also a fairly antagonistic place. Although somewhat more infrequent now, catcalls to the effect of

"Apprends donc l'français" used to be rather usual street-fare. And back in 1980 at the time of the referendum, I was still in highschool. In hindsight, the idea of dozens of fourteen-year olds arguing at recess over whether or not Quebec should separate is fairly astounding. And their partisanship was nothing mediocre as it came accompanied by their lapel button pronouncements of Oui, No, Yes, or Non, (and sporting a "Yes" button in my school was definitely a commitment). What this has meant to me then, is that Quebec is not only a heavily governmentalized society, but a very politicized one as well.

Everything matters a lot.

And people are rarely satisfied.

And this partly explains why it's a place of commitment. But the differences of commitment also make it a place of contention. And commitment and contention side by side tend to breed potentially inflammatory situations riven with confrontation and contradiction, and rarely resolved by compromise. And since the referendum, compromise seems to be all the Quebec government has had to offer, an unfortunate fact that does little but attribute this same character to the government itself and, by some extension, to the whole province.

Like all compromises, they appear satisfying from the outside, perhaps even the result of some laudatory consensus. But, in fact they are far from being benign in

their implications and ramifications which effect the ways we think of ourselves and construct the means by which we know our society. So, if the knowledges we have about ourselves and our society are limited to compromises, we are not only limited individually and socially, but compromised in both these ways, and politically as well. This, then, is one of the reasons I've tried to write the following without making more compromises than necessary for this type of project. But this is only one of the reasons. The other elements which explain my means of proceeding are specific to the writing strategies employed and the type of analysis followed to make a few important points about a place I keep coming back to, presumably because it is my home.

On writing

Like many people, I went back to university after a few years leave. My decision to return and stay, however, was contingent on being able to do and say what I wanted. Well, at least within the academic parameters I was acquainted with and recognized as part of the reason to return. The idea of being coherent and consistent appeals to me, for instance. And luckily, by the time I went back, the dedication to objectivity I'd previously been instructed to adopt had pretty well dropped off the roster of academic requirements.

It had become quite acceptable to implicate oneself in writing. And the point to writing had been shifted away from establishing the proof of some truth to the more useful exercise of revealing tendencies and paradoxes within a set of given circumstances. I hadn't much appreciated learning to write without myself, not so much out of authorial pretension as out of a healthy contempt for the concept of undergraduate authoritativeness. And the idea of objectivity never really grabbed me much either, let alone the concept of truth. Other people's truths--which weren't supposed to be people's, but just truth--rarely appeal to me. And this probably explains my means of proceeding as much as Dumont's statement supports them.

The first of these "infractions", then, is in the realm of language. This analysis of discourses of québécois identity is written in both English and French. Granted, my contribution is predominantly English but many of the quotes which explain, support or preface my arguments are left in the original French. They haven't been translated for a few reasons, the most important of which is implied in the adoption of a discursive model of analysis. The choice of this model depends on the belief that the primary material of language itself carries social meaning: that language is expressive of cultural characteristics, preferences and priorities, so that it is through language that such elements are apprehensible and by which they get

assimilated. And, to this extent, it seemed important to leave the discursive constructions which build identities and structure self-knowledge in the form and language in which they're initially offered and argued. In this way, they not only represent the logic on which these identities and knowledges are predicated, but illustrate the density of their construction.

The second reason is somewhat more personal but equally directive. Being a linguistic hybrid of Canada's B&B era, I've never felt like defining myself as either French or English since I am both. Perhaps not equally in all respects, but nonetheless both. And other people seem to decide for me anyhow: French people tell me I'm English, English people think I'm French. And that's why I've never wanted to make the commitment: it seems to matter much more to others than it does to me. And I don't think that it should be something that matters to the point of inclusion and exclusion, to the point where it assigns not just cultural traits, but opinions and concerns attached immediately and fundamentally to the language of choice. So, apart from the fact that much of the literature about the province is in French, I decided to write about Quebec in Quebec using both languages I've always used to know and understand the place I live.

Which brings me to a second point about the writing of this project, one which also concerns structure and form. As

the preceding pages might indicate, I have a certain predilection for the anecdotal and aphoristic, and a much more troubled relationship with the linearity of truths proposed as the logical conclusion to analytic trajectories. The "truth of the matter" is always much less believable than are its tendencies, its possibilities or its exceptions. And it is precisely because anecdotal and more partial, sometimes personal, renditions of circumstances function to evoke the possibilities and tendencies of such circumstances that they are useful. Meaghan Morris speaks of using anecdotes much this way, arguing somewhat more technically against their usual connective role to grant them the referential character she assigns them:

I take anecdotes, or yarns, to be primarily referential. They are oriented futuristically towards the construction of a precise, local, and social discursive context, of which the anecdote then functions as a *mise en abime*. That is to say, anecdotes for me are not expressions of personal experience but allegorical expositions of a model of the way the world can be said to be working. So anecdotes need not be true stories, but they must be functional in a given exchange. (Morris 1990: 15)

And, by and large, the anecdotes she speaks of, and the fragments I've included, are not just "as functional" as the claims they accompany, but work to complement them. They add to the specificity of the claims by opening them up, showing how they are articulated in other places, by other people. Accordingly, lengthy fragments from related and unrelated literature and life have been included somewhat

strategically in the hope of relating, whenever possible, the specificity of Quebec to something larger than itself.

This, because it is precisely the self-referentiality of certain versions of québécois identity that concerns me here. Specifically, it is the ways the institutional discourses of public policy and popular culture work to reinforce and reproduce a dominant version of a collective québécois identity predicated on a particularly linear version of our history and a rather standard formula of nation-building that is the object of my criticism. And that is precisely what this is: a work of criticism, an important qualification which brings me to a second explanation of the choices I've made in order to follow this argument through.

Of discourse

This is not a work of prescription or ultimate conclusion. Quite differently, it is a diagnostic analysis which seeks to ascertain the reasons for the development and circulation of very consequential perspectives and premises I consider rather faulty. Although it necessarily proceeds through a series of facts and does assign causality here and there, it doesn't seek either to establish facts or assign ultimate determinacy. Rather, this work is designed as an attempt to question "the already-said at the level of its existence." (Foucault 1972: 131) And although this would seem to imply a lot, it does mean something very specific at the level of

discourse and as related to the formation of nationalist discourses and their articulation of québécois identities.

Specifically, it means adopting a Foucauldian perspective on the means and purposes to creating truths. That is, it means endorsing the belief that truths are established by means of various forms of power that necessarily exclude other possibilities and people; that these truths are formed as means to direct, govern and regulate people within their broader socio-political context; and that these truths are at least, formative of subjectivity and, at worse, programmings of behaviour:¹

These programmings of behaviour, these regimes of jurisdiction and veridiction aren't abortive schemas for the creation of reality. They are fragments of reality which induce such particular effects in the real as the distinction between true and false implicit in the ways men 'direct', 'govern' and 'conduct' themselves and others. To grasp these effects as historical events--with what this implies for the question of truth (which is the question of philosophy itself)--this is more or less my theme. (Foucault 1981: 10-11)

And these "regimes of jurisdiction and veridiction" produced by various relations of power are themselves largely discernible through their discursive productions. It is by means of what gets said and re-said, and what gets left out in the process that such truths are created as means to regulate and validate.

¹ Specifically, the workings of a system of governmentality produce and negotiate the means of rule and regulation in a given society. It is by means of this type of model that I will be analysing the production and circulation of discourses of *l'identitaire* herein.

So, particular institutional practices and discourses then become the source of "calculated, reasoned prescriptions" which are meant to arrange, organize and reorganize other institutions, spaces, places and people. The role of discourse analysis is consequently that of breaching the self-evidence inscribed in such truths, of shaking the obviousness which grounds them as "common sense": "It means making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness that imposes itself uniformly on all." (Foucault 1981: 6)

And it is precisely the repeated invocation of an historical constant bearing on our identity, of an anthropological interpretation of culture, and of an obviousness assigned to the nature of Quebec's social constituency which is the subject of this contention. Specifically, the production and reproduction of a collective québécois identity predicated on a becoming, but grounded in historical justifications and anthropological legitimations which then represent it as outside the realm of question became the subject of this inquiry. Not only because of its suggested self-evidence, but because of the conditions it levels and the limits it constructs.

L'identitaire, the singularity I've defined as the tendency to ground identity in historical contingency, is

thus the focus of this work.² The limits it imposes to subjectivity are multiple, and the particular articulation it receives in Quebec fashions the constitution of a sovereign people according to its atavistic image, and makes this the basis of a broader political project and the justification for limiting culture to purely québécois parameters. Accordingly, the intricacy of the system which adopts this tendency and produces this identity also gets questioned, and this in terms of its very intricacy and of its means of producing particular truths about québécois society:

These programmes don't take effect in the institutions in an integral manner; they are simplified, or some are chosen and not others; and things never work out as planned...in fact there are different strategies which are mutually opposed, composed and superposed so as to produce permanent and solid effects which can perfectly well be understood in terms of their rationality...: this is what gives the resulting apparatus (dispositif) its solidity and suppleness. (Foucault 1981: 10)

The production of truth is nothing simple then, not merely the result of unnegotiated power. Discourses are neither linear nor simple objects of inquiry. Rather, the production of permanent and solid effects which result from their circulation can only result from the play of mutually-

² *L'identitaire* is used herein and throughout to indicate a process of discursive formation; it is designed to point to a propensity, to the process of articulating identity according to certain figures, and not used as a closed semantic reference. See Sherry Simon, "Espaces incertains de la culture, In: **Fictions de l'identitaire au Québec** (Simon et al.), Montreal: XYZ, 1991, pp. 15-52

encouraging institutions which form a *dispositif*, a network of interests for which a limited set of "realities" functions purposively.

As far as I can tell, a *dispositif* is nothing very clean. Not so much in its constitution (which is nonetheless also possible), but in the ways it functions. Its make-up is such that its distant and often-disparate parts often employ different strategies and mechanisms, or issue statements which contradict their other establishing pronouncements. And this despite a shared "interest" in maintaining the truth value of their production. That is to say, a *dispositif* falls very short of resembling anything organic, which is the whole point to employing it as an analytic framework for Quebec.

Thus, while cultural policy busies itself with collapsing culture into economy, and narrative television spends prime time blurring distinctions between the personal and political, and both ensure that identity becomes a condition of history, neither accomplish any of these moves unconditionally. None of the categories are clean, none of the distinctions made that clear. They can't be. To establish the truth of a favoured set of so-called realities, the distinctions and definitions of public policy and popular culture must compromise, must ignore any and all exceptions to their rule. So, as far as I'm concerned, *L'exception ne fait pas la règle* in this case.

And it is precisely because the formation of this québécois identity is based on a formula which seeks to generalize to the point of no exception that it not only necessarily excludes multiple possibilities, but also becomes an object demanding of criticism. Which is one more reason this work commits its infractions; that is, to challenge the "already-said", re-said, repeated and reproduced at the level of its existence:

Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction that concludes...It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is. (Foucault 1981: 13)

This is then a challenge to what is proposed as "what is". If not because such offerings, statements of "reality", have never met with my knowledge of what is, then because I've never thought reality to be a homogeneous, simple thing.

Accordingly, this intervention is designed as a challenge, as a critique of the knowledge about self and society that gets produced at a public level in Quebec. The choice of sites of analysis has perhaps limited the quotient of individual and collective agency which bears not only on the formation of these discourses, but on their opposition. This potential omission has little to do with believing in deterministic models of social formation, but rather in a belief in the strength and importance of institutional production. And as I've said, covering all bases has not

been my main goal because being comprehensive is very difficult without being boring. And because that hasn't been the point, anyhow.

Rather, the point has been to say something; to make an intervention about a very specific form of identification that gets circulated by particular institutions and according to definable interests. Not to design an institutional or governmental conspiracy, not to establish one truth that could then counter another. But to reveal the tendencies and paradoxes of a set of chosen circumstances which seemed worthy of attention because of all they disallow, limit, hinder and, ultimately, compromise. So, by prying open certain institutional meanings attributed to culture and identity in Quebec, by trying to say something coherent and consistent about their significance, I've hopefully opened up the possibility for other meanings to insinuate themselves into our definitions of self and society, meanings which are also "already-there" but don't always get recognized.

Chapter One

*Je note une fois de plus l'acharnement
du "sens commun" à interpréter les
choses à l'envers, en vertu de principes
et de vues a priori.*

Michel Tournier, *Les Météores*

While browsing through a magazine store recently, I ran across the tenth anniversary issue of *Vice Versa*, one of Montreal's better-known and more high-brow art-lit-crit-culture monthlies. This special edition was rather obliquely dedicated to the subject and person of the reputedly insane French poet, Antonin Artaud. The choice of topic seemed consequence of recent re-edition and revival of Artaud's verse, and timely given the concurrence of its release with a Spring symposium on and about the author. But despite this back-up explanation, the choice remained odd, if only in its singularity, for a magazine otherwise and for long dedicated to things "transcultural".

A trilingual magazine (French, English, Italian), *Vice Versa* has almost literally been the bandwagon for those favouring a so-called "third option" for Quebec culture. Its vision has consistently sought a version of culture which transgresses political and linguistic barriers, choosing instead to focus on its material aspects and its expression in and through language--or rather, languages. It has offered a portrait of urban and québécois culture composed of the influences, thoughts, preferences and privileges of

many; it has insisted that this culture not be tied to a French anvil, but rather, that it begin to be conceived as structured in, around and across the many and varied cultures of the people living in this city and province.

In this respect, the magazine's general bent has lent to extensive discussions of ethnicity, nationality, culture, and identity, their various articulations in the artistic world and possible variation in a political one. All this to say that, in my opinion, *Vice Versa* has gone far beyond the call of duty, ensuring that it exceed a dedication to some rather banal proactive multiculturalism, to address these issues as selectively and as interestingly as possible, to offer as many questions as it attempts to answer.

Yet, this editorial direction has always struck me, like any unerring dedication, as the potential subject, if not target of eventual tedium. Hence my hyperbole for the magazine's steadfastness and my relief when, only a few paragraphs into the introduction to this anniversary edition, *Vice Versa* proclaimed itself tired of, no bored with, the very issues of ethnicity, nationality, culture and identity. Bored with that which they've fed off for ten years now, finding themselves down the road opting for something more dynamic, immediate and antagonistic than their usual lifeforce, embodied by someone more negative than negotiating; someone narcissistic, nefarious and mostly intransigent.

Now, although *Vice Versa* pulled the rather instrumental move of pinning Artaud to "la transculture" (claiming something like "*Il est l'artiste transculturel par excellence...*"),¹ it did offer a more revealing explanation of its decennial dedication in tying Artaud (and itself in the process) up in a "modern" spirit. Artaud, then, becomes emblematic of a modernist aesthetic by which everything goes and maybe, everything must go; emblematic of a preference that denies all strictures and structures in the hope of loosening the terms of art, literature and the acceptable. Perhaps even emblematic of modernity itself: less an era than an aura, the spirit of development and individualism, the scene of destruction and industrialization, ultimately, the time of the dialectics of improvement and obsolescence. In the sense that *Vice Versa* here opted for the conjunctural aspects of modernity and the confrontational spirit of modernism, it pulls away from and ahead of its more typical self image, siding first with the need for creation, second with the worries of representation; renewing a place for destruction and negation instead of making room for everyone.

¹ The idea of *la transculture* is not limited to *Vice Versa*. Rather, in Quebec, there exists a certain recognizable purchase of the concept which points to an ideal of creation and cultural production capable of transgressing "cultural" (ethnic or national) barriers. See Pierre Nepveu, "Qu'est-ce que la transculture?", *Paragraphes*, 2, 1989, pp. 15-31

So, the relief stems not only from the assurance that fallibility has little to do with not always appreciating the conciliatory aspects of contemporary discussions of ethnicity and the rest, but also from the otherwise-inspired suggestion that these topics can be boring. Not that they are necessarily. Just that the ways in which they get put forth and pushed around have become perhaps less interesting than they once were: their values (equality, access and recognition, to begin with) having become principle rather than desire; their claims taking the form of request rather than demand; ultimately, their principles having been absorbed into the unfortunate and uncontroversial realm of "common sense".

Jamais, quand c'est la vie elle-même qui s'en va, on n'a autant parlé de civilisation et de culture. Et il y a un étrange parallélisme entre cet effondrement généralisé de la vie qui est à la base de la démoralisation actuelle et le souci d'une culture qui n'a jamais coïncidé avec la vie, et qui est faite pour régenter la vie.

Avant d'en revenir à la culture je considère que le monde a faim, et qu'il ne se soucie pas de la culture; et que c'est artificiellement que l'on veut ramener vers la culture des pensées qui ne sont tournées que vers la faim.

Le plus urgent ne me paraît pas de défendre une culture donc l'existence n'a jamais sauvé un homme du souci de mieux vivre et d'avoir faim, que d'extraire de ce que l'on appelle la culture, des idées dont la force vivante est identique à celle de la faim.

Nous avons surtout besoin de vivre et de croire à ce qui nous fait vivre et

*que quelque chose nous fait vivre,--et
ce qui sort du dedans mystérieux de nous
mêmes, ne doit pas perpétuellement
revenir sur nous-mêmes dans un souci
grossièrement digestif.*

Antonin Artaud, 1938

One of the loftier pursuits of much of the work on ethnicity and nationality referred to here, whether of academic, activist or artistic inspiration, is that of critiquing, sometimes dismantling metanarratives. Said to be the social glue of Western societies for at least a few hundred years, these rather linear tales of race and nation--the ones that offer the step-by-big step biography of place and people-- seem to have been designated one of the greater evils of the last few centuries. This, primarily and quite sufficiently, for their force of exclusion or lack of inclusion and their consequent homogenization of all and many. But, cause of age or of this rather generalized critique, they are now said to be drying up and flaking away, decaying slowly, finally leaving room for the telling of other stories.²

² In speaking in the passive voice, I'm not trying to shroud this process in doubt or point to any illusory consensus, but to highlight a particular way we've come to think of these metanarratives of race, gender, class and nation. And that is that they were once more socially binding than they are now. Whether or not this is "true" is inconsequential because what has come to matter is not their power of inclusion but their force of exclusion. But what remains interesting in this conception is a sort of nostalgia that speaks of a past when things were simple, more unified and less contradictory. Speaking of this as a modern tendency, Stuart Hall suggests that "This may be indeed, what the narrative of the West is like: the notion that we told of the story we told ourselves, about their

Now, so far I've referred to all this "work" rather generally, not only as if it can actually be referred to as an "it", but also as if its concerns are known, its content general knowledge.³ And, I guess this tendency explains itself with the idea that these concerns and contents are, to some extent, known this way: that more voices should be heard, that more opinions be voiced, more people seen, represented and working are principles easily adhered to. The very fact that these claims are here termed principles is telling enough in itself: the demand for greater equality and lesser discrimination in the public domain has become intrinsic to our morality and hence, to our socio-political standards and values. Accordingly, in both first and final analysis, they are "good", "right", and, aside from absolutes, they make sense to us.

Yet, maybe because these ideals are so entrenched, it often seems as if we've stopped making sense of them. So much so that when the banners of ethnicity and identity are raised, they are quite readily conflated with these very principles, resulting in a set-up where these flags no

functioning that way." (Hall 1991b: 46)

³ The impossibility of offering any thorough depiction of these concerns, debates and discussions must be admitted. It's not only unfair to lump together all projects stating difference and claiming identity because of their diversity in quality (which nevertheless remains an opinionated distinction), but because of their contingency on time and place. But it is this contingency of context that is at stake, that gets lost when these issues become "general" concerns solved by "common sense".

longer merely wave to this good, but contain it, almost stand for it. Suddenly, the moment ethnicity rears its topical head, we're all very clear on the acceptance of diversity and the pursuit of equality as first principles of the discussion. And, given this consensus, to suggest that equality doesn't really exist, except perhaps in the shadiest of places, or that diversity merely admits difference rather than asserting it, is more than inappropriate, but verging on the heretical. And the problem with this, or the one that bothers me, is that it becomes very difficult to push discussions of identity outside this juridical framework and the legalistic concerns of rights and representation which flow from it.⁴

To backtrack a little, identity might seem suddenly evoked, as if all these terms are interchangeable. And, although ethnicity, nationality, culture and identity have come to be strung together almost as a composite (herein as well as elsewhere), they all point quite clearly to separate

⁴ It's not a question of sidelining the importance of acquiring rights or lobbying for more egalitarian state regulations as these are the most obvious, and more importantly, most instrumental ways of balancing and weighing social and institutional discrimination. Rather, taking this into account, it is a matter of severing the issues of social identity from "formal legal definitions": "far from collapsing the complex questions of cultural identity and issues of social and political rights, what we need now is greater distance between them. We need to be able to insist that rights of citizenship and the incommensurabilities of cultural difference are respected and that the one is not made a condition of the other." (Hall 1993: 360)

conceptual categories having their respective qualities. And anyhow, this isn't the point. Rather, what is being talked about most often when these other issues are raised is identity: whose culture, what nation and how many ethnicities are the defining questions of contemporary collective identities; they are the stakes of any politics of identity. And it is the formation, circulation and articulation of these politics that concerns me here.

A whole body of work within cultural studies--perhaps the body of work which has taken over that loose amalgamation of artists and academics--has long concerned itself with these issues, long enough that they've managed to build an extensive and expanding library on the subjects. But these discussions and debates have also acquired their own general parameters, their own tropes and referents so that it sometimes seems as if the people concerned get lost amid the subjectivities developed, as if hatred and fear are forgotten for more imposing social relations.⁵

⁵ These parameters and tropes have, however, not been left undisputed. In particular, see Hall's "Minimal Selves" in which he questions the idea that "this centering of marginality [is] really the postmodern experience," to argue somewhat differently that "the discourse of the postmodern is not something new but a kind of recognition of where identity always was at." Also, Doreen Massey tries to fill some of the space between the global and the local by sidestepping the "hype and hyperbole of Ridley Scott images" of postmodernity, to bring things back to more common ground where "Much of life for many people, even in the heart of the first world, still consists in waiting in a bus-shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes." (Hall 1987: 44; Massey 1992: 8)

More specifically, the general explanation for identity's topicality gets framed around a suitably adapted version of the postmodern.⁶ Global economies and technological wizardry among other threatening abstractions are then said to have chipped away at the social fabric of family, religion and tradition, transforming social relations and forming new terms of reference for all those so effected. Against the anonymity of this international imposition, those effected are then reuniting according to their specific and localized terms of belonging, wrapping themselves up warmly in so-called "new communities". Accordingly, contemporary collective identities have arrived at a conjuncture of the local and global, of the specific and universal. And, in this sense, the politics of identity get articulated according to the parameters of a new metanarrative, one which insists on the concurrence of the aging narratives of homogenization with the newer ones of emergence; or, according to a minority-majority dynamic. (Clifford 1988: 17)

To be disenfranchized, disinherited, or worse, straightforwardly oppressed becomes more than a re-

⁶ There's not enough room to address the slipperiness of postmodernity here. But as Massey's treatment in the last note indicates, as much as it can be an historical construct useful in admitting the difference between now and then (anywhere from 30 to 200 years ago), it can also be just a lot of hype that points to little more than "the prevailing uncertainty about the positive shape of the new." (Massey 1992: 3)

appropriated point of pride, but a leverage point, a means to demand that the universal pay its dues to the specific, that it step back and let this cluster of specificities occupy its space. And this is the problem. It's the same space. So, whether speaking of pluralism as did the old metanarratives, or of diversity and difference, the strategies inscribed here have to do with the particular promoting itself to the general: to an equation that seeks the accession of a minority concern to the position of a majority interest.⁷ And so, aside from analytic difficulties, what remains troublesome is that these postmodern identities of race, gender and sexuality get spoken in ways and terms as essential as did the metanarratives they claim to be replacing in more democratic spirit.

Now, if I remain skeptical it's not to disinherit the present of its progress, for surely this writing, lobbying and interpretation has brought some enlightenment, perhaps even wrought some improvement of social and ethnic relations. Rather, it is because this line of "progress" seems limited to a very specific form of hegemony, a sort of musical chairs of the attributes and works said to

⁷ Or, as Hall puts it, "one damn thing after another, or the difference that doesn't make a difference." (Hall 1993: 362)

constitute a given ethnic group, culture or nation.⁸ And what this means is that the terms of reference of these discussions rarely escape the state: the unrepresented ethnicity or the disenfranchized community or again, the nation without its state are those left standing, having government and the state as the last courts to appeal their prefixed status. And, even when cultural critics optimistically suggest the need for a different kind of space--a space of difference--in which a gaggle of postmodern, postcolonial identities can mull about comfortably and equally, the state remains the last referent, the last model we have to imagine this space. On top of this, the motives behind this type of proposal also suspiciously lead back to this pair: ultimately, to propose the formation of a so-called "post-national" space just so that a social equivalent exist to multinational economies and transnational politics does not only seem to be a

⁸ Certain assumptions about representation, mostly those that stem from this collision of cultural identity and social and political rights, often get sidelined in public discourse and debate. As minority groups seek greater representation in the public domain, they often fail to address the issues of who is to be moral arbiter, who is to choose, and what makes that or those individuals qualified to represent. Similarly, as they lay claim to particular objects and traditions as part of their cultural heritage, arguing that they should be responsible for its uses and abuses, they also seem to disregard how this transforms these objects into property, thereby rendering their culture just another item of economy.

subsequent move, but fails to escape the determinacy of politics and economics over culture.⁹

Which brings me to a second, and perhaps inescapable difficulty with these discussions and redefinitions of identity. Largely conceived of as socially and discursively constructed in the cultural studies literature, identity is spoken of as something as malleable as it is fundamental. Identity is, then, both a thing and a feeling: as much as it is the rather important feeling of belonging somewhere to something, it is also a thing, out there, that can be negotiated, rearticulated, point blank changed. So, just like the previously mentioned lapse from people to subjectivity, the thing that is identity often gets privileged over the feeling it represents, its malleability made overt while its necessity is merely inscribed as implicit.

And, although what follows indicates that I've invested importantly in the idea that collective identity is largely constructed, I don't think it can be left at that. It remains that the way we conceive of and apprehend race, nationality, language and gender make a difference. They make all the difference. As much as they may be constructed, they remain meaningful to people. Try telling a mother that what she has chosen to teach her children is optional. Or

⁹ This type of reasoning is particularly well-followed through in Arjun Appadurai's "Patriotism and its Futures". (Appadurai 1993)

try to reason your way out of culture shock. To think identity merely as construction, as a thing which results from a set of social and discursive relations, is a comfortable and useful analytic position. Yet, it is also one that might have little to do with how we think of ourselves when occupying other social roles or following other social rules.¹⁰ Beyond this, to begin and end with the cultural contingency of identity is, in the end, somewhat dismissive of culture itself. Although this position removes the essence from identity, it also relegates culture to a subordinate position in relation to the larger field of discourse, abstracting it further beyond its already-intangible and highly compromised character. And so, culture sometimes seems to receive pretty shoddy treatment from a field that chooses to prefix itself with the concept.

So maybe, by moving culture from the back to the front burner, and by turning to the feeling, the need that is central to any articulation of identity, we might find ourselves speaking of identity in other terms. And, I don't think this turn makes the issue one of why we need to belong

¹⁰ One of the more extreme examples of this contradiction comes from many postcolonial authors who, after having thoroughly damned the homogenization and implicit discrimination of their colonial histories, lapse into a personal exegesis of the discontinuous cultural and ethnic components that constitute their identity. Apart from being almost incomparably tedious, such paradoxical accounts point not only to the arbitrary closures of each of the identities listed, but highlight the authors' own lack of reference in a system of belonging that seems just as weighty as the old and somewhat longer to get through.

(a question rarely well answered and one best left alone), or of the value of belonging (as ultimately to suggest rearticulation, however diplomatic, is a moral request). Rather, it becomes a question of how a culture or nation fosters allegiance; the who, what and where of identity then become subsequent to the issue of how a culture or nation is constituted or constructed to be not only worthy of allegiance, but ultimately, one of the final social referents. In this sense, the starting point becomes that of dissecting the culture or nation in question, rather than dismissing them as contingencies or anachronisms.

By taking the idea that belonging is essential as a springboard, identity might then be recognized as something that is always in the process of becoming, something that is always developing and never static. If we begin with the idea that we do need to belong and that, usually, we side with a variety of bodies, groups, and institutions, we not only recognise that no one allegiance suffices, but that it is we who choose among the many existing options. And in this sense, identity becomes a set of allegiances and ties that are as complimentary as contradictory, forming a composite which adds to, rather than adding up to subjectivity. If partial and discontinuous, identities no longer impose themselves on us, as we feel the old metanarratives were an imposition, but rather, we impose ourselves, our creations, thoughts and expressions on the

never-finished project of defining ourselves. In this sense, maybe collective identities can be "an open complex, unfinished game" which "produces new subjects who bear the traces of the specific discourses which not only formed them but enable them to *produce themselves anew and differently.*" (Hall 1993: 362-3) And, maybe this way, we'll find we partake of a more vivid culture, one that needs to be built and rebuilt, one that needs to be fed rather than one that is already stuffed.

On peut brûler la bibliothèque d'Alexandrie. Au-dessus et en dehors des papyrus, il y a des forces: on nous enlèvera pour quelque temps la faculté de retrouver ces forces, on ne supprimera pas leur énergie. Et il est bon que de trop grandes facilités disparaissent et que des formes tombent en oubli, et la culture sans espace ni temps et que détient notre capacité nerveuse reparaitra avec une énergie accrue. Et il est juste que de temps en temps des cataclysmes se produisent qui nous incitent à en revenir à la nature, c'est-à-dire à retrouver la vie.

Antonin Artaud, 1938

Whenever I run across Quebec among a long list of post-colonial peoples seeking self-determination, I'm reminded of one of the more enlightening episodes of my university years, one that had little to do with things academic and more with scattering certain unremitting attitudes. Where or how, I don't remember, but I found myself arguing with some equally dogmatic Irish character who had taken a fancy to

the idea of Quebec sovereignty but had no use for learning, let alone speaking French. Despite a well-developed suspicion of anglophone immigrants who take hold of the idea of francophone separatism--their conviction almost always that much deeper than any good *péquistes* I've known, their righteousness that much greater--I decided to see this one through, only to discover that this character's opinion had less to do with Quebec than it did with Ireland. As far as he was concerned, both territories had been colonized, were mostly Catholic, were claiming self-determination and weren't getting there. So, they were analogous: side with one, side with the other.

Maybe because of this particular logic, I soon realized I understood about as much of the situation there as this character did of here. And so, it dawned on me that because places and people might share similar criteria, they don't necessarily share the same characteristics: context needn't be merely considered; context is everything. And, although I had never thought of Quebec's particular political conjuncture as that of a "national liberation movement" (maybe these were supposed to be more rebellious, dreadful, noisy and bloody?), I supposed I could accept the title semantically. After all, it was and is a nation seeking political independence from the state it is bound to. But I'm still not really prone to thinking of it this way. And maybe I lack this particular disposition, not because I'm

for or against the idea, which is really neither here nor there, but because one important question keeps coming back: who or what, exactly, is Quebec liberating itself from?

In the last thirteen years, the government of Quebec has held two referendums--one directly, the other more obscurely--to decide of its membership in Canadian confederation. Although these are separated by twelve years and asked fundamentally different questions, the 1992 "yes" vote represented pretty much the same choice as 1980's "no": "Yes, we wouldn't mind signing the ratifications proposed to include Quebec in a constitution it never signed," or "no, we don't want sovereignty-association," at least not then, and still not now. And, although the margin of victory (or error, as no one has been sufficiently convincing as of yet) was narrow in both cases, they point not to any collective ambivalence, but rather to the supposition that the Canadian union is not necessarily that which we must be freed from.

And since it is "common" knowledge that the Quiet Revolution rid the province of its religious and traditionalist burdens, neither of these old oppressors can be singled out as contemporary culprits. The Québécois are now more than well enough entrenched in corporate and political worlds that their former anglophone occupants can no longer be held to blame either. So the question remains: what is there to be liberated from? Other than ourselves, that is.

But this is a bit much. If not because the political situation in Quebec is more complicated than just this, then because I'm not convinced that this derision is appropriate. At least not yet. But it's to make a point. And that is that, although it probably isn't ourselves that we need to be freed from, it may be many of the ideas invested in throughout the last thirty years. Ideas by which we've defined ourselves and by which a predominantly francophone society and a valued québécois culture have been built. Ideas of being and becoming about the French-Canadian community cultivating its French character and language--its difference--to become a québécois collectivity. Ideas about these people participating at all levels in all social sectors; about this People becoming a modern nation. Ultimately, ideas about this nation coming into its own, finally being in a state of its own right, built on its own terms.

But these ideas, however positive and instrumental they may have been, have over-extended their stay, becoming stale, almost rank. Rank because, for a society seeking independence, Quebec seems to have forgotten the value of assertion for the freedoms of protection. Or maybe, its protection is its only remaining assertion. And, although I generally agree with the theorem which suggests that, at some point in their development, new nationalisms make a momentary return to essence, becoming more insular and

warding as they settle the last remains of their past, I can't help wondering when this period will be over in Quebec.¹¹

For at least twenty years now, Quebec's culture has been the crux and crutch of québécois politics. More specifically, the preservation of this culture, said threatened by recurring waves of English North American television and music, has become more than just the "raison-d'être" of protectionist laws and policies, but Quebec's own "raison d'état". And, like many things preserved, this means that its culture has been jarred up and sealed in, becoming stagnant as it constantly refers back to itself and recycles its own history. And, as the discourses of politics and popular culture continue this circular self-referencing, culture becomes the central element in a system of belonging which hinges on becoming; that is, it becomes the support structure for the self-fulfillingness of *l'identitaire québécois*, of a collective identity predicated on being what we were meant, seemingly destined to become.

When culture initially became an issue in Quebec in the '60s, it was employed as a means of binding a French-Canadian community by evoking its shared traditions, customs and history. But as rapidly as it became the more totalising "projet de société" it is today, it also came to mean

¹¹ In particular, see Eric Hobsbawn on this sort of regression in modernization which seeks to preserve the traditional in the face of the new. (Hobsbawn 1972)

language, and language almost exclusively. Force of political expediency, almost all of Quebec's traits, attributes and characteristics were absorbed into language during the '70s: to be French was to be québécois; québécois culture was French culture. So, somehow, to be French not only denoted an historically contingent but nonetheless elusive way of life, but it also came to contain a definable ethnic group--the Québécois. But because speaking French was developed at this same time as something radically different, namely, a mandatory qualification for those living in the province, the québécois identity fostered by this narrative of emergence--an identity of essence--now runs up against the ethnically varied make-up and the cultural composition of this francophone society.

Now that French is firmly established as Quebec's first language of education and business, Quebec faces a problem that can't be solved by merely retreating on the more superfluous clauses of bill 101. Rather, it has been stuck for some time with the problem of redefining its identity and culture. Its ability to strike a chord of belonging through division--with the rest of Canada--and exclusion--anyone who is not French--with any degree of credibility has been compromised by the political gains reaped since the initial assertion of québécois "distinctness". Internally, the linguistic difference that once appealed simultaneously to culture and community has become, at best, the social

binding of cultures and communities. Externally, even though not constitutionally enshrined, Quebec's difference has been sufficiently acknowledged by the rest of the country, so much so that a fair portion of Canadians would be more than happy to see Quebec sovereign.¹²

Accordingly, continued québécois appeals to the cultural discrimination of colonization and to the province's minority status no longer act as the objects of overcoming of a more confrontational relation to identity. Rather, they function, at best, as means of self-congratulation for almost any hurdle surmounted; at worst, as the bulwarks against a form of self-assertion which deviates from these impoverished concepts. Similarly, appeals to québécois culture and community no longer ring with the elation, confusion and relief of *une retrouvaille*, but resound with the silence of redemption, echoing in the hollowness and self-satisfaction of a culturally-"distinct" and ethnically-closed formation.

So, maybe Quebec does find itself among a long list of people and places, although one that is perhaps less hopeful and more foreboding than the former. In some sense, it finds itself among a somewhat disparate group of "small nationalisms" which inevitably arrive at some closure "from

¹² The popularity of the Reform Party in Western Canada bears witness to this sentiment as well as to many others concerning Canadians' choice (not to say right) to live amongst their kin and not with those who aren't quite "like them".

trying to realize the aspiration, which they see as the secret of success of the great, modernizing nation-states of Western modernity, of gathering one people...under one political roof."¹³ (Hall 1993: 355-6) Even in its more recent attempts at redefining a québécois identity, at extending its terms of belonging to a French-speaking but ethnically- and culturally-varied population, the discourses of politics and popular culture rarely reach outside the more essentialist terms of Quebec's "narrative of emergence", preferring to stick to a well-tested and proven-effective pluralist formula that never escapes the idea of the *People as One*.

Quebec, then, seems to have been stopped short in the tracks of progress by its own history and its own modern character. Its narrative of emergence which reclaimed a territory and a society for a French-speaking community, has become a means of aculturation and an attempt at homogenization. And, it is for this reason, among a few others, that the accession of minority concerns to the status of majority interests is not terribly functional. Not only does this process fail to lead to the supposedly sought states of equality and democracy, but it's also not even

¹³ Since context is what matters, this is not to equate Quebec with the more strident ethnic and religious nationalisms and fundamentalisms of Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Rather, it is to draw a parallel between their sometimes similar uses of history and culture as means of "national" inclusion and exclusion.

very conducive to the development of their principles of access, recognition, and representation. And beyond this, its outcome is worse than repetitive; it's redundant:

"The capacity to *live with difference* is...the coming question of the twenty-first century. New national movements that, in their struggle against old closures, reach far too closed, unitary, homogeneous and essentialist a reading of 'culture' and 'community' will have succeeded in overcoming one terrible historical hurdle only to fall at the second." (Hall 1993: 361)

So, if metanarratives deserve dismantling, it's not only because they're exclusionary, but because they're "meta". And this makes them more than linear, it makes them boring. So if I think Quebec's particular narrative of nation and state deserves critiquing it's not only because it's boring, but because I think that this is a place that both deserves and requires something more dialectical than *l'identitaire*; perhaps more importantly, a place that is just worthy of something more interesting.

Chapter Two

La Maison du egg roll might not be a bad place to start this diagnosis of québécois identity. Not only because of its severed name, emblematic of many fading possessives or the ethnic specificity of its cuisine, but also because it is where Cité-Libre holds its monthly meetings to debate the merits and demerits of *la société québécoise*. Replete with a heavy stack of Pierre Trudeau's recently released **Mémoires politiques**, a few aging liberal senators and enough disputatious academics to make the buffet line-up a passageway to one of Montreal's intellectual establishments, the December 1993 dinner was tangentially followed by a discussion of cults and sects, their place in Quebec and the problems they pose here.

In good-willed yet typically liberal fashion, the speaker, the founder of a local organization called Info-secte, warned against the pull of sectarian movements, condemning their eradication of individual determination and their unequivocal attitude towards membership as "ideological". Accompanying this invocation of "ideology" was the inevitable reference to Waco and Jonestown as the potential but logical conclusions to such movements.

Now, despite the somewhat alarmist quality of this logic and the old problem of liberalism placing itself outside ideology, it was a presentation that could have been anticipated. One, however, which became that much more

interesting as issues of belonging and nationalism were introduced into the point-counter-point of the question period. And what surfaced at this time, or what struck me the most, was the speaker's claim that there presently existed a potential 7 000 sects in Quebec.

Maybe because of my current concerns, what this meant to me was that any organization, institution, group, school, whatever, almost anything that regrouped more than a handful of people under one roof for one purpose, anything that involved membership or adherence or, ultimately, any sense of belonging was there being defined as potentially sectarian. And what this points to resembles more some form of quasi-absolute individualism than liberalism's democratic and egalitarian aspirations: a form of individualism that depicts a sense of belonging and the collective identity attached thereto as not only potentially bigoted, but as the result of an unwarranted dependence on the social, a loose thread in an ideal social fabric of individualist ascetics.

So, although this line of reasoning diametrically opposes that of an essentialist conception of collective identity (on necessary versus unnecessary grounds), it tends to complicate the issue of belonging in much the same way. That is, it frames belonging (and identity by affiliation) as a matter of inclusion into and exclusion from something (institution or idea) that is "already-there", apprehensible and limited; as a question of whether or not one belongs and

not as a matter of how that comes to be. And so, an interrogation of the processes and strategies which foster belonging and initiate adherence is not only more suitable to the following discussion of nationalism and identity, but more conducive to revealing the ways by which we come by our own "mémoires politiques".

As of this year, students applying for government assistance are required to submit a statement listing all sources of income. A leaflet to this effect accompanied 1993's round of loans and bursary cheques and stated in big bold letters that **"students incomes will be systematically verified"** with the ministère du revenu du Québec. It further explained that "the purpose of this operation is to ensure greater equity in the assistance granted and to complement the verification of the incomes of the parents, sponsor or spouse considered to be on the labour market." The document then reminds all students that false declarations will exempt them from any future assistance, but ends on a less penalising and more democratic note ensuring that this measure has been implemented "so that a greater number of people may benefit."

Immediately after last summer's PQ party congress, Jacques Parizeau offered a few hours to members of Montreal's "ethnic" press. Armed with an Italian and a Spanish

translator and hosting the affair in a Chinatown hotel, he repeated the party line against multiculturalism, denying it a place in provincial policy in favour of one of integration--and this despite the flavour of the gathering. Otherwise, he expounded typically on the fate and future of immigrants and immigration in an eventually sovereign Quebec. Aside from following strangely on federal footsteps in suggesting the introduction of a semantic surrogate for "cultural communities" in the title of Quebec's ministry of immigration, Parizeau spoke of favouring immigration applications from nationals of French-speaking countries over others as "la langue doit demeurer un critère, non pas exclusif, mais très important." (*Le Devoir*, August 25, 1993)

La Caisse de dépôt et placement, the management/investment arm of Quebec's pension fund and the fifth biggest capital pool in North America, has been the target of accusations of poor management, political investment and economic nationalism for years. In 1993, it first came under fire in February when, as one of the largest shareholders of Univa (Provigo), it interfered in the sale of the floundering company's shares to outside buyers. Shares had reached a record high at \$11 a piece when the Caisse stepped in, ensuring their future stability by driving them back down to their more regular \$8 value.

The protectionist nature of its management and investment tactics was brought up again at the end of the summer. An article in *J'Actualité* decrying its mismanagement of Quebecers funds throughout the decade--a total loss of \$1.5 billion--qualifies the organization as amateurish and adventuresome, its investments as mediocre and politically-driven. (Dutrisac 1993: B1) Despite Jean-Claude Delorme's (the Caisse's president) subsequent retorts dismissing and disclaiming these accusations, the Caisse's financial return for 1992 showed up at a low 4.5 percent. But as Delorme insists that "C'est sur une longue période qu'il faut juger de l'efficacité de la gestion de la Caisse," it would seem that we should wait another decade or so to find out just how tight the squeeze really was.

Sometime in the last ten days of August, I came to know of these developments either by reading the daily paper, usually picking up Saturday's edition on Monday, or by being suddenly diverted by an outraged roommate. And really, they are little more than snippets, info bites that crop up next to countless others appearing in the same week and the next, some speaking of how the government is revizing its universality policy for provincial social programmes, others of how the province is unable to fulfill the immigration quotas it set itself last year and is consequently missing out on maintaining its current population levels. These are

daily and weekly developments which complement each other as much as they contradict. And together, they add up to suggesting, if not showing an increasing governmental intrusion into the ins and outs of people's everyday lives, an accumulation of information on and about the members of Quebec's population and, consequently, the government's and the state's increasing control over its citizens.

But to bring up "control" and "information gathering" is something of a double bind. Either it rings of conspiracy theories inspired by some unbridled libertarianism or it holds so many propaganda-like overtones that paranoia sets in before you have the time to notice how monolithic these terms are when thrown about unqualified. But to not speak of them, to avoid them for fear of these reasons is perhaps just as unsuitable. So, they are evoked here because that is what has been going on for some time now in Quebec, as in many other places and countries called democratic.

Going on, not necessarily directly, perhaps insidiously, but more likely just regularly; regularly because, as these snippets are meant to indicate, such changes, developments and considerations are daily occurrences. They've become normal and accepted and, unless these debates and decisions get too out-of-hand or too heavy-handed as did the federal government's proposed implementation of snitch-lines for denouncing fraudulent unemployment insurance claimants, they often become law. And

this tendency is not really indicative of public passivity or a lack of collective political commitment, but rather it points to the regularization or normalization of certain social relations of power, namely those formed, sustained and reproduced by a particular system of governmentality.

Whether cause of conceptual paucity or contemporary pertinence, governmentality has received increasing attention and adaptation in the last few years. Governmentality is one of Foucault's median concepts: something he began developing (in the late '70s) to leave behind for an element initially determined to be a component, but ended up being a complex in its own right (discipline). In a series of lectures and a few disparate articles,¹ he develops the concept historically by following a literary trajectory from Machiavelli's *Prince* to Rousseau's *Social Contract* through one vital sentence borrowed from the less-illustrious Guillaume de la Perrière-- "government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end." (Foucault 1979: 10) Governmentality thus gets rooted in a series of literary oppositions to the Prince's sovereign rule, all of which Foucault subsumes under the title of "the art of

¹ See M. Foucault, "on Governmentality", *Ideology & Consciousness*, 6, 1979, pp. 5-21; "Questions of Method", *Ideology & Consciousness*, 8, 1981, pp. 3-14; "Technologies of the Self" and "The Political Technologies of Individuals" in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Tavistock, London, 1988), pp.16-49, 145-62

government". And so, the problem of governmentality becomes that of understanding this "art" and its particular disposition of things.

Governmentality locates itself comfortably among Foucault's other concerns, then, as it is about the means of exercising various forms of power and of displaying and displacing various forms of knowledge over and about people. In brief, it is of power and knowledge and is about social relations which are "at once internal and external to the state." (Foucault 1979: 21) More specifically, it is the system which negotiates and maps these relations and this knowledge. It is not something specific to a government or a politics, but rather many things which function as a network in which "we have a triangle: sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism apparatuses of security." (Foucault 1979: 19)

Thus, the formation and regulation of subjectivities return as dominant concerns here. This divying up cuts across the fabric of rule to ask how this network functions (in a given territory and for its population) to create or construct a "subject nation"; that is, to question the means, tactics and strategies (discipline) employed to order people and territory (sovereignty) and to govern things:

One governs things. But what does this mean? I don't think it is a question of opposing things to men, but rather of showing that government does not bear on the territory but rather on the

complex unit constituted by men and things. Consequently, the things with which the government is to be concerned about are men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in relation to that other kind of things which are customs, habits, ways of doing and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things again which are accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (Foucault 1979: 11)

Government thus becomes both a matter and means of achieving "specific finalities", of ordering things and people for a convenient end, of administering a particular *dispositif*. And in this sense, government is understood not in terms of a body of rule, but as a means of management: "the art of government is just the art of exercising power in the form and according to the model of economy." (Foucault 1979: 10)

And this is perhaps the crux of governmentality, the one point which makes it particularly pertinent to understanding contemporary politics and policies. Economy crucially defines the role of government as that of managing the concerns and resources of a "community". And, aside from the fact that such a corporatist conception runs up against the public service and communication orientation assigned to government in Canada and Quebec,² what is also crucial about

² Speaking of the relationship between government and culture in Canada, Jody Berland borrows the following quote from Allan Smith to explain how particular knowledge about state and people reinforces, permits, or excludes certain practice: "Belief in an essentially Deutschian conception that the state is an entity held together by the ability of its people to communicate with and understand one another

this formula is the notion that the management of "men in relation to things" implies more than things of state reaching "the people", but things and people reaching the state. That is, it implies both the upwards and downwards continuity of government, a continuity which enables collective concerns to become personal problems, which makes domestic particulars public data.³

Now, a system of governmentality's ability or capacity to create this socio-political symbiosis is not a linear, all-determining process, but rather the result of processes that converge in something somewhat more stellar. Its exercise occurs in and stems from a variety of sites and events, and depends on an ability to balance the workings of sovereignty, discipline and government within the terms of an acceptable democracy. And in this respect,

thus remains strong, and no less strong is the conviction that the ability must be maintained and strengthened by the activity of the state itself.'" Berland accordingly argues that, in Canada, government subsidy and intervention in the cultural domain are interpreted as the most logical means of developing a national culture, the "common sense" route to building a Canadian cultural identity. (Berland 1993: 62)

³ Foucault argues that this lapse from public to private is enabled by the concept of population. As the "introduction of oeconomy [government of the family] into the area of political practice" is crucial to "the art of government", population provides government with a substitute for family. Thus, oeconomy is transformed into economy by way of population: "The formation of a 'savoir' proper to government is absolutely bound up with the knowledge of all the processes related to population, in its larger sense, that is to say what we now call 'economy'." (Foucault 1979: 18) And the doubling that population provides government is further instrumental as it maintains the family as its most manageable unit or reference.

governmentality is fine-tuned at an epistemological level. That is, its exercise depends heavily on the ways we think of things, the ways in and by which we know of "men in their relations", in short, on the formation of a "savoir" particular to the territory in question.

If my earlier snippets were offered as regularities or routine instances, they were also given as examples of attempted definitions: whether they enable or enact, they present means by which Quebec and the Québécois get defined and redefined daily. And in this sense, they represent strategies of identification, items of knowledge of a system of governmentality inspired by and sustaining of a specific type of state-supported nationalism.

So, coming back to Quebec, I want to argue that it is a system of governmentality that reproduces and rearticulates the nationalist discourses of *l'identitaire québécois*; that a particular reciprocal imbrication of government and culture is creative of a "public language" which repeatedly refers back to this persistent and atavistic form of identification.⁴ Accordingly, it is to the québécois nation

⁴ The idea of a "public language" is borrowed from Donald Horne's **The Public Culture**. Horne defines the latter as the dominant and limited representations of society, as a means of organizing "realities". Accordingly, "these 'realities' are not symbolized only in words. The 'language' of 'realities' includes visual images, music, buildings, dancing..." (Horne 1986: 48) In brief, a society's public language is constituted by disparate means of expression which permeate the social fabric, directing and forming our perception and understanding of where we live.

and its culture that I turn my attention, not only because together they represent the locus of these strategies of identification in and about Quebec, but because they are the more visible and powerful sites of this system's exercise: "the society of the nation in the modern world is that 'curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance' and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other." (Bhabha 1990b: 2)

And it is precisely this tension in *l'identitaire* which makes it topical: its unceasingness rendering its particular knowledge about place and people so pervasive, its uncertainty providing the means by which to question this very knowledge. And it is also precisely this tension that is negotiated through a system of governmentality, the occasional or temporary failure of which reveals the paradox of the nation and its culture: that anything that attempts to represent itself as complete never can without exclusion.

Car je comprends maintenant pourquoi quelques lignes de Descartes m'avaient paru flamber soudain dans la grisaille d'un cours de philosophie..."Faire partout des dénombrements si entiers et des revues si générales que je fusse assuré de ne rien omettre." Le grand mérite d'un monde clos sur lui-même, sans ouverture sur le dehors, obéissant aux seules lois internes qu'il s'est données, c'est de faciliter la satisfaction de cette règle fondamentale.

Michel Tournier, *Le Roi des Aulnes*

To try to describe *l'identitaire québécois* in any kind of causal terms, as consequence of connections between events and people or even as the analytic outcome of several conceptual shifts, is hopeless. Culture slides into nation, nation into culture, both into collective and individual identities, the whole lot occasionally running up against and into the state. Indeed, it is because of this slipperiness that questions of ethnicity, nationality, identity and culture get stuck together and mistaken as one and the same. Mistaken because their interchangeability is the product of a particular political perspective which articulates identity and culture not only in terms of legalistic or juridical concerns, but as closed, contained, complete, and not as open, conjunctural and relational.

Nationality is obviously related to identity and ethnicity to nationality. But the linearity of the traditional conception of nationhood--of people related by common descent, language, history and culture constituting a nation within defined geo-political borders--is what is being disputed.⁵ In fact, this definition of the nation has

⁵ The relationship between ethnicity and nationality is presented as obvious because of the ways we confront and know of them. However, Hobsbawn argues against the immediacy of this relationship, claiming that ethnicity is neither a programmatic or political concept, but one which has been politicized because of larger problems of "social disorientation". He further argues that this politicization has resulted in a form of "modern political xenophobia" in many places. (Hobsbawn 1992)

played a significant role in compromising culture conceptually because it equates culture with society. Culture is thereby collapsed into the nation and is employed loosely to define an historically contingent "way of being" particular to this people and territory. Culture is then further troubled as it is made derivative of "its" ethnic group, a relationship which not only commodifies artistic expression by repatriating it to the nation, but one which also lends to the employment of "cultural identity" as a sort of "coded language for race and colour" and other forms of discrimination. (Hall 1993: 357)

So, as much as these concepts need to be untangled, the logic of the slipperiness which knots them needs to be understood. Specifically, it is the propensity of culture to stand for nation and as justification for claims to political sovereignty that requires attention to understand certain choice politics of québécois identity.

And maybe this is where I should start. So far, a great deal of qualification has been poured into *l'identitaire* to contextualize it as only one of several ways of articulating québécois identity, always a potential but never a necessary source of identification. As much as quotes about the rise of new nationalisms in Eastern Europe may be helpful in pointing out problems, or excerpts about self-contained realities useful in revealing certain underlying tendencies,

Quebec is neither what was once Yugoslavia nor is it so insular as to fit this last bill more than conveniently.

Quite contrarily, it is an ethnically- and culturally-varied society which shares in the social-democratic standards of its parliamentary tradition and in this tradition's changing complexion.⁶ Its colonial character--granted first by the French, then by the English to the French--makes it "a land of immigrants",⁷ a characterization which often seems forgotten in discussions of cultural identity, presumably because its flavour is being lent to other newer arrivals. In fact, it is perhaps the double-time of its colonial heritage which points most clearly to Quebec's specificity. And, although we are repeatedly reminded of this specificity, namely that it is a French-speaking enclave in the midst of English North America, sharing in the customs and habits of this continent while

⁶ The balancing of private and public interests and investment typical of social-democratic states has levelled out on something of a slant over the course of the last fifteen-odd years. In general, Western countries (England, France, Canada) have retreated slowly from their social-welfare orientation, questioning if not reneging on universality policies to favour privatization of their programmes, ultimately redirecting their economies towards the international arena. And this in the name and aim of "remaining competitive".

⁷ Or, as it is put somewhat more instrumentally in the founding document of Quebec's ministry of immigration and cultural communities, **Autant de facon d'être québécois**, "Le Québec est depuis toujours une terre où l'on vient s'établir. Les dernières décennies ont même découvert en lui un point de convergence important des mouvements migratoires de notre siècle." (Québec 1981: 3)

staring back across the Atlantic to the culture and language of another country, it is perhaps the most valuable insight at hand because it points both to Quebec's cultural hybridity and its discomfort with it.

As different things make different people uneasy, this discomfort has also been productive of a variety of solutions and answers to Quebec's chronic identity crisis. Quebec nationalism, then, is more diversified than it is monolithic, and this even if its types and trends merely represent variations on *l'identitaire's* theme of Quebec's "coming into being".

To suggest at this point that Quebec nationalism is expressed differently by various tendencies is not to further confuse the issue, but to further qualify *l'identitaire* and nationalism. Nationalism gets its bad name partly from the earlier-mentioned liberal labelling and partly from its association with such practices as "ethnic cleansing" and a history of other varieties of purification. And because of this, it almost seems necessary to reiterate the initially impartial character of nationalism. In itself, nationalism isn't a bad thing, can't be as long as belonging is viewed as essential. Out of context or purely conceptually, then, nationalism is merely "an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture and custom." (Said 1990: 359) But contextually or in

practice, the place, people and the heritage become nationalism's contingencies: they are the factors which will define it as limiting or liberating, which situate it somewhere between the reactionary perspective of the exclusive and the lost sense of place of the exiled:

It is capable of being inflected to very different political positions, at different historical moments and its character depends very much on the other traditions, discourses and forces with which it is articulated." (Hall 1993: 355)

And so, if governmentality is of power and knowledge, nationalism presents a form of power and a certain knowledge about nation, state and people. It is of little surprise, then, that there should exist competing and complimentary knowledge about the nation and its culture in Quebec.

This to say that, although *l'identitaire* is articulated predominantly by a form of territorial nationalism which ties people and culture to territory and nation (enclosing social concepts in political categories), it is also a more pervasive theme articulated by and within several other adjacent discursive formations. It receives different treatment from each, as these nationalist tendencies meet up with each other on some points and part ways on others. Like the identities they are formative of, these discourses are also in formation: they are "a 'production', which is never complete, always in process." (Hall 1991a: 22) And in this respect, components held by one version as constituting the nation may be shared by another, and can be dropped off and

picked up strategically by any of these in a style of incorporation attributed to hegemony.⁸ The nation, then, is a more than suitable repository for this variety and flux because

"it has the advantage of an apparently precise delimitation externally...and almost total lack of precision in its internal definition, so that it can simultaneously contain the most changing and contradictory interests and aspirations."
(Hobsbawn 1972: 402)

So, Quebec's territorial nationalism exists alongside, termed simply for convenience's sake, its economic, cultural and intellectual counterparts.

Running somewhere nearby this territorial nationalism, the corporate economic nationalism which grew out of efforts to reappropriate and develop domestic resources and funds, like the nationalization of Hydro-Quebec (1962) and the founding of la Caisse de dépôt et placement (1971), was well incorporated into our *public language* about Quebec during the '80s. The failure of the referendum brought with it a shift in national commitments, away from the collective, social and governmental aspirations of the late '70s to the '80's individual, private and corporate emphases. If political independence was outside our reach, at least

⁸ Hegemony is brought up here not to evoke the dominance of these discourses, but to qualify them as formative. Thus, their negotiated representations of the nation are strategic because they are "'directive' in the sense that people are being shown what to do and how to do it, what to believe and how to believe it. Not necessarily, or even usually, by direct exhortation, but more by a process of permeation throughout society." (Horne 1986: 53)

economic autonomy could still be sought. Thus, its proponents now argue on the coat-tails of claims to political sovereignty that Quebec has reached economic maturity, is comparable on this ground with the rest of North America and is thus more than prepared for its political independence: "En 1980...les gens se posaient la question de savoir si nous avons les moyens de nous payer l'indépendance. Aujourd'hui ils se demandent plutôt si l'on a les moyens de rester dans la fédération."⁹ (Lesieur 1994: 46)

Bombardier, Desjardins and Lavallin usually get dredged up somewhere in this argument which posits economic stability as justification, but not reason for political sovereignty. However, it should be noted that the last of these recently got dropped off this list of entrepreneurial successes, while the other two were duly celebrated as the subjects of téléromans in the last two years, respectively *Bombardier* and *Desjardins, la vie d'un homme, l'histoire d'un peuple*.

Aside from such theatrics, this economic nationalism does have a better side as it steers clear of isolating

⁹ As these discursive formations are representative of nationalist tendencies, their proponents aren't necessarily affiliated to a party or institution, although they very well might be. Rather, these nationalisms, and especially this economic argument, receive lip-service when and where they are convenient for politicians and other interested parties. For example, the quote above is from an interview with Jean Campeau, an eminent Montreal banker and long-time supporter of the PQ.

Quebec ethnically or culturally to broach a more continental approach to Quebec. But this outward bend gets folded back inwards as the defensive corporatism of "Maître chez nous" continues to inspire economic perspectives and policies.¹⁰ The Caisse de dépôts' earlier-mentioned finagling and the type of hype that breeds television series about québécois transportation giants are good examples of this influence. And further, as 1991's post-referendum economy frenzy indicated, the first world-GATT motives of this nationalism merely put off culture and the linguistic/constitutional debate attached thereto to a later date.

Nevertheless, this nationalism shares its continental favouratism with another discursive formation about the nation, one which is culturally undersigned as *l'Américanité* and emphasizes the North American character of Quebec and the Québécois. We watch much of the same television and films as Canadians and Americans, live much the same, partake of the same consumer culture and, consequently, share many of the same concerns.¹¹ So, the argument runs,

¹⁰ Part of the Lesage government's modernization, "Maître chez nous" was developed during Lévesque's nationalization of Hydro. It became a significant rhetorical trope used to denote control over domestic industry and economy, opposing Anglo-Canadian and American incursions therein.

¹¹ In 1987, the NFB produced five québécois shorts under the title of *L'Américanité*. Among them was Micheline Lanctôt's "La poursuite du bonheur", a short which represents the flip-side of this continental favour as it points out American consumer culture as the great homogenizer destroying québécois tradition.

there is no denying our "Americanité" but this recognition doesn't rob us of our specificity either. Rather, somewhat more self-possessed, it defines Quebec as part of something larger than itself, a continent which determines part of Quebec's character but a space which Quebec contributes to filling out as well.

This is the feel of much Quebec cinema: *Le Déclin de l'empire américain*, *Un Zoo la nuit* and *Léolo* being the most obvious examples of this bridging of the local and the continental. But like its economic counterpart, this version heads back to Quebec's self-obsession as the very members of the cinematic community exchange on the nature and meaning of Quebec cinema--what it means about "us" and what we mean it to be as a national medium. Countless and competing associations and journal's like *Lumières* then become forums for debates which articulate Quebec cinema as a collective national project.¹²

Finally, it is to a completely different continent that a last and less-circulated nationalist tendency refers. A more high-brow variety which remains more or less nameless suggests that Quebec is the cusp of French culture. The

¹² Aside from the presence of a strong "mouvement syndicale" in Quebec, the number, diversity and political implication of these associations of film, video and television producers and distributors explains itself in terms of the milieu's disenchantment with the provincial government. The Quebec film and television communities dissociated themselves from the Quebec government in the '80s over questions of funding and control centering around the bureaucratic character of SOGIC.

province then becomes a sort of *terra nullius* where European expats can escape the staleness of the old country and other colonial immigrants that of the depravation of their third world order to renew or revive *la culture française*. This injection of something suspiciously similar to multiculturalism into the linguistic divide of *la Francophonie* turns nationalism into "culturalism", making culture, not the state, the object of any québécois autonomy. Accordingly, the sovereigntist option is rejected outright as only a semblance of a culture has evolved in the 30 years attributed to Quebec's modernity:

Nous estimons qu'il est faux et présomptueux de faire passer pour une culture nationale, au sens fort du mot, ce qui n'est encore que l'essai, l'esquisse, l'ébauche ou l'anticipation... L'Etat nationale qui adviendrait alors serait pris pour la réalité même de la culture, alors qu'il ne serait que l'expression de son impossibilité de se constituer, symbole d'impuissance donc, qui, paradoxalement, enfermerait l'imaginaire d'un peuple dans une métaphore empruntée [celle du contrat social]. (Morin & Bertrand 1979: 31-31)

The biggest problem here is not the self-referencing of these other tendencies, but, quite the contrary, its almost complete lack of reference to Quebec's existent culture. To make Quebec the prime location for this refocussing it has to be emptied of its present cultural holdings, devoid of its particularity except in terms of its optimal geopolitical situation. And despite the optimism of bridging cultural and ethnic gaps inscribed herein, this discourse does little to address the questions of sovereignty,

independence and language possessing Quebec for thirty-some years now.¹³

But like its counterparts, it does have a more positive articulation. Although I'm not sure that the following should be defined as part of the same formation because it targets sovereignty and language directly, I've chosen to do so for two reasons. One, it shares its proclivity for culture, centering it as the issue at hand, and two, it also favours the difference within Quebec over its identity with itself. And in this sense, their points of departure are quite similar and so can be said to seek much the same political conjuncture, namely, one which favours culture and difference and the difference in culture:

la Francophonie, and the Commonwealth itself, could be analyzed as transnational cultural vectors of productivity and possibility; that is, as both vestiges of colonialism and possible lines of disruption of post-colonial power relations. (Allor 1993b: 20-21)

Much like *l'Américanité*, this argument places Quebec's final reference outside nation and state to seek alliances which

¹³ I think this argument represents the poor side of "la transculture" and maybe the voice of québécois political correctness, if such a thing exists. And I use the rather berated conjunction of political correctness not as the *Time Magazine-Maclean's*-style exposé of radical but reactionary university leftism, but rather to point to somewhat muddled and certainly overly-moralistic political platforms which concern themselves with questions of access and representation but end up limiting the possibilities for both these. *Images*, a monthly multicultural magazine now distributed by *Le Devoir*, is perhaps the most representative of this in terms of its representational and democratic desires for Montreal and Quebec.

disrupt typical national and epistemological borders. In an effort to dissociate culture from Quebec sovereignty, then, traditional components of identity formation--nation, sovereignty and culture--get pushed in directions which then hopefully unsettle *l'identitaire's* territorial nationalism.

In fact, this variety of perspectives of the québécois nation have been developed and have evolved from a desire to disrupt or supercede this most pervasive and dominant form of territorial nationalism. And insofar as the difference in their perspectives and prescriptions bears witness to "a struggle over the constitution of political subjects" in Quebec it suggests that Quebec remains an open-ended concept still being debated. (Charland 1987: 135) Their diversity, then, is not only suggestive of a collective desire for a future different from the government of essence proposed by territorial nationalism, but of the possibility of actually overcoming this standard and rather poor offer.

Thus, the discursive formation productive of Quebec's territorial nationalism is, among these, most responsible for insinuating culture into politics. To frame the equation somewhat differently, it posits "the nation's 'coming into being' as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social polity."¹⁴ (Bhabha 1990b: 1-2) And it does so based

¹⁴ Although this nationalism's tendency to carry through this representational shift is what is at issue here, I think that it is the nation's duality represented by

on the "one ethnicity-one nationality" version of the nation, a predominantly nineteenth century conception which is also the subject of governmentality. The relations of power and knowledge regulated by governmentality are traced from the workings and mechanisms of this century's nation-state. This version of the nation is also the topic of Anderson's **Imagined Communities** as well as of a list of other retorts to and dissections of the nation. This, not only because this version remains the most circulated and thus dominant conception of the nation politically, but also because contemporary nationalisms stubbornly continue to refer to this model despite its post-colonial unrepresentativeness.

Anderson argues that a model of the nation, drawn from characteristics of post-revolutionary French and American states, was "available for pirating" by the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ A sort of norm for nation-building was created at this time, then, one which Anderson claims

this shift that is of consequence. That is to say, rather than seeing this shift as an element of instability of knowledge about the nation as Bhabha does, simply pointing at "the discipline of social polity" as the nation's "real" role, it is the negotiation of both these roles that are the stakes of the nation and a system of governmentality.

¹⁵ As this framing suggests, Anderson's model is problematized by its European roots. More than simply "available for pirating", this model was also implanted and imposed throughout the colonial world: "The national identity is not 'Born of the lean loins of the country itself'...but is part of the 'cultural baggage' which Europeans have brought with them, and with which we continue to encumber ourselves." (White 1981: ix)

"imposed certain 'standards' from which too marked deviations were impermissible"; one which was subsequently borrowed by emergent political powers and post-colonial states over the course of the next 150 years. (Anderson 1991: 81) According to this model, the creation of the modern national state is initially dependent on the possibility of constructing an "imagined political community": "State-building, in modern terms, is nation-building." (Hobsbawm 1972: 391) The nation is thus conceived of as the cultural kin of the modern political state and the focus of any and all identification with it: the sovereignty of the modern state rests upon that of the nation and its ability to override other allegiances and subjectivities to pull everyone and everything into its collective identity of nationality.

And, as Anderson's title suggests, it is by doubling as community that the nation attempts to create symmetry between a cultural identity of nationality and a political identity of citizenship:¹⁶

¹⁶ This distinction between nation and community is crucial to building national identities. In **Keywords**, Williams discusses the various meanings of "community". Expressive of actual social groups, common concern and particular social relationships, community designates a smaller social unit than "society" or "nation": "Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term." (Williams 1983: 76)

The 'nation' which is the sovereign people, cannot tolerate intermediate and sectional interests and corporations between itself and its members. But by implication this very elimination of the other centres of loyalty makes the relation of loyalty of citizen to 'nation' the only valid, and therefore the strongest, of his emotional-political commitments. It is the content of the 'civic religion' which the community needs. (Hobsbawn 1972: 391-2)

However, this national "community" is restricted by its own parameters: its national identity can be little more than self-referential in that it defines the people as belonging to a bounded territory, both people and territory sharing in the definable characteristics of the nation itself-- language, ethnicity, culture. And insofar as this type of national identity obviates difference to universalize experience and homogenize people into the "Nation's People", the constitution and representation of the people become the central problems in discussions of the nation.

Consequently, this model of the nation contains a dedication to pluralism, to the potential of diversity within, but of a diversity without difference. The nineteenth-century nation-state was more of a venture into economy than it was into ethnicity. Common ethnicity is actually largely presumed in this model, partly because it was perhaps easier to assume prior to this century's migrations, but mostly because the coming-together of these states resulted from more corporate purposes and interests. After all, this state is largely predicated on the idea of the social contract, an agreement by and for people to be

managed reached on the basis of shared concerns which exceed individual parameters and community perimeters. And so, it is admitting of diversity as long as it comes into the national fold, as long as it subsides to the nation's cultural and linguistic holds--as long as the many become One. Regardless of its recognition then, pluralism eventually throws everything--its people, their diversity, language and culture--back to some initial moment and to some originary community or ethnicity.

This version of the nation, then, has two potential pressure points, emphasized differently according to the territory's specificity and historical contingency. Even if Hobsbawn's "state-building is nation-building" equation suggests that the latter precedes the former, sufficient variation in their order of territorial implementation has shown them to be mutually dependent. Nations may breed states, but states build nations:

None of the commonly accepted criteria are indispensable, or need exist prior to the state: language, common culture, religion, traditions or history, let alone 'race'; even the nation's common economy may follow rather than precede the state. (Hobsbawn 1972: 394)

These adjustments remain largely theoretical however, as contextual problems continue to undermine these linear relations between nation and state. For instance, contrary to Quebec's stateless nation, Canada is domestically conceived of as a state without a nation and its consequent

quest for a common culture is widely felt to have shown few signs of success.

So, if last century's drive to nationhood was heavily inspired by corporate and economic interests as the Canadian confederation is instrumental in suggesting, post-colonial nationalisms, whether essentialist or fundamentalist, have shown themselves to be more concerned with return and restoration of something originary:

it is important to acknowledge that the drive to nationhood in many of the 'ascending' small nationalisms can often take the form of trying to construct ethnically (or culturally, religiously, or racially) closed or 'pure' formations in the place of the older, corporate nation-states or imperial formations. (Hall 1993: 355-6)

And this is what *l'identitaire* represents in and for Quebec, then, a return to purity that only hindsight allows, a reacquaintance with essence remembered at one time for the sake of emergence.

*Sa vertu n'est pas de rupture, mais de
restauration: culte de la race, des
ancêtres, du sang, des morts, de la
terre.*

Michel Tournier, *Le Roi des Aulnes*

L'identitaire doesn't represent an identity *per se* then, not something that can be aspired to or anything we can actually become.¹⁷ Rather, it is more involved with what we already

¹⁷ The usage of *l'identitaire* as a subject shouldn't be read as any insinuation of agency into what has been described as the result of particular inclinations and

are and has a lot to do with what we aren't anymore. That is, it is an act of referral to an already-constituted reference: it is the process by which the very elements considered to constitute the nation--language, culture and history in this case--are continually resignified and represented as the nation's ontological, though tautological, proof.

In its terms, we are québécois because we once came to know of ourselves as such. But while the Quiet Revolution bred a recognition of a French-speaking collectivity which represented an opening for people whose culture was substantively different from its canadian expression and whose history was largely bound up in the canadian experience in relations of submission and control, *l'identitaire's* use of this represents a closure. The political emphasis placed on language and community in the '60s represented a positive collective identity motivated by and motivating Quebec's modernization, allowing the traditional, religious, agrarian French-Canadian to become the modern, political, entrepreneurial Québécois. It was an identity which brought a territorially-dispersed group of people to invest language and community into territory to become *le peuple québécois*, members of a nation that could very well form their own state. And so, the formation of a

discursive production. Rather, this employment stems from my use of *l'identitaire* as a shorthand to refer to a complex of representation.

Québécois identity represented the outcome of important "politics of re-identification" by which "one discovered not only where one came from, [but] one began to speak the language of that which is home in the genuine sense." (Hall 1991b: 52)

Now, the problem with *l'identitaire*, and the reason it is tautological, is that it functions to inverse the order of this recognition. That is, it takes language, home and history as the defining elements of identity: where one is from, the language one speaks and the history one claims become criteria of inclusion or exclusion. A québécois identity is then maintained by continued identification with our re-identification. And thus, identity becomes static as it is contained in and constrained by territory, a space defined and definable by its history, its *peuple* and its culture: time is equated with "becoming" and space with "being" as being fully Québécois requires becoming a state.

So the problem with *l'identitaire's* notion of becoming is two-fold. Based on a rather psychological version of individual identity which posits selfhood in terms of a "continuous, self-sufficient, developmental, unfolding inner dialectic", it posits Quebec's "coming into being" teleologically, making its future not merely contingent on its past, but a condition thereof. (Hall 1991b: 42) And in this respect, it doesn't hold anything for this eventuality except what was: because becoming implies being something

fully, something more, it necessarily also implies being something else or other than we were. So, ultimately, *l'identitaire* presents a reference to a virtuality without any eventuality. Secondly, and somewhat more pragmatically, *l'identitaire's* return to an essentialized past requires an almost complete abstraction of the present and the last thirty years of Quebec's "modernity", years which pushed Quebec's ethnic, cultural and linguistic elements in directions that no longer meet up with its national equation.

And this is one of the main tensions that governmentality reproduces and regulates. The whole question of Quebec's statehood is bound with that of nation so that *l'identitaire* is almost inevitably involved even in oppositions to the descriptions and prescriptions of this territorial nationalism. It becomes very difficult to speak of Quebec without bringing up the Québécois which means referring to an identity of citizenship predicated on nationality. But as the québécois nation is limited by its own definition to an historically-constituted *peuple*, its language and culture, the nation can never add up to the society's ethnic and cultural make-up. And it certainly doesn't add up to its current linguistic community either. All of which means that either an *Etat québécois* will be something substantively different from this nationalism's portrait of it--a territory reclaimed by and for people

whose history dictates this inheritance--or, as such, it will represent the success of governmentality: "la constitution d'un Etat-nation s'inscrit donc dans une logique d'accroissement du pouvoir de l'Etat." (Morin & Bertrand 1979: 138)

And maybe this is why Quebecers shied away from the possibility of statehood each time the question was put officially. Either because it means just more government at all levels of society, or because the equation of language and community on which it depends doesn't meet up sufficiently with a social constituency. Language has been interpreted as essence, employed to stand in for culture, and accordingly used as support structure for a project of independence. And it is this interpretation, this substitution and this usage which have also made language this project's liability.

There is little point disputing that language is binding or that, by virtue of language, French-Canadians shared a culture and history different from the rest of the country.¹⁸ But this doesn't add up to language being equatable with ethnicity or the root of culture; that is, language is not of essence, but of integration:

¹⁸ But as difference is a comparative concept, all the other province's can speak of a history different from a more current narrative about Canadian unity. However, their difference and/or problems of discrimination stem from geography (centre-periphery disadvantages) and not from language which is interpreted more essentially than incidentally.

It is always a mistake to treat languages...as emblems of nation-ness...Language is not an instrument of exclusion: in principle anyone can learn any language. On the contrary it is fundamentally inclusive. (Anderson 1991: 133-4)

And it is precisely because language has functioned as a means of integration in Quebec that it compromises *l'identitaire's* reasoning which centres it as part of the nation's ontology.

Thirty years after the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, four language bills and several waves of immigration later, French is well-ensconced as Quebec's first language. Because of the success of integrationist policies--mostly those of bill 101--Quebec's linguistic community has been transformed from one that ostensibly could be tributary of ethnicity and culture to one that represents the coexistence of cultures and ethnicities in a society. Which means that language's reference to community gets shifted precisely away from a French-Canadian community to a Québécois collectivity. And this shift is significant because it represents a second important tension in *l'identitaire* which gets negotiated more or less successfully by Quebec's system of governmentality.

On one hand, this shift represents *l'identitaire's* own teleology, a desired change in identity which reclaims territory from French-Canada to render it to the Québécois. But, as with language, the Quiet Revolution's re-referencing of community also represents an actual change in Quebec's

social constituency, a change which is left largely unacknowledged by *l'identitaire's* québécois identity except in terms of its nationalism's pluralism.

And what this means is that *l'identitaire* oscillates around an internal contradiction between its identity of citizenship with its persistent retrieval of an essentialized québécois nation. Which ultimately means that our governmentality negotiates a nineteenth-century corporate nationalism of inclusion and openness with late-twentieth century absolutism which subsumes its ethnic and linguistic subjects under the rubric of culture. And in the end, this negotiation produces a compromised or at least complicated portrait of Quebec's search for self as "une recherche d'ouverture couplée a une volonté de raffermissement des racines." (Letourneau 1992: 78)

So it is specifically to the discourses of cultural policy and popular culture that I turn my attention in an attempt to reveal the means by which *l'identitaire* gets elicited, produced and reproduced by separate discourses linked mainly by their inclusion in Quebec's broader system of governmentality. Which, ultimately, is a system that recycles the past to reiterate our "québécoisité"--a word I dislike profoundly--daily and weekly in a pervasive and permeating form of socialization; a system which binds entertainment, advertizing and corporate success to government and a national project whose terms of belonging

are often restricted to "de chez nous", and whose identity is restricted to the past in a way which is "réfractaire à toute idée de progrès, de création, de découverte et d'invention d'un avenir vierge." (Tournier 1970: 413)

Chapter Three

"Quelques arpents de neiges" was an understatement. Since late December, the North Eastern corner of the continent has been frozen. This year's brand of freak climactic conditions have brought Arctic winds whistling down our streets and temperatures driven below the lowest low. City watermains burst in New York while a truck spinning on black ice drove a hole in the Mercier bridge just big enough for a car to fit through. Plumbers and snow removers are better employed than they've been for years and Hydro announced a record consumption of electricity for December 1993 and January 1994. And pretty much everyone has deciphered the contradiction of what global warming means for us.

It's cold.

In fact, it's so cold that the weather has become more than a trite topic of conversation and almost the stuff that legends are made of. Where you were when it was minus 50, what it did to your car, your house, your hands and your feet are the highpoints of tales told before an open oven. Where to be and what to do with your car next time are the questions answered by nightly newsreports and weather warnings. The cold, the snow and the wind have become news as they regroup daily in seemingly ever-worse combinations to assail us with a surprise we could have done without. And in Quebec they've now become aspects of *l'identitaire* that had evaded my attention until my weekend paper brought the

weather and sovereignty together under the heading *Vive l'hiver libre!* (Côté 1994: A1)

Not too hard to figure at this point, M. Côté argues that "Mme. Météo's" bad attitude towards anything but sunny skies and Quebecers' annual exile towards the south are symptoms of a dysfunctional sovereignty. To like winter is to like Quebec, while "Refuser l'hiver, le maudire, espérer le fuir un jour pour de bon, n'est-ce pas tout simplement tourner le dos à son vrai pays?" (Côté 1994: A1) A "love it or leave it" argument in which weather is made synonymous with land and winter with home. So Quebecers have lost touch with their environment. We are no longer the sovereign people we once were. When? "Du temps qu'ils avaient une architecture, une cuisine, une âme. Du temps qu'ils s'installaient dans l'hiver parce que c'était leur pays et que ça ne se discutait même pas." So when exactly did we cease to be sovereign? "Probablement quand les hommes se sont mis, l'hiver, à se coiffer de chapeaux et se chausser de 'canots' mésadaptés et les femmes à sortir en bas de nylon... Quand nous avons perdu l'art de vivre en hiver." (Côté 1994: A1)

Imbécile.

However inane though, Côté's argument is telling because it shows quite specifically the impossibility of *l'identitaire's* identity. It's not as if Côté is actually suggesting that we return to our rural ways, that we will be

sovereign once men start dressing and acting like *trappeurs* and *courreurs*, or when women shed their pantyhose for a good pair of wool knickers and a few frocks. He couldn't be.

Rather, it seems to me that his romanticization of a past he can never really know anyhow only bears witness to *l'identitaire's* reactionary character. To claim the disappearance of a consensual and cohesive community, as opposed to its absence, is to reject a québécois society; to reject the difference within Quebec is to reject Quebec's modernity. And so, Côté's argument makes it blatantly clear that *l'identitaire's* purification of the past is inspired by a disaffection for the outcome of Quebec's "projet de société" or, the state of its current modernity.

So, the reason to address this inanity is not only to show that just about anything can get pulled into the debate over sovereignty, but also to speak of the disaffection which triggers such interpretation. Because, to a great extent, I do think that it is a dissatisfaction with the way things have turned out in Quebec which roots *l'identitaire's* return to the past and re-identification with a québécois community that left few traces of thinking of itself in terms other than "canadien-français". Specifically, it is disaffection for Quebec's current neo-liberalism, its corporatism and so-called individualism which seems to send shivers up the backs of yesteryear's sovereigntists and

those who favour a collectivist and governmental framing for independence.

So, apart from the disgruntled ramblings often found in treatises such as Côté's, one of the more interesting places I've encountered this disaffection is in Quebec's early cultural policy (1978). Most interesting because these are the documents which explicitly develop the idea of cultural sovereignty to define the ultimate state of Quebec's modernity. And in this respect this disaffection is written into this policy not as a reason to return, but as a pitfall of modernization that best be avoided: "our heritage would induce us in a vain nostalgia for the past if in pursuing our present creative activities we were unable to weave it into the very fabric of our future." (Quebec 1978b: 333)

But this nostalgia warning is immediately compromised by its setting: despite its more prescient moments, Quebec cultural policy is predicated on the historical contingency *l'identitaire* designs for Quebec and the Québécois. The need for a cultural policy separate from its canadian version is predicated on the existence of a separate nation and a distinct culture in Quebec. To describe the culture it regulates, cultural policy documents require ontological proof of this culture and so necessarily proceed through its historical authentication. And so, as cultural policy initiatives repeat and reproduce the historical narrative about Quebec's disempowered past to give reason and motive

for a cultural policy for the future, it is also largely responsible for the reproduction and circulation of certain versions of *l'identitaire*.

To the extent that there exists this very basic contradiction between a goal of modernization and a predilection for the past, between cultural production and its protection and preservation, cultural policy then offers an interesting site of investigation into *l'identitaire* and ultimately, an important investment into its persistence. Beyond this, it also offers one of the more telling instances of the influences and parties interested in maintaining this dominant version of québécois society. First, because it is the product of various governments and second, because its public character makes it open to contestation and intervention. And in this respect, it isn't a closed field but an open terrain on which the political, economic and social perspectives of various and often competing associations, organizations and administrations get played out. To read policy according to the workings of governmentality, then, presents

"an emphasis on how 'ideas'...behave, how they become the basis for holding together diverse and even antagonistic projects, how they are contested, and how they help clear the way for a field of possibilities not [necessarily] given in the policy-makers' words or intentions." (O'Regan 1993: 523)

So, the inner workings of cultural policy represent one of the strongest ends of a system of governmentality which ties

people and culture into territory, sovereignty, and government; a system which then represents the government as being of and for the people, and not as about them.

It seems important to mention a few things about governmentality and Quebec at this point. Most obviously because governmentality is about states and, as is the point, Quebec is not a state. Not yet anyhow. But for some time now, our "public language" about Quebec has been framed in terms of the inevitable eventuality of independence. Gone are the days when the heartfelt though half-baked federalism the Quebec liberals pitted against the PQ in 1980 still held social resonance.¹ Historical reasons and emotional justifications no longer suffice to counter the sovereigntist option; at best, federalism is justified in Quebec by economic necessity. And even this weight is contested by arguments about paying twice as many taxes or about the inequity of our yearly investment into Canada and our portion of transfer payments.

In a very significant way, then, the referendum caused a shift in Quebec's terms of reference. It has become quite unacceptable to negate Quebec's difference within Canada, let alone any other community's, Trudeau's bugbear finally

¹ The passage of Bill 22, Bourassa's language bill which made French Quebec's official language, played a significant role in compromising this federalism and the government's relations with the federal liberals.

having gotten the better of us all. And internally, the carving of effective political rhetoric must include a recognition of this difference and further, a commitment to act on it, be it to chisel more out of the federal government or to sovereignty directly. For instance, the "distinct society" clause that became the crux of 1991's constitutional debate was masterminded by Bourassa's Liberal government as a way of satisfying both federal integration and provincial autonomy. But this tokenistic approach to cultural difference ended up satisfying no one as it merely represented a semblance of recognition and of independence which, ultimately, wouldn't make a difference but made all the difference politically. This same government then repatriated all cultural powers in 1993 despite heavy internal opposition and the impossibility of bringing communications legislation back with it. So, again, the only difference made is at the governmental level--just more government--and not on a social field of culture and difference.

This to say that, whether gradual or abrupt, Quebec's independence seems implicit. Provincial politics have been geared towards state-building and a québécois identity designed according to nationality and citizenship to suit them. So, the predictions and prescriptions about people, territory and sovereignty produced by a system of

governmentality are more than pertinent, but sufficient for understanding Quebec.

Yet, it still remains amorphous. And this is partly because a system of governmentality is not necessarily an instrumental model into which things fit clearly or for which exceptions need to be made. Rather, it presents possibilities of tensions and contradictions, and the potential mechanisms and strategies which negotiate these. Its consequent adaptability to different places, situations and even historical periods does not, however, mean that it isn't instrumental. Rather, it is a model of management which clarifies the engagement of otherwise unrelated realms and the interstices which trouble their commingling.²

For instance, last December, *Le Devoir* published a special section on the 1993 recipients of les Prix du Québec. In an event similar to the Governor General's awards, eight prizes are granted annually for scientific, philosophical and artistic achievement. Each is named after illustrious quebecers commemorated for their contributions to their respective fields, each awarded to a quebecer

² That is to say that governmentality is not just about the government, its ministries or the bureaucratic apparatus attached to it. Rather, it speaks of relations of power in relation to the actions of the state, and in this respect involves other types of organizations and institutions. That is, governmentality speaks of relations of power inside the state and "at a distance". See Nicholas Rose and Peter Miller, "Political Power Beyond the State: problematics of government", *British Journal of Sociology*, v. 43, no. 2. 1992, pp. 173-205.

deserving of future commemoration. Like its federal counterpart, les Prix du Québec is something of an institution, dating itself back to 1922 when then-secretary of the province, Athanase David, held what would become an annual contest to gauge that year's best in literary and scientific production. But it was only in 1977 that three new categories were added to le Prix David, transforming a contest into an achievements ceremony known under its current nomenclature. And three more categories were added in 1992, an award for "la mise en valeur du patrimoine" among them.

But it is not the specifics of the ceremony or the fact of these awards that is interesting, but the journalistic treatment the event received in Montreal's better French paper that is noteworthy. The twelve page supplement includes this history of the awards, an article on each recipient, and a brief discussion of the eight québécois artists who designed the eight different prizes. This editorial is split fifty-fifty with related advertising, beginning on page three with a full page split between the minister of culture, Liza Frulla, and the minister of education and science, Lucienne Robillard, followed by a series of half page ads offering congratulations from Quebec's larger corporations.

And basically, all these elements are mutually supportive in rendering the continuity of a québécois

culture and in tying cultural achievement up to the state. The process begins with the very existence of this *cahier*, and seems initiated by Frulla's felicitous notes:

La cérémonie de la remise des Prix du Québec nous a permis d'assister à un moment chargé d'émotion au cours duquel nous avons remonté le fil du temps avec les lauréats et les lauréates de cette très haute distinction du gouvernement du Québec. Aujourd'hui, nous jetons un autre regard sur ces vies, ces visages, ces oeuvres, sur ces cheminements qui ont contribué à l'essor de la société québécoise: (*Le Devoir*, December 5, 1993: E3)

A series of headlines ranging from "A la poursuite de la mémoire"--a play on Lanctôt's film, *A la poursuite du bonheur*--and "Des grands morceaux de temps retrouvés" reinforce our present's dependence on the past, while "Le Québec en bloc" continues the work of meshing culture and politics in a play on words that lacks mostly play. These are then complemented by Hydro-Québec's, Ioto-Québec's, Teleglobe's and Alcan's corporate congratulations. Each ties greatness and "la société québécoise" together in fairly pat manner, an apposition which culminates in la Caisse Desjardins' particular appreciation of culture and society:

"Le mouvement des caisses Desjardins est convaincu qu'au coeur de notre société québécoise se trouve la culture, une culture commune faite de valeurs, d'institutions, d'oeuvres et de réalisations qui donnent à tout un peuple son homogénéité et son sentiment d'appartenance." (*Le Devoir*, December 5, 1993: E5)³

³ The printed quote is lifted from the Caisses' submission to the 1991 parliamentary commission on culture, Octobre 29 of the same year.

Despite their independent concerns then, corporate sponsorship, editorial coverage and governmental appropriation converge in a portrait of culture and society which absorbs individual effort into a collective project, the whole undersigned by the recurrence of "notre société québécoise" and its "coming into being" from such efforts and greatness.

And this example isn't only representative of the way our system of governmentality collides individual and collective achievement, and collapses corporate and governmental interests with cultural endeavours, but also emblematic, in something of an offhand way, of the earlier-mentioned shift in cultural policy. The emphasis on the past in this supplement and its dedication to "nous" is symptomatic of the growth of *l'identitaire* and a certain introversion not quite as apparent in Lévesque's more optimistic 1977 presentation of les Prix du Québec:

C'est grâce à toutes ces intuitions, à toutes ces trouvailles, à toute cette patiente transpiration qui accompagne les seules inspirations valables, qu'ils auront fait de ce pays incertain dont parlait naguère le Prix David de ce soir un univers qui est toujours modeste dans le monde, mais qui est plus cohérent, plus conscient à la fois de ses dons et de ses limites, par conséquent plus sain, plus normal, et par conséquent aussi plus ouvert, plus disponible aux autres, parce que c'est quand on devient sûr de soi que l'on est ouvert aux autres, et pour les autres finalement, tous les autres avec qui aussi il faut se parler.
(Québec 1977a: 3-4)

The difference marked by the comparison of these approaches is one respecting modernity, then. Lévesque's understanding

of progress is as teleological as that presented by today's government, but it depends on becoming more--just more--and knowing something other than ourselves--namely others. Meanwhile, *Le Devoir's* supplement constantly refers to the past as a means of gauging and congratulating our present, but this without anything but uncertainty regarding the future. And this is the difference which marks the growth of *l'identitaire* as a means of self-recognition, the difference between the potential optimism of referring to development, growth and the future and the solipsism of our self-congratulation.

This difference is important, then, because it also parallels another shift in cultural policy, one which is perhaps more significant as it underlines the importance of governmentality as a model for analysing Quebec's present political conjuncture. And that is a very definite change in the government's interpretation of culture--and that of groups affiliated to policy initiatives for that matter--away from the developmental emphasis of a public service approach to the managerial and economic emphasis of cultural industries: "trente ans plus tard ce n'est plus la notion de service public qui donne une cohérence à l'ensemble des recommandations, mais celle d'industries culturelles."

(Lacroix & Lévesque 1986: 140)

This shift became explicit in 1991 with the release of the government commissioned Arpin report, a document which

concluded a series of public hearings on the state and fate of Quebec culture with the unmediated recommendation that Quebec revise its cultural policy in terms of repatriating cultural powers. Its conclusion of repatriation rests on an interpretation of culture as a social good, a right and, thus, as a field of government intervention: "La culture est un bien essentiel et la dimension culturelle est nécessaire à la vie en société, au même titre que les dimensions sociale et économique." (Arpin 1991: 49) But, as much as this levelling out of culture with economy represents recognition long yearned for, it doesn't come without the cost of governmental determinism:

"L'Etat a le devoir de soutenir et de développer la dimension culturelle de la société, en utilisant des moyens comparables à ceux qu'il utilise pour soutenir et développer les dimensions sociales et économiques de cette même société.
(Arpin 1991: 49)

And, while this conclusion depends partly on modelling Quebec's administration according to the parameters of French government--a system by which government and culture are much more heavily imbricated than they are in Canada's "arm's length" model--it also results from more than a directional "étatisme".⁴

⁴ Insofar as Quebec's modernization has been broadly equated with the growth of its technocracy, its politics have been coloured by a certain statism. But to locate the problem solely at this level lends too much weight to the state and not enough to other social actors who contribute equally to the advancement of this nationalist discourse, or to the dispersion of its tropes and figures. Rather than being the repository and source of social democracy, affairs

Rather, Quebec's "coming into being"--its *devenir*--no longer depends on the institution-building inscribed in early cultural policy. The institutions are built and the pervasiveness of our government is something rarely doubted. In fact, in terms of government, the work of modernization is pretty much considered deed done as the above reference to the state and not government is helpful in suggesting. Rather, it is the whole of society that still needs to be worked, a society that remains to be built to fit the predictions of the state's predestination.

The completion of the state, its existence as a virtual "fait accompli", let alone the failure of two referendums, necessarily shifts the object of territorial nationalism away from the formation of a state to the more nebulous "becoming" of a people and the "devenir" of their society.⁵ In the most idealized terms then--often the terms of policy itself--the people's becoming is inscribed as a "devoir de devenir", a duty to become that which we were meant to be by virtue of *l'identitaire's* pre-ordainment. This formulation

of state (party politics and such) are a fairly self-referential system having its own points of reference and purposes, most of which are geared towards the effective management of society's (economic) affairs.

⁵ This shift doesn't however obviate the question of independence as much as articulate it differently, according to the development of cultural sovereignty instead of political sovereignty. It is a rhetorical shift which mostly counterbalances independence, a concern which still crops up weekly in PQ oppositions and proclamations. See the PQ's latest "projet de société" outline, *Le Québec dans un monde nouveau*, Montreal: VLB, 1993.

is as predictive as it is prescriptive, then, of an idealized society which it portrays as a *collectivité* with a deep rooted sense of *appartenance* to a sovereign democracy, open (to the outside and outsiders) and accessible (from within to its citizens and regions).⁶

Now, its not that there's anything wrong with this formulation, nothing that seems worth contesting. Rather, it merely represents a liberal ideal of democratic society, and in this respect, represents little more than a virtuality for Quebec. And I think that's where and why it becomes problematic. If, as I think it is, our "devenir" is *l'identitaire's* focal point, then our becoming depends on a *telos* which reconstructs its ground point in a constant and continued resignification of our culture. And in this sense, it is not only the "coming into being" of our society which is at stake, but the authenticity of our culture which gets problematized for now, but promised for later. Like Côté's argument about the weather, *l'identitaire* predicates our eventual being on a fable that we once were that idyllic cohesive community sharing language, culture and custom that is this *collectivité's* destiny:

the modern past often has that idealised air of the golden age: it is formed according to the well developed perspectives of a romantic orientation

⁶ The emphasis is to draw attention to how these concepts function as *l'identitaire's* main signifiers. In a foucauldian sense, they are the *énoncé* of a territorial nationalism which strives to create an holistic portrait of society.

which corresponds to modernity by asserting that the true potentialities of human development must be seen in light of the traditional...and deeply settled communities that have already been destroyed. (Wright 1985: 21)

And so, this is where territorial nationalism's "projet de société" takes on its second meaning. Designed to evoke the collectivist character of Quebec's modernization-- "Culture belongs to the people"--it also comes to point to the whole of society as the object of governmental administration. (Quebec 1978: 9) And this is precisely where and how the Arpin report comes into play. Like the '78 White Paper which expresses the fact that "No aspects of our reality must be passed over....", its attempt to develop a comprehensive cultural policy eventually runs culture into the social. (Quebec 1978: 4) Culture either designates artistic practices and creative expression or it is made a factor of economic concerns and governmental decisions herein. Either way, culture is society.

Point final.

It is of little surprise then, that this document attempts to administer culture down to the last letter, making it simultaneously of economic, industrial, governmental and artistic concern, and accordingly, the source of our *devenir*:

La culture est la valeur première des Québécois, celle qui expriment le plus intimement ce qu'ils sont et ce qu'ils veulent être. Elle ne saurait, moins que tout autre mission de l'Etat, être assujettie à des décisions provenant de deux paliers de gouvernement qui ne coordonnent pas

leurs activités et qui sont même souvent en rivalité. (Arpin 1991: 7)

Culture thus becomes an object of management, a stately mission designed to save not just that which is most expressive of "nous", but most intimate. And in this sense, the Arpin report's economistic take on culture provides a good example of the upwards and downwards continuity of government fostered by relations of governmentality. As with the duality of the "projet de société", culture is said to belong to the people, and consequently made personal. But, this depiction comes from the government itself which makes culture the highest stake in the formation of society and, consequently, one of the most important objects of governmental management:

L'intervention de l'Etat québécois dans la culture et dans les arts doit être exceptionnelle. Il y va de la survie de l'originalité, de la spécificité de notre culture. Ces qualités en font, chez nous, un ferment de développement et de croissance, et à l'étranger, un produit culturel attrayant. (Arpin 1991: 270)

Thus culture is made to stretch beyond a relation between the personal and the collective to one which reaches the political and managerial. So the shift from a public service approach to an emphasis on cultural industries in Quebec cultural policy--fairly apparent in the juxtaposition of the survival of our culture and the development of "un produit culturel attrayant"--also parallels the meshing of culture and economy. This then gives reason to the adoption of a managerial approach to culture.

Accordingly, cultural policy presents a complex but crucial arena for understanding Quebec's territorial nationalism. To take up Bhabha's interpretation of the nation again, cultural policy embodies the dualism of the nation: quite materially, it is an outline for the discipline of social polity which represents the nation's "coming into being" as a system of cultural signification. Accordingly, it is both a focal point for the workings of governmentality and one of the prime sites of *l'identitaire's* recurring ontology. This combination makes it a complicated object of analysis, but a pertinent one as it represents, perhaps more than any other one object, the imbrication of government and culture which compromises both our culture and our government, as well as the québécois identity which ensues from their production.⁷

It is to the knowledges that policy puts forth in and about Quebec, to its perpetuation of an ontology of culture predicated on history and territory, and its inception of a managerial approach to this culture that I turn my attention. In something of a programmatic way, I'll proceed through the analysis of three main policy documents, the **Arpin report** and its 1978 predecessor, **A Cultural**

⁷ The extent of this imbrication is perhaps best highlighted by the number of public interventions deposited at the Arpin hearings: 181 organizations, institutions and groups submitted a total 264 interventions to the National Assembly hearings. See **Débats de l'Assemblée nationale**, October-November 1991.

Development Policy for Quebec, and the 1981 Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities' **Autant de façon d'être québécois**. These provide the means to trace a trajectory from policy's tendency to ontologize culture to the more recent projection of its activity, a progression which also parallels the growth of culture's management.

The analysis does not proceed chronologically, or policy by policy, as I am not aiming at a comprehensive analysis of these documents, but rather at instantiating the play of *l'identitaire* within policy and Quebec's broader network of governmentality. Accordingly, I will also be looking at depositions submitted by a variety of "cultural" organizations to the public hearings on the Arpin report, as well as conference papers which followed the final decision of repatriation. This plurality of sources functions as an indicator of the size and diversity of what could be called *l'identitaire's* archive, a disparate corpus already suggested by the interplay between *Le Devoir's* supplement and Lévesque's 1977 presentation. In turn, the breadth of this archive is significant indication of the extent of governmentality and the pervasiveness of *l'identitaire* as a form of self-knowledge.

There exists a fundamental problem in speaking about cultural policy. Which is that culture itself becomes quite meaningless as it designates everything from a mission to

language and painting and so, seems to mean nothing specific, maybe nothing at all. Now, there's no question that culture has always been a complicated concept, expressive of art or behaviour or civilization depending on where you come from, but it wasn't always quite as compromised as it might be now.⁸

Whatever the set of circumstances are, whether they be the tensions of globalization or merely the resurgence of overt racism--the diagnostics are multiple and complicated themselves--culture has surfaced in the past decade as the most important source of specificity, rivalled only by religion which often gets absorbed into the cultural anyhow. So it has become, rather benignly, the reason for many political separations or the subject of disputes over representation and, more dangerously, the justification for what get deemed, with all the surprise that "this is still happening", human atrocities. And given all this, what it designates and what it makes possible--what gets done in the

⁸ In **Keywords**, Williams outlines a history of "culture" and offers three basic modern meanings to the term: a process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development; a particular way of life; and the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. Languages further complicate its meaning as their different histories bear on the word's connotations. However, its residual complexity and endless variations lead to the conclusion that "Between languages as within a language, the range and complexity of sense and reference indicate both difference of intellectual position and some blurring or overlapping [of meaning]...The complexity, that is to say, is not finally in the word but in the problems that its variations of use significantly indicate." (Williams 1983: 87-93)

name of culture--gets put into question. A question which then applies quite well to the domain of Quebec cultural policy.

And the answer isn't very promising. One thing that I think holds true for all the documents I've seen and read is that there isn't anything that even remotely resembles an attempt at holding down culture to one meaning or even to one set of meanings. Its definitions are many and mixed, and mostly non committal. The closest thing to a single definition the Arpin report comes up with is:

La culture est un fait concret. Elle repose sur une géographie donnée, sur une population, une histoire puisant à plusieurs sources; elle est le produit de la longue marche des nations, l'expression de la riche sédimentation occasionnée par l'expérience humaine. L'identité culturelle est composée de l'ensemble de l'évolution d'un peuple, des choix qu'il a faits et de ceux que lui impose l'histoire. (Arpin 1991: 37)

However assertive this is of concreteness, the rock-hard build-up of time, space and people, this definition epitomizes the lack of clarity in policy's definitions of culture. It is a geographically and historically instantiated fact, the product of the march of nations, and the ultimate expression of human experience. Whatever this adds up to, I'm quite sure it's not the object of legislation with which these documents are concerned.

Rather, what surfaces from all attempted definitions is the still-nebulous but somewhat more purposive elaboration of culture as "a way of life. As evinced by preceding policy

quotes, culture is strategically boiled down to everything we are and everything we want to be: "la culture...exprime le plus intimement ce qu'ils [les québécois] sont et ce qu'ils veulent être." (Arpin 1991: 7) And despite its repeated and always-differing offerings, that is all policy ever offers as a definition of culture. What we were, what we are, and what we want to be. A way of life. As if its content was known, agreed upon or, even more, lived daily so not needing elaboration since everyone here is intimately acquainted with it.

Well, short of us all having the same life, I don't get it. That is, not unless the vagueness of this definition results from one of three things. It could come from the fact that policy is and offers a specific discourse. It is a pedagogical text in the strictest sense, meaning that it is a form of "dominant common sense", even despite the variety of influences which might or might not play in its formation. (Morris 1992: 550) It espouses generalities and reinforces the acceptance of "accepted truths". And one part of the reason it does this is that policy is meant to last. At least a while. The fifteen year gap between Quebec's cultural policies is indicative of its planned longevity. Leaving enough room for interpretation and sufficient open ended clauses for adaptability are important criteria in its development. So maybe the generality and the banality of its interpretation of culture is just par for the course.

Or, maybe the looseness of this definition comes from a more general difficulty. As Lévesque was insightful enough to admit, culture's conceptual complexity makes it quite unsuitable for programmatic or functional definitions: "la culture, c'est un mot qui est à peu près impossible à définir. Ca échappe comme du vif argent aux définitions." (Quebec 1977a: 2) But the emptiness of "a way of life" also leads to the supposition that this interpretation, or lack thereof, is merely more instrumental than a series of distinctions (along the lines of separating "une politique des arts" from "une politique du développement culturel") might be.⁹ And though the specifics of policy and the complexity of culture factor into this lack of precision, I think the legislative openings left behind by interpreting culture anthropologically are more significant as they are wide enough to absorb almost all aspects of social life into culture.

For instance, the '78 White paper prefaces its cultural development policy with the following elaboration of what it considers its field of intervention:

⁹ This distinction is addressed in the '78 White Paper although not worked into the policy's recommendations. (see pp. 11-12) It is also developed quite extensively by François Colbert and Mario Beaulac, representing the Hautes Etudes Commerciales at the Arpin report hearings, October 22, 1991. They argue that it marks the difference between "la culture comme dimension de la vie sociale" and "la culture comme secteur", a difference which, if recognized, would necessarily alter the perspectives of policy. (Beaulac 1991: CC-2370).

In addition to the traditional sectors of preservation of our heritage, and the arts and letters, where there is an urgent need for action, the policy deals with education, work structures, the implications of leisure, eating habits and drug use, problems relating to sex and age, regional limitations and strengths, decentralization, and so forth. (Quebec 1978: 2)

And so forth? This tendency to engulf every practice, behaviour and endeavour into the cultural might stem from the desire to create a comprehensive and complete policy, but its lack of coherence when it comes to the subject at hand ends up compromising both the cultural and governmental ends of its project.¹⁰

So, the point to looking at policy is not to decipher what it means by culture, because it certainly tries to mean a lot by it. In Quebec's case, too much. Rather, it is to try to understand how policy documents and debates restrict culture to the terms of territorial nationalism; that is, to a history, a territory, a people and a language. This condensation then renders a form of culture equally singular and subsidiary to the nation as are policy's versions of these four other important belongings. And it is precisely the way policy limits all of these in order to ontologize culture which robs them of their specificity. That is, policy uses these factors to establish a collective identity, but the ontology on which it depends ends up

¹⁰ For further discussion of the White Paper, see Michel Audet, "La quête d'un Etat: la politique québécoise de développement culturel", *Recherches sociographiques*, xx, 2, 1979.

denying the particularities this identity might have or could have had. So that the knowledge produced about self and society by the governmental which gets circulated as an important part of our *public language* about ourselves not only limits the possibility of difference within but more, limits the possibilities for our identity to *l'identitaire's* few.

This approach to policy, then, also puts into question the openings created--in the cultural domain and for the government--by closing culture down to this singularity. Such openings necessarily produce other hindrances and barriers, but these mostly in the cultural domain and not for the government, however. And this inequity, the one that favours government over culture, is in part a result of who is setting the rules of this game. But more importantly, it stems from a fundamental disjunction between policy's fashioning of this cultural singularity and the administrative moves which supposedly flow from it. And what this disjunction points to is, ultimately, an incommensurability between *l'identitaire* and policy: policy discourse begins with the faulty premise of its object's existence (rather than its conjunctural and developmental character) and proceeds to prove it by means which don't add up to the regulation it then receives.

Like policy documents then, I'll start with the existence of our culture. The need for a domestic cultural

policy is predicated on the existence of a distinct culture in this territory, and thus a distinct nation within Canada. So, to prove the nation, a necessary operation within the discourses of sovereignty, culture must be proven not only a "real" object, but a distinct one. The first step in this ontological proof then, is historical. Quite plainly, history serves to establish the continuity of the québécois people and their culture: "there is no guarantee of authenticity like that in history."¹¹ (Hall 1991b: 58)

And the proof of Hall's statement is that all these documents ontologize Quebec culture by first proceeding through its historical validation. They all tell the same story, seemingly by rote, which leads to the same conclusion of a distinct culture, yet one barren of its own means and thus requiring a little governmental push to help it along in its development. This story is tantamount to a textbook history of Quebec, albeit tainted by a somewhat more overt nationalism than the "objectivity" potentially allowed by

¹¹ Authenticity is very important to this criticism. Firstly, because even though I object to the constitution of this history, I am not arguing against it in terms of its authenticity but in terms of how it compromises culture and identity. And part of the reason not to frame this argument in terms of authenticity has to do with its connotations: "'the problem of authenticity is distinct from the problems of objectivity and true knowledge'--indeed 'authenticity and truth may collide' and if this happens we often 'stubbornly resist' the truth 'because we cannot 'unbind the spell' of the 'original'.'" (Wright 1985: 15) So, policy's repetition of this history functions to establish origin, while *l'identitaire's* promise of an eventual authentic culture depends on establishing the "truth" of this "origin".

latter-day historians. Beginning in 1534 when Cartier comes face to face with the local population, "L'histoire du Québec commence tout de suite par un choc culturel."¹²

(Quebec 1981: 3) What came of this initial meeting is mostly sidelined, as it would certainly be a shameful addition to our "cultural heritage". Instead, depictions of steadfast "colons" conquering the land, trapping and hunting are offered and then toned a little as the romanticism of "les Filles du roi's" arrival comes to bear on the depiction of our society's normalcy.

But, this rugged quaintness is set up only to be torn down by the fateful event which would compromise this French people until the 1960s--the British conquest:

Came the British victory of 1759, and the small French community, which had had relatively little time to gain a firm foothold on this territory was forced to withdraw into itself and ensure its own survival and development in a country that had been effectively taken over by a people whose language, religion, law, political institutions and mentality were foreign. A conquered people under foreign political and economic domination, the *Canadiens* gradually developed minority reactions and became a marginal society in a country that was actually their own, but over the

¹² "Cultural shocks" and ruptures play an important role in a teleology of Quebec culture designed to end with our "devenir". It is a history which then depends as much on overcoming our past as it does on establishing continuity with it. And this contradiction results mostly from the constitution of the sovereigntist project which places itself as the logical conclusion to Quebec's modernization, itself the product of Quebec's most consequential rupture: "cette redéfinition de l'être collectif comme être moderne s'est fait à partir de l'idée de rupture." (Letourneau 1992: 69)

main structures of which they soon lost control.¹³
(Quebec 1978: 48)

So the first two hundred years are ones of conquest and development, while the next two become years of confinement dedicated almost solely to holding on to what's dear in anticipation of Quebec's next great rupture:

Après de nombreuses décennies de confinement à la terre, de refuge dans les vieilles sécurités, de manque d'ouverture et d'audace, de simple artisanat dans les services sociaux et d'acceptation passive des dépendances économiques, le Québec des années soixante s'est soudainement réveillé. Il s'est doté d'un Etat moderne, il a pris en main les secteurs-clefs de sa vie collective, il a remis en question ses habitudes anciennes, il a procédé à des réformes de l'éducation depuis l'école jusqu'à l'université, il s'est donné des services sociaux mieux structurés et il est devenu un facteur de sa propre croissance économique. Ce fut la 'Révolution tranquille', une réalité inscrite pour toujours dans l'histoire du Québec et dont on n'a même pas encore développé toutes les virtualités.
(Quebec 1981: 9)

This history then serves primarily as a means of establishing the continuity of a québécois culture and a québécois people, a process which stretches current identity--being québécois--back over 350 years. And the problem with this, aside from the basic and obvious

¹³ Depending on which version of demographics is being favoured, this period's population is either the small French community of a minoritarian discourse, or the burgeoning ancestral community of today's québécois society: "A la veille de la défaite des plaines d'Abraham, en 1759, ils formaient déjà un peuple homogène et relativement autonome de 65 000 habitants. Aujourd'hui, la très grande majorité des québécois francophones qui sont presque cinq millions, viennent de familles françaises installés au Québec depuis trois ou quatre siècles. (Quebec 1981: 4)

substitutions and exclusions it must maintain to establish this linearity, is that it restricts culture to heritage, and people to lineage: "la culture...est un patrimoine collectif"¹⁴ (Arpin 1991: 40) And though both heritage and lineage factor into identity and a sense of belonging, they aren't sufficient means to define our current culture--whether that be the way we live or the body of artistic expression we call "ours"--nor adequate terms of reference for a collective identity, let alone justification for the administration policy proposes.

Which is partly why policy documents turn to territory as a repository for culture, a further instantiation of its existence which extends its sovereignty further through time and over space.

"...C'est ce à quoi on pense en premier lieu, lorsqu'il est question de patrimoine culturel. Mais ce sont aussi les paysage naturels quand ils revêtent une grande importance pour l'ensemble de la société, soit en raison de leur beauté, de leur caractère pittoresque ou de la valeur que leur a conférée la légende." (Arpin 1991: 163)

¹⁴ As the quote from page 40 of the White Paper indicates, policy's historical slippages are of the order of "the Canadiens...became a marginal society in a country that was actually their own." Well, to start with, it wasn't their's until colonization, with all the implications of devastation this holds; then it was officially French territory until it was signed over as part of a package deal of defeat to England, which eventually signed the territory off as an independent country that Quebecers participated in developing. Quebec cultural policy obviates these facts in favour of the more dissident moments of Quebec's history, like the protest against conscription, or to emphasize episodes of injustice against the *peuple*, as every license plate in the province reminds us to remember the *patriotes* and any similar events.

At a very basic level, territory serves to naturalize culture, making it something "already there", something which exists unquestionably: "in everything natural there is always something unchosen...in these 'natural ties' one senses what one might call 'the beauty of *gemeinschaft*'." (Anderson 1991: 143) Land, then, not only serves to limit culture to the defined geo-political borders which lend it its territorial specificity, but also acts as the idyllic site and sign of community.

And the immediacy of community figures prominently in establishing the commonality of territory and of its culture. Like the community of the nation, territory is rendered as something which encompasses direct rather than organized relationships. To this extent, then, cultural policy projects Quebecers' relationship to the land not only as an intrinsic character of cultural identity, but one formative of rather refined insight:

Firmly rooted in their land, close to nature and the real meaning of life, the French Quebecers have learned, from their very isolation, to see the artificial side of human endeavours in their proper perspective and to confront the ingrained habits to which self-centered cultural traditions are so readily exposed with the basic demands of life, the soil and the climate. (Quebec 1978: 55)

And though the '78 White Paper clarifies this character as not innate but culturally-assimilated from close contact with our native cultural counterparts, our tie to the land is consistently maintained an essential cultural attribute. (Quebec 1978: 45) Which means that policy not only invests

territory into culture by means of portraying emotionally resonant landscapes, but attempts to imbue culture with a sense of place by fashioning collective attitudes and insights derived from geographic location.

But, in Quebec, like anywhere else, geographic location is not uniform. Aside from inclusion within the state's political infrastructure, the far north of the province shares little with Chicoutimi, and neither much with Montreal. Which is why Bill 101 is widely understood as designed for and directed at Montreal and not a source of much contention outside city limits. And the difference of place, even within a nation or state, breeds difference of concern. Which is precisely why this last play of culture and territory requires the qualification of difference in territory.

So policy coordinates identity with political boundaries, and sets up an administrative grid in the process, by opening up the wholeness of Quebec to its parts. Quebec's territory then becomes something organic, a whole made of parts which operate differently and separately, but always in the name of the body to which they belong:

En réalité, le Québec est constitué de trois grands "pôles": une métropole, Montréal, qui n'est pas une région; une capitale, Québec, qui n'est pas non plus une région, et un ensemble régionale mixte, formé d'un certain nombre de villes de plus ou moins grande importance, entourées chacune de zones rurales d'étendue variable. C'est selon cette conception du territoire québécois et de sa

population que nous proposons de constituer un véritable réseau culturel.¹⁵ (Arpin 1991: 119)

Quebec's fourteen regions--sixteen by a definition which includes Montreal and Quebec City--then become the prime sites of difference within our culture: "in a vast country like ours, rather sparsely populated, regional diversity is, more than elsewhere, a source of originality and creativity." (Quebec 1978: 87) The difference within then, is of first order geographical and not historical or ethnic, let alone cultural. And that's mostly because it is projected as the diversity within a sameness and not really difference at all, except as an analogue to Quebec's position in relation to Canada. And in this sense, it represents the basis of a pluralistic approach to cultural development, undersigned as Quebec's project to foster cultural democracy and grant all its regions equal access to domestic cultural production.

It is at this level, then, that the ontology of culture presented so far--policy's articulation of *l'identitaire*--begins to be troubled by administrative projects and

¹⁵ Because policy initiatives all centre around particular political projects, emphasis on regional versus urban development vary quite interestingly. For instance, the Arpin report emphasizes the urgent need for urban development to link the province up with international urbanity through Montreal. Quite differently, the '78 White Paper which partakes of Bill 101's linguistic and cultural equivocation, contains the following reminder: "Montreal is a danger zone where the French language and culture are in greater peril than in the rest of Quebec." (Quebec 1978: 89-90)

governmentality's influences. Policy texts argue that our cultural production should be distributed evenly over the whole territory as a matter of principle and, even more, of right, because "des œuvres d'art, des monuments, des sites...sont les symboles de notre identité,...marquent les étapes de notre courte histoire,...sont les points de repères de notre identité nationale." (Quebec 1977b: 9)

But, it remains unable to offer anything more than a proposed plan of decentralization which tends to pit its regions against its urban centres:

Tous ces projets...expriment notre volonté d'assurer le développement des cultures locales et régionales, ainsi que de celles qui malgré leur immense potentiel créateur ont été trop longtemps refoulées à l'ombre de la culture des professionnels des grands centres et qu'on nomme un peu malicieusement le culture cultivée. (Quebec 1977b: 7)

And furthermore, as has been made evident with Radio-Canada's 1990 retreat from the regions and this year's NFB withdrawal, the costs of maintaining a policy of universality vis-a-vis culture and of fabricating this domestic market are too high.¹⁶ So, while still maintaining the same line on regional development and access, recent policy has come to value cultural production in light of its ability to compete internationally:

¹⁶ The federal character of these institutions is secondary to their inability to support cultural universality which is symptomatic of a more generalized problem across the country and in Quebec.

l'avenir de nos industries culturelles peut s'avérer difficile, pour ne pas dire impossible, sauf si elles offrent un produit culturel qui répond aux caractéristiques de la concurrence... Si nos oeuvres ou nos produits culturels n'ont pas une qualité au moins comparable à celle des autres pays, s'ils nous parviennent plus difficilement que ceux de l'étranger et si nous ne retrouvons pas en eux un peu de notre univers particulier, notre vie culturelle est alors sans avenir. (Arpin 1991: 61-62)

And it's not that regional development and international success are mutually exclusive possibilities, as if accomplishing the one discounts the possibility of the other. Rather, it is a question of how this frames a notion of cultural identity which hinges on the economic success of our culture. There is to be no "devenir collectif" without competition, while the authenticity of our culture now resides in our cultural industries' ability to churn out most marketable, yet culturally-specific products.

A lapse has occurred, then, somewhere between policy's effort to ontologize Quebec culture and its administration. And that is in its attribution of activity to culture, an attribution which parallels the growth of its administration and of our system of governmentality. Diversity in territory and difference of people, and the difference within our culture, force their way into policy documents, mostly by means of the consultative process of policy formation inspired by a dedication to the democratic. But policy discourse opens up its national singularities to diversity and difference only to shut them down by means of

pluralistic interpretations which diminish or flatly deny the difference which makes a difference: "It [pluralism] is the condensation of a variety of different identities. It plays on difference and through difference, all the time. It tries to represent that difference as the same." (Hall 1991b: 66) So the differences between Quebec's far north and Chicoutimi which actually factor into qualifying culture and challenge *l'identitaire's* collective identity are completely sidelined by policy's mapping of territorial difference onto its administrative standards of economy and government.

And policy's conjunction of culture and people functions much the same way. Just as Quebec's territory gets recognized as differentiated, so does its population. After drafting its linear history and its depiction of a once-homogeneous québécois people, policy discourse often retreats a few steps to speak of the other populations and immigrants who contributed to the hybridity of québécois culture, although these are loosely defined as influences stemming from Quebec's native populations, the English, "et même d'ailleurs". (Quebec 1981: 8)

So policy discourse is temporarily admitting of the conjunctural nature of québécois culture: "il tire sa richesse culturelle d'une source qui n'est pas unique." (Quebec 1981: 8) But, again, this recognition never gets forced beyond the boundaries of pluralism--and sometimes not even that far as the Arpin report failed even to make

mention of native culture--because it always and inevitably collapses any and all differences into the collective project of our "devenir":¹⁷

C'est des quatre coins du monde que sont venus, les uns depuis longtemps, les autres plus récemment, les habitants actuels de la terre du Québec. Ils doivent désormais ensemble savoir lier indissociablement fidélité à leurs origines et participation à une projet collectif. Ce projet, dans le respect des traditions culturelles de chaque groupe, est celui d'une société française. (Quebec 1981: 8-9)

And, as with territory, policy's proposed solution to bridging the gap between allegiance to separate ethnic, religious and cultural origins and participation in Quebec's collective project falls back on the governmental apparatus and its economic aspirations and concerns.

For instance, **Autant de façon d'être québécois'** answer to cultural integration is to increase cultural communities' representation in provincial public service:¹⁸

¹⁷ The depositions submitted to the Arpin report hearings by the Grand conseils des Cris and l'Institut culturel et éducatif montagnais both criticize the report for completely abstracting native culture from its portrait of québécois society. But, interestingly, in their dedication to self-determination and eventual self-government, both also use many of the same tropes as does the Arpin report: "Quand on parle de rapatrier des pouvoirs au niveau culturel, il ne faut pas voir là un repli sur nous-mêmes ou essayer de nous enfermer dans notre petit monde...On veut continuer à préserver cette culture qui est si importante pour nous et cette langue qui est si important pour nous également." (Saganash 1991: 2523) Despite the inherent instrumentality of using the same discursive tropes, their employment nonetheless points to a certain acceptance of the logic behind *l'identitaire*.

¹⁸ In fact, more than half of the document is dedicated to this topic. The founding document of Quebec's ministry of

Pourtant, sans une meilleure représentation au sein des rouages gouvernementaux, les communautés culturelles se sentiront encore longtemps étrangères au développement du Québec et la majorité risquera de prendre sans elles des décisions importantes pour le projet collectif québécois. (Quebec 1981: 36)

Or, again, the Arpin report's overwhelming economic take on everything manages to shift Quebec's ethnic and cultural diversity away from being an important qualification of our collective identity to being a form of insurance against the development of an insular culture:

Cette diversité de la population est incontestablement une richesse au plan culturel. Elle constitue, en outre, en particulier grâce aux nouvelles communautés ethniques, une forme de garantie d'ouverture au monde et un contrepoids au repli sur soi. (Arpin 1991: 43-44)

The difference which raises questions of representation, other than in the public service, but in matters of culture and identity are then merely bypassed as not worth further discussion because satisfied by this solution.

And short of these administrative standards and operations of government and economy, policy discourse always has recourse to language as a final means of bringing

cultural communities and immigration (from being the ministry of immigration) is riven with very strong attributions of otherness to "our" cultural communities. It continually emphasizes their integration, adaptation, our acceptance and "sensibilisation" in its discussion of the means to "faciliter l'insertion" of immigrants after our benevolent "accueil" of them. See also, Louise Fontaine & Yuki Shiose, "Ni citoyens, ni autres: la catégorie politique communautés culturelles'", In: **Citoyenneté et nationalité: Perspective en France et au Québec**, (D. Colas et. al. eds), Paris: PUF, 1991.

any difference back to the same culture. Like the other categories, language is employed as a fundamental precept of our culture, perhaps the most essential element defining the specificity of québécois culture. But, in an inversion of policy's procession from the existence to the activity of these defining elements, it is language's integrationist pull that is favoured in order to establish essence:

Une langue n'est pas simplement un véhicule, un enchainement de mots et une construction syntaxique servant de contenant à des idées. Elle exprime une vie, tout en la façonnant parfois. Langue et culture sont intimement liées. De telle sorte qu'en reconnaissant que la langue commune du Québec doit être le français, il faut accepter la suite logique. Non pas en affirmant que la culture d'expression française doit être la seule légitime au Québec, mais en acceptant qu'elle soit le moteur principale de la culture québécoise. (Quebec 1981: 11)

So language pulls all the stops out of difference, all the contradictions out of culture, by being both the tradition on which this culture rests and its main impetus. And, by virtue of this framing and by force of regulation, culture is fully absorbed into language, so that policy's final rendition of the state of Quebec's culture reads as follows:

Au Québec, le genre de vie est de culture française. Une population compacte et organisée soutient la langue. Une aire géographique et des frontières politiques lui servent de base. Une longue histoire l'alimente. Des structures sociales, des institutions et des lois de culture française y correspondent. Un vouloir-vivre collectif, avec de solides fondements géographiques, assurent son maintien et son développement. Une créativité culturelle en pleine croissance la projette vers l'avenir. (Quebec 1981: 11-12)

After being so neatly tied up, it seems almost contradictory that policy has such trouble defining culture and that it should conclude that it requires so much regulation. Something must be askew somewhere, and my feeling is that it is both in policy's package deal and the result of something which exceeds the administrative apparatus of the state, namely Quebec's broader system of governmentality. And taking a look at where all this has left us helps to define the cogs in a system that never fails to represent itself as complete but which functions constantly to complete something unfinished.

So, where has all this left us? Well the recent formation of Johnson's new cabinet transformed the Ministry of Cultural Affairs into the Ministry of Culture, Communications, and la Francophonie. The introduction of communications into the ministry is a poor response to the rather widely-felt opposition to repatriating culture without communications. It is little more than a nominal distinction which, ultimately, won't make the difference of complete provincial control over communications. The addition of "la francophonie" ties our culture and language together once and for all and dedicates it to a certain internationalism which speaks of economism. This transition exemplifies, rather pointedly, the incorporation and condensation of different nationalist perspectives into the

governmental and its persistent collision of culture, language, and technology.¹⁹

We also have a new québécois Conseil des Arts which, as of Spring 1994, will partially replace SOGIC's rather disserving offices. And, we have a new cultural policy (1992), **La politique culturelle du Québec. Notre culture. Notre avenir.** It is largely based on the recommendations of the Arpin report which means that government involvement is increasingly about a type of development which depends on heavy management. All of this increases the top heavy relationship of government to culture and, consequently, also pares down what can be considered cultural.

And although the imbrication of government and culture that I've been speaking of throughout began back with Lesage's trust in a government ministry's ability to actually embody "the soul of our people", the *dirigisme* inscribed in the Arpin report, and heavily opposed throughout the hearings, has gone far beyond this point.²⁰ (Quebec 1978: 29) In fact, the changes between '78 and '91

¹⁹ Like Canada, but in a different way, québécois policy discourse is permeated by a technological nationalism which insists on binding cultural development and national growth to technological improvement. See Maurice Charland, "Technological Nationalism", **Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory**, v. 10, no. 1-2, 1986.

²⁰ "Dirigisme gouvernemental" was the strongest opposition to the recommendations of the report. The government's reply to this "accusation", its justification for insinuating administrative measures into just about anything it could stick its hand into, rests rather feebly on its adoption of a French model of administration.

in the role the government assigns itself are quite marked.

The '78 White Paper dictates that

the government must nonetheless intervene to encourage the free play of creative liberty and to tackle the restrictions and powers that fetter it, so that everyone will have free access to the best of our cultural property. Here we see the importance of the government's role in safeguarding individual liberties and inaugurating true social justice. (Quebec 1978: 5)

Despite the reference to cultural property which bears witness to a relationship between culture and economy--which is contentious only in terms of the degree of their imbrication--the document frames government intervention in terms of questions of freedom and democracy. And despite the fact that the protectionist policies which ensued had as much to do with development as with limiting other possibilities (linguistic ones in particular), its emphasis is equally on allowing for the free play of ideas and for equal access to their productions.

Conversely, the Arpin report's *dirigisme* leads to a much more obstructive directiveness, oriented towards entrepreneurship and a fundamentally corporate conceptualization of culture:

Le gouvernement se doit d'intervenir: il doit le faire pour soutenir la recherche-développement et y appliquer les mêmes critères de 'rentabilité' qu'il applique aux autres secteurs d'activités, dans une perspective à long terme, où il faut dix fois entreprendre avant d'arriver à un résultat concluant. Car la recherche-développement, dans le domaine culturel, c'est la création-innovation. Cette intervention du gouvernement s'impose d'autant plus que la création continue est le principal rempart permanent que la culture

québécoise peut avoir pour protéger son originalité. Si la création locale venait à faire défaut, notre culture serait alors complètement vassalisée par la puissante culture anglo-américaine. D'autre part, l'Etat québécois, qui doit intervenir pour protéger la création, doit le faire avec prudence et éviter de définir des normes trop précises, qui risqueraient de mettre au monde une quelconque culture ou art officiel vides, en pratique, de toute substance et d'originalité. (Arpin 1991: 58)

Its heavy-handedness in applying R&D to culture and then making this the source of our specificity is so blatant that, whoever put the last touches to the document, seemingly recognized the need for the insertion of its ending disclaimer.

So, the second question is, how did culture and social life come to be conceptualized in such a way that it would add up to justifying these measures. And sovereignty is the only answer I can find. Partly because of the failure of the political project of sovereignty, the desire to prove ourselves sovereign in all other aspects of social life, culturally, economically, and as a people flows into the decisions which form policy, influences the formation of an identity of citizenship predicated on nationality, and becomes a condition of the moves and mistakes the Quebec government and its corporate constituents make in the name of our modern society.

Policy's adoption of a version of *l'identitaire*, its repetition of an overly well-known history, its reproduction of a collectivité that exists only on paper, its consequent

appeal to national identity as the essence of social life, and the placing of all these somewhere beyond question all stem from the insistence on our sovereign character. What else could justify boiling everything down to the minimum of one land and one people, and dissipating difference across institutional and economic frameworks until there's no difference left to speak of? Nothing but this dominant model of nation, culture and sovereignty which gets processed through a system of governmentality seeking to establish the parameters of a "subject nation."

Chapter Four

Constructing evidence...is a project of preservation, of making monuments of certain objects that are actually contemporaneous with ourselves. For them to acquire the status of 'historical evidence', however, we have to be able to deny them their contemporaneity by assigning them to a specified period in a calendrical past, an act by which we split the 'present' into the 'modern' and the 'traditional' or the 'historical', and thereby declare ourselves to be modern.

Dipesh Chakrabarty

Le Québec moderne. Notre société moderne. Un Etat moderne.

As evinced by the preceding analysis of the domain of cultural policy, our modernity is not something to be forgotten. In the last thirty years, Quebec has acceded--we have acceded--to this highpoint of historical development. And it is, and we are, very proud of it. And quite rightly so. Not having first hand knowledge of the facts, I can only base this assessment on what history has taught which, aside from policy's particular convolutions, is that an otherwise disinherited people set out to overcome a series of hindrances and barriers to its self-assertion and did.

But I don't think that the rather constant repetition of any of the above three statements, each of which appears more than weekly in the daily press or as part of nightly television, has much to do with a spirit of overcoming. Rather, the frequency of its invocation makes our modernity something insisted upon, something that if repeated often

enough might come true. In this way, it has much the same effect as trying to impress upon someone how little you care, that is, of insinuating doubt into whoever is on the receiving end of such persuasion.

But given the social and institutional infrastructures existing in Quebec, and the privileges and positions accessible in our society, our so-called modernity isn't something to be doubted, at least not in these material terms. Which can only mean that something else about our modernity remains questionable, and this especially to ourselves since it is we who seem to be in need of such constant reaffirmation of character. So, without getting into the idea that we are collectively insecure, widespread enough that it holds some social resonance despite the fact that it represents rather heavy psychologizing, maybe this recurring invocation has to do with the means by which we know ourselves as modern, namely history itself.

As Chakrabarty suggests, history is about constructing evidence. Specifically, it functions to prove the existence of something, and that thing is quite traditionally a people, a nation, a state, and often all three. And in this respect, its purpose is not only that of registration and preservation of things past, but also a certain dedication to the creation and representation of the present. Histories work to authenticate, to make real by investing a place in

time. But to do so, their means of proceeding are necessarily selective and quite often purposive.

So, the question that arises respecting Quebec's modernity is one about the purpose to its reiteration. And aside from self-congratulation or comforting national insecurities, the only other inspiration for such repetition that seems plausible is that of forging a collective identity. And in this respect, I believe that an insistence on the fact of our modernity is an essential element of the territorial nationalism I've been speaking of throughout.

This precisely because it represents the culminating point of the lengthy trajectory of the québécois nation and so, functions to reaffirm the nation itself and continue the work of establishing its continuity. That is, history plays an important part in processes of nation- and state-building not only by virtue of the continuity it fosters, but also by the fact of its narrative form:

Once we grant this connection between positivist historical narratives (causal explanations strung together through a liberal and strategic sprinkling of 'coincidences') and the social organization of the modern (nation-) state, we realize that there is no escaping 'history'. Historical narratives are integral to the institutions and practices of power of the modern bureaucracies we are all subject to, particularly those of the state. (Chakrabarty 1992: 57)

And in this respect, an insistence on Quebec's modernity is not only an important strategy of identification of a variety of nationalisms interested in portraying the homogeneity and continuity of the québécois nation, but also

a version of our collective identity produced by Quebec's system of governmentality. And its inclusion into this system results, in part, from narrativity's ability to foster particular identities.

The idea that the nation actualizes itself through narration is more than some post-structuralist accomodation; rather it has become an important means of criticism in discussions on this topic. The idea is based in the notion that narratives function to reveal and make real particular subjectivities and specific identities:

We cannot but be struck by the frequency with which narrativity, whether of fictional or factual sort, presupposes the existence of a legal system against which or on behalf of which the typical agents of a narrative militate. And this raises the suspicion that narrative in general, from the folktale to the novel, from the annals to the fully realized 'history' has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy, or more generally, authority." (White 1987: 13)

National narratives thus become one of the more instrumental means of our governmentality's construction of a "subject nation". And aside from text book treatises and policy's pointed portraits of our history, one of the more usual sites of articulation of Quebec's own national narrative is on television. In fact, there exists a strangely intricate relationship between québécois television and contemporary québécois society, and this especially in its conceptions of nation and history. For a variety of historical and governmental reasons, television has come to factor into "the nation's insatiable need for representational labor"

by providing rather constant and recurring images of a québécois past and relating it to this society's present. (Marshall 1992: 20)

Granted that historical series remain ever-popular fare throughout North America, Quebec seems to produce, air, and consume an inordinate number of what are here referred to as historic téléroman: "Mon étonnement, à la télévision, c'est que n'importe quoi d'historique fonctionne." (Barbe 1993: 16) And although this author goes on to suggest that such shows are popular because they are comforting, it strikes me that their constant circulation and massive consumption is suggestive of something more than mere comfort. And that is that history is, quite literally, being made in Quebec.

Without this explanation, I have a hard time accounting for some of the events which have occurred in and around several téléromans in the past few years. For instance, *Les filles de Caleb*, probably the most emblematic of these relationships between television and society, was produced as a twenty episode series, designed to run over two seasons. Inspired by Arlette Cousture's two-tomed novel on the lives of both her mother and grandmother, the series itself, and presumably its popularity of 3.2 million viewers per episode, inspired the construction of a theme park named *le Village d'Emilie*. (*La Presse*, July 27, 1991, C7) Pieced together from the series' set and built in la Mauricie where it was shot, the park has since come to include sets from

other historic téléromans, including those from *Blanche*, *Les filles de Caleb's* sequel which ran this past fall, and those of *Shehaweh*, which has nothing more to do with either of these than the fact the same actor, Marina Orsini, appeared in all three. Nothing more than their emphasis on things past, which somehow seemed valid enough reason for the park's promoters to bill this tourist attraction as a monument to our national heritage. So somehow, a fictionalized biography which became two television series has come to be interpreted not only an instance of our national imaginary, but has literally been transformed into an historical site, the subject of its commemoration--the series, its characters, our past or nationality?--being the only thing left to be determined, I suppose.

But without trying to twist my mind around this last point, the popularity of these series and just the fact of this park, let alone its success, bear witness to a further imbrication of *l'identitaire* and governmentality. These shows are all either financially supported by governmental agencies or ministries, aired on public television and heavily sponsored by québécois corporations, all of which works to endorse these series' production of *l'identitaire's* atavistic style of identification. Thus, there must be reason for the important corporate and governmental backing these images and reflections on the past receive.

And one of the reasons I've found to explain this is that the versions of history produced by these téléromans have to do with *l'identitaire*, that is, with a current form of self-knowledge, however informed it may be by the past. But, precisely because of this relation, their versions of *l'identitaire* are nothing unmediated. Rather, the particular negotiation of the past that these series engender establish both the continuity of a modern québécois nation with its past, as well as its contemporary difference from it. Just as policy documents employ territory and people to establish the difference within Quebec without really making a difference to the consistent portrait of the nation they offer, narrative television establishes our difference from our past while simultaneously establishing the continuity of our history. That is to say, Quebec's modernity gets articulated through two separate but related relationships to the past, constituted in the téléroman as a particular historical figure.¹

On one hand, the national past is factored into our present national identity as its negative archetype--as other than what we are now. In this capacity, this historical figure functions as a gauge of our current character, fashioning us as more or less modern. On the

¹ The term "figure" is used throughout qualitatively. I do not mean to point to any personification or embodiment, but rather to character as applicable to both territory and people. Accordingly, it is here to be understood as a particular version, a specific figuration of history.

other, this figure serves as a marker of *l'identitaire*, as a figure of cultural continuity based in the longstanding traditions of a particular originary community. As such, it functions as basis and proof for claims respecting the province's distinct culture and so provides the grounds for a politics of emancipation. In short, this historical figure is factored into our national identity as an element which requires both its affirmation and negation; it is both that which we are and are not.

Representations of the past then become indicators of difference--in education, gender relations or industrialization--as well as means of establishing continuity with ourselves--of founding a particular identity of community. The historic téléroman is then understood as speaking as much, if not more, about the present as about the past; it is therefore also as much about the viewers' position in respect to the narrative as it is about the narrative itself.

It is at this level then, that the historic téléroman figures into our system of governmentality. Represented herein by *Les filles de Caleb* and *Montréal, ville ouverte*, this type of programming is understood as contributing not only to the reproduction of a particular narrative about the past, but one heavily invested with contemporary values and concerns, personality traits and political projects. Such programs "write" histories by means of a process of

individuation: by playing out social tensions in familial relations and translating national characteristics into personality, this process collapses the political into the personal and domesticates things public through a registration of population that proceeds through the family.

And in this respect, it functions at a very significant level according to governmentality's prescriptions: its individuation of political projects transforms the dominant projects of territorial nationalism into personal matter. The historic *téléroman* then functions, in its mediated way, to continue the upwards and downwards continuity of government by negotiating the domestication of what is more than a political project, but a governmental one.

Accordingly, it is to the ways the *téléroman* contributes to generating this particular narrative representation that I turn my attention. This because I believe that it continues the work of portraying the nation as an organic, purposive body moving forth in time towards its ultimate state, as witnessed in previous policy documents. But it does so in a different way and by different means. Specifically, its focus on the past which reflects on our present, and particularly our modernity, lends to the idea that Quebec's modernity, or at least the constant repetition and reaffirmation of it in our *public language*, is "a moment of becoming designated by itself, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that

represents an eternity produced by self-generation." (Bhabha 1990: 299)

A discursive analysis of this type of program and the media texts circulating around it--both the initial text and the media texts that modify and qualify it--will provide some insight into the nature of the historic téléroman as well as the mechanisms it employs for its nationalistic deployment.² This analysis is also designed to reveal the concepts and statements surrounding this narrative, most notably those of commemorating family, community and nation while monumentalising individualism, industrialization and corporatism. Finally, this approach lends itself to showing up the omissions across and around which this narrative is built, highlighting the tensions it embodies and avoids--otherness--and the political consequences of its circulation--stasis and exclusion.

There is a natural progression from the personal to the collective in questions of culture. (1978 White Paper)

² Morris frames her earlier-mentioned discussion of anecdotes in a broader discussion of television analysis and cultural studies. Therein, she suggests a more flexible interpretation of television production which hinges its relevance on its social context and its viewers' varied practices. She argues that this qualification obviates assigning complete determinism to either television or its viewers. In line with this, the present discussion also attempts to avoid such strictures to discuss some of the attributes and characteristics which make the téléroman capable of re-writing histories and re-producing select subjectivities inscribed in and across other sectors of québécois society. (Morris 1990)

Although policy discourse offers a glimpse of the nature of Quebec's particular narrative, it only does so in the most instrumental of ways. Something like its offering of the little truism above: it presents an idea or a series of entirely plausible facts that could be interesting or might even verge on being insightful and inevitably manages to corrupt any value to the statement by making it a function of governmental action. Accordingly, a slightly different version of Quebec's national narrative is offered in order to contextualize its particular televisual articulation.

The idea of "le Québec moderne" became an important new identity at the beginning of the 1960s.³ Until then, the dominant form of québécois "nationalism" was clerical and conservative in nature, defining itself in allegiance to faith, fatherland and French, and this mostly in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon capitalist ethics circulating in the the rest of Canada: "Il en est ainsi du nationalisme traditionnel canadien-français qui se défend contre un environnement anglophone et libéral et qui, donc, revendique à contrario sa spécificité linguistique et religieuse et son conservatisme." (Guillaume 1990: 121)

³ This change in identity is not viewed so much as reinvention of national character as rearticulation thereof: "populations can at different historical moments gain different identities that warrant different forms of collective life." (Charland 1987: 136)

A combination of factors felt throughout the 1950s-- continued clerical/religious domination, governmental inaction and isolationist policies, economic stasis, international technological development and incursions, and perhaps just general tedium--bred a new political elite interested in "modernizing" Quebec. Their rise to prominence was also facilitated by the changing makeup of québécois society as a whole:

We must note the emergence of a new francophone middle class, a group of salaried professionals as opposed to an old middle class of self-employed professionals, lawyers, doctors, notaires. In my view, this new middle class was already in formation well before the 1960s, such that it could become the leading element within the coalition supporting the Quiet Revolution. (McRoberts 1989: 125)

It is this class then, including such noted figures as Trudeau, Lesage and Lévesque that is designated, and perhaps designated themselves, as the leaders of the Quiet Revolution or, Quebec's "coming to democracy".⁴ And although the period during which Lesage's government redrew the lines

⁴ This political elite are also responsible for a certain problematization of Quebec's territorial nationalism: "L'intelligentsia moderniste a joué un rôle majeur dans l'élaboration de ce 'monde vécu' et ce de deux façons principales: d'abord en s'attribuant le rôle de définitrice de situation...c'est-à-dire de visionnaire, de compétente et de seule autorité légitime capable de déterminer les véritables enjeux auxquels devaient faire face la collectivité québécoise; ensuite en occupant graduellement, surtout à partir de la deuxième moitié des années 1960, presque tout l'espace communicationnel public, imposant ainsi ses visions, ses représentations, ses problématiques, ses façons de déterminer et de solutionner les enjeux politiques. (Letourneau 1992: 65)

of government in Quebec is included as part of the Quiet Revolution, this event is perhaps less a denotation of historic political events than it is representative of a shift in the popular conception of québécois society. Specifically, it marks the emergence of the very idea of a *québécois society*. And, in this sense, this particular revolution alludes to Quebec becoming political, to its adoption of and adherence to the democratic principles of citizenship and nationhood, and the corresponding institutions of government and state.

Since its arrival, television has occupied a privileged space in québécois culture and in its modernity. Radio-Canada began broadcasting in Montreal in 1952, remaining the sole French language station in Quebec until 1961 when, as a result of extensive political controversy, private licenses were granted and Télémétropole was incorporated.⁵ Throughout this period, television became the site of heavy political activity and controversy in Quebec, the previously mentioned brood of intellectuals rallying around it, converging towards it as something of a mecca of communication and modernization:

In Quebec, the intellectuals did not shun TV--they took a radical hold on it during the opening

⁵ From an institutional vantage point, television has long been tied to the idea of a Canadian nation. This, not only because we have a public broadcasting service in the CBC/SRC, but because the latter's official mandate has been that of encouraging or fostering the creation of national unity.

years. This piece of equipment, less expensive than the motor car, became the first symbol of modernity. Within three years, 94 per cent of homes in Quebec were in possession of television. (Desaulniers 1986: 116)

Specifically, having freed up communication by providing a voice of some authority and reach to a fully secular rather than clerical elite (or one affiliated thereto), it has retrospectively been positioned as a socially-inclusive instrument of democratization for the otherwise disenfranchised French-Canadians. As this narrative portrays Quebec prior to the 1960s as occupied, if not colonized, successively by the British, English-Canada, Ottawa, and throughout these, the Catholic Church--as to an important extent it was--then the claim that "la parole réprimée" was the Québécois' largest stumbling-block isn't much of a stretch. (Lockerbie 1989: 18) Television provided means by which to break this silencing and develop a certain agency, giving the Québécois a place to speak from, finally granting them *la parole*.

Despite the merits of this development, this characterization of television has been over-emphasized and has become something too matter-of-fact: television's ability to actually act as a sort of social gel, cementing québécois culture and solidifying its identity is now, unfortunately, rarely put into question. For instance, Desaulniers claims that television "at once permitted the transformation of an attachment to the land, a history, into

an attachment to a collectivity which was feverish, expansive, bold and naturally adapted to its era."

(Desaulniers 1986: 118)

Similar statements also appear quite frequently outside analytic texts, receiving repeated lip-service in Quebec media, albeit in something of a cannibalized fashion. For example,

"Notre culture collective, notre sens de nous, viennent presque uniquement de la télévision. La révolution tranquille ne se serait jamais produite ici sans l'arrivée de la télévision, qui a cimentée la culture québécoise qui n'était pas partagée par tous auparavant." (Cousineau, February 28, 1991: E1)

More than mere technology or consumer item, television is thus deemed to have rendered to the Québécois that which belonged to them, but of which they had long been deprived, namely, their right to speak. So folklorized, television is widely taken for that which, aided and abetted by several other developments, allowed the nation to be and speak itself. Accordingly, it occupies rather hallowed ground in modernity's retinue.

This position, this role of granting *la parole*--an important trope in this nationalist discourse--finds its structural analogue in the téléroman, Quebec's oldest and favoured form of programming.⁶ Tracing its roots back to the

⁶ In 1992, on the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the SRC calculated the number of broadcast hours dedicated to the téléroman since the station's inception: 125 had been produced, representing 9 000 hours of viewing or, 375 consecutive days of uninterrupted québécois television. (de

roman feuilleton--the 19th century's marriage of newspaper and novel--and growing quickly out of radio plays, the téléroman depends almost solely on what is said rather than what is done: "le programme narratif du téléroman est linéaire et fondamentalement propulsé non par les agir des protagonistes mais par les dire." (Saouter 1992: 275) From both without and within television, to have *la parole* has become an important signifier of modernity; the ability to speak freely, without constraint is an important trope alluding to, and perhaps a measure of, Quebec's progress.

Accordingly, the téléroman, structured as an indiginized soap and partaking of rather standardized production and distribution techniques, also fulfills the requisite criteria for "québécois content":⁷

le caractère québécois du téléroman ne peut être que structurant. Il doit aussi être de nature discursive, c'est-à-dire que le récit doit participer au débat public de ce qui est perpétuellement en train de devenir normal dans et pour la société québécoise. Il doit, pour être québécois, devenir un des nombreux lieux publics où le débat sans cesse renouvelé autour de l'identité collective se poursuit. (de la Garde 1993: 14)

Regardless of whether the téléroman is a strictly québécois medium--a claim itself grounded in a desire for distinction-

la Garde 1993: 30)

⁷ As with daytime and primetime soaps, as well as South American telenovelas, the téléroman is structured as a serial (and not a series), appearing weekly in 30 to 60 minute slots. The historic téléroman distinguishes itself by its announced closure, most of its productions having a limited number of episodes.

-its focus is on things québécois and its ability to define and delimit these are nonethelss essential to its consumption and success. "Le téléroman a réussi à devenir l'un des grands genres télévisuels à succès, à devenir l'un des relais visibles, parce qu'il participe mieux que d'autre au travail public de normalisation." (de la Garde 1993: 20)

It is this defining aspect which also problematizes this type of programming. Insofar as television tends to be sided with society's more notorious hegemonic structures, it is most often productive of pedagogical discourse.⁸ "'Good television is, essentially, majority television: that is for an audience composed not--as it most certainly is--of different groups, with cross-cutting minority interests, but as a large, undifferentiated, homogeneous mass'." (McArthur 1980: 12) In this respect, the narratives produced by television and, here, those produced by the historic téléroman, are discursively homologous to those offered by national narratives as they both produce and reproduce canonized accounts of the nation which seem geared to feed "a subjectivity that will take this symbolic structure as

⁸ In his attempt to reveal the ambivalence of the nation-space, Bhabha distinguishes between dominant and minority discourses as significantly different means of writing the nation. Dominant discourses--institutionalized, authoritative and widely-accepted means of representation--are characterized as pedagogical. That is, they are identifiable by their teleological perspectives which "add up to" creating a portrait of the nation in progress, and not a culturally differentiated space produced by what he terms "performative" discourse. (Bhabha 1990)

the sole criterion for assessing the realism of any recommendation to act or think one way and not another." (White 1987: 88)

Thus, the historic téléroman's articulation of a set of norms revolving around family and territory, coupled with the recent politicization of its discourse have begun providing some legitimation for Quebec's territorial nationalism. Adopting the essentials of this nationalist discourse, grounding them in select historic events sufficiently padded with fictional fodder, the téléroman has come to breed a new sort of "cultural" nationalism. This use and production of "history" and this shift in sites of nationalist discourse are then, the sources of this television's ability to establish "new landmarks which allow the individual the possibility of gauging the similarities and differences around him." (Desaulniers 1986: 121)

Yet, this referential character depends on more than the respective discourses of such programs, each of which is more or less--less in the case of *Montréal, ville ouverte*--capable of having such an effect. Rather, the specifics of the type of history they reproduce, the particularities of the genre, and their circulation as items of media interest weigh heavily in making them these more meaningful vehicles. The ways in which they are spoken of and those in which they speak are important factors in establishing the play of this

medium within the broader terrain of Quebec's narrow nationalism.

Le patrimoine, enfin, c'est une chose par rapport à laquelle la plupart d'entre nous vivent intensément sur le plan individuel. Il y a un rapport à l'inscription dans la terre, au désir de transmettre, éventuellement au plaisir d'avoir hérité, en tous cas de se constituer un patrimoine. Si les gens ne pensaient qu'en termes de rentabilité, il loueraient leur voiture et iraient à l'hôtel; on voit bien qu'existent des liens profonds entre l'imaginaire individuel et une symbolique sociale plus systématique...

Le patrimoine est une notion très ambiguë: ce n'est pas simplement ce qu'on hérite, c'est tout ce qu'on veut faire hériter aux autres, donc c'est la transmission.

Marc Augé

The historic téléroman contributes to writing history by building a *patrimoine*, by assembling the elements of a cultural inheritance and those of an ideological heritage. Its specific contribution then, is not so much that of adding to an already-lengthy narrative built around a chronological grid causally connecting disparate events. Rather, it is of marking select sites and happenings, or articulating and developing particular figures so as to register these as nodal points within this lengthier trajectory.

Rather than re-drawing the broad lines of Quebec's history, the téléroman does something more like adding memory fragments to Quebec's existing *patrimoine*, paring

things down, trimming away at diversity to concentrate experience in a few dominant images and ideas: "All memory transmutes experience, distills the past rather than simply reflecting...Thus memory sifts again what perception had already sifted, leaving us with only fragments of what was initially on view." (Lowenthal 1985: 204) However, as its production is intended for and circulates within the public realm, it is distinguishable from personal memory. Rather, it acts like a conjunction of these forms of remembrance whereby personal memory doubles metonymically as public, pedagogical history.

In this sense, the historic téléroman can be said to be productive of what Pierre Nora has referred to as *histoire-mémoire*. This concept is used to point to the political objects, concepts and institutions created as vestiges to the past, specifically dedicated to the future in their invocation of select national episodes, achievements and changes. These are then creative of an institutionalized and monumentalized land-marked continuity for the nation and its history, here understood as dedicated to the present: "Tout ceci signifie que traiter l'objet historique en lieu de mémoire, c'est donner la parole au présent, non comme l'héritier du passé, mais comme l'utilisateur du passé." (Ozouf 1993: 23) The téléroman's historical production is then one which take the present as both starting and end points, employing the past as its sole referent, ultimately ensuring

that today be continuous with yesterday, while ensuring the existence and maintenance of important sites of difference.

In terms of the *histoire-mémoire* they articulate then, *Les filles de Caleb* and *Montréal, ville ouverte* function similarly within the parameters of an essentialist nationalist discourse, both emphasizing identity, homogeneity and continuity instead of a more diversified and discontinuous portrait of our past. This similarity in emphasis is significant not only in terms of its representational repercussions, but also as it points to the various other interests involved.

Specifically, the financial makeup of these series suggests our system of governmentality's important imbrication of government, industry and cultural production. *Les filles de Caleb*, broadcast on Radio-Canada, benefited from an overall budget of \$13 million financed in differing proportions by Telefilm Canada, SOGIC, a dedicated tax shelter made up of 500 private parties, its producers Production Cité-Amérique (an offshoot of the novel's publishers), and its sponsors, Steinberg, Groupe Rona-Dismat and Alliance International (respectively, a grocery chain, a hardware chain and an insurance company). (Cousineau, October 3, 1990: E1) Aired on the private network TVA, *Montréal, ville ouverte* fed its interminable 13 episodes with a structurally analogous \$6.5 million budget culled from some of the same sources: Telefilm, the network, tax

credits, and its producers Avanti Ciné-Vidéo. As well, it shared two of the same sponsors, Rona-Dismat and another branch of the same insurance company, L'Industrielle-Alliance.

These production connections lend weight to the argument that such forms as the téléroman partake in broader relations of power in Quebec, and are thus not only reflective but generative of select subjectivities and national ideals:

"They are connected moments of an arrangement of discursive and non-discursive relations of power, a dispositif that links the specificity of the sectors of audio-visual (especially narrative cinema and television) with wider articulations of the relations between economy and society and between the Quebec state and the imagined communities of nation and people." (Allor 1993: 70)

Despite such essential parallels, however, these two programs are quite fundamentally different, especially in terms of their production values and topics. *Les filles de Caleb* is a twenty-hour serial shot on film focussing on the marital bliss and strife seemingly characteristic of rural life in the 1890s. Quite differently, the latter remains little more than thirteen hours worth of claustrophobic video, narrowing in on the corruption and depravation bereaving Montreal in the 1940s.

Similarly, the means by which their respective discourses are structured and registered, although overlapping, also distinguish these two series one from the

other. Fitting itself into a long line of rural romances, the narrative thread of *Les filles de Caleb* runs across twenty odd years, following its heroine Emilie (Marina Orsini) from her obstinate youth, asserting her independence and difference as she argues with her father over familial gender relations, through her dedication to "becoming" a schoolteacher, to her meeting with Ovila (Roy Dupuis), their marriage, their move to the city and their eventual yet fateful break-up. "In *Les filles de Caleb* it is quite obvious that an imaginary québécois history is recreated through the figure of Emilie." (Probyn 1992: 9) This "history" is, in turn, functionally tied to territory, as character and landscape are linked through Orsini's presence in more than 90 percent of the series' scenes, 40 percent of which are shot outside. Hinging on the atavistic impulse at the core of *l'identitaire*, all this adds up nicely to fashioning a québécois pastoralism appropriately riven and driven by endless and effective bucolic imagery.

Partaking of the urban variety of téléromans, *Montréal, ville ouverte* distinguishes itself by building a modern history for the city and, by extension, for the province. It follows the Enquête Caron--the police inquiry dedicated to undoing the corrupt ties between government, police and business--and the movement against conscription. The series riddles this trajectory with more or less noted figures, Henri Bourassa and Jean Drapeau among them, the latter's

personal life strangely and ineffectually scattered throughout the narrative, presumably as added interest or a sort of grounding factor. Such factual figures are then mixed in with a host of fictional though supposedly representative characters in a selective re-creation things of past and invented, a commemoration of people and moments that might or might not have been.⁹

Meanwhile, alongside the impossible heroic figure of Drapeau, the series frames *Le Devoir*, and the media in general, as ultimately responsible for uncovering and resolving such troubling civic corruption. This suggestion works to support the supposed democratizing powers of such media institutions, reinforcing the previously mentioned problem respecting television and "la parole". Thus, its creation of monuments from events and institutions its author deems *the* political ruptures leading to the Quiet Revolution contributes less to the construction of a modern history than it does to the series' lack of narrative coherence. Actually, in the end, it serves to show up the paucity of the province's held history, a lack which it seems to take as its very starting point.

⁹ One of the series' main characters, a cab driver named Marcel who makes good only after having entered this ring of corruption and depravation, was designed by writer Lise Payette in a reproduction of stereotypes to represent the "Canadiens-français moyen de l'époque, toujours minoritaire, même et surtout chez lui." (des Rivières, 1991, B3)

For all public intents and purposes, then, these narratives retrieve traces of people and places which, somehow weren't sufficiently residual for the present's needs, yet retrospectively deemed significant enough to receive some well-deserved padding:

'Ce sont des rituels d'une société sans rituel; des sacralités passagères dans une société qui désacralise; des fidélités particulières dans une société qui rabote les particularismes; des différentiations de faits dans une société qui nivelle par principe; des signes de reconnaissance et d'appartenance de groupes dans une société qui tend à ne reconnaître que des individus égaux et identiques.' (Nora, in Marshall 1992: 10)

Thus, the particular registration of history that these shows engender, their piecing together of an histoire-mémoire, result in a form of instrumental memory whose schematized past simply points to the more important present. (Lowenthal 1985: 204)

Accordingly, the historic téléroman contributes to the formation of the national and its figures of identification through this double temporality or, the means by which it is as much about its narrative of the past as about its present narration:¹⁰

The historical costume drama is riven with a textual instability, crucial in this national

¹⁰ This double temporality is, however, in no way made explicit but rather remains implicit to the text and genre: "I know of no programme, either of tele-history or television historical drama, which incorporates into its structure an awareness of the notion of differential temporality or even signals the existence of a problem in that regard. Rather, the problem is repressed and displaced onto other terrain." (McArthur 1980: 33)

context, that is the gap between the *énonciation* of the moment in time of the narration (the relationship between narrator and implied reader/viewer) and the *énoncé* of the events being narrated... This problematisation of the relationship of the past to the present recurs constantly: the post-*révolution tranquille* viewer is invited to regard the past as the same...and as other. (Marshall 1992: 2)

The narrative's characters are thus invested by contemporary traits and concerns which, again, collide with those inscribed to ensure their simultaneous otherness. Thus, Emilie is simultaneously "Quebec's first feminist" and the embodiment of its expired *matriarcat*. The latter is supported by recurring images of her as adoring mother which increase exponentially throughout the series with the arrival of each child; the former by daily press coverage and the unflinching attitude she carries from the first to the final episode.¹¹

In *Montréal, ville ouverte*, Mme Beauchamp (Dominique Michel), one of two *madames* heading up the city's more lucrative bordellos, displaces her role as signpost to the *matriarcat* by filling a more advanced corporate position. However, this role is undercut by the content of her business, as the narrative thread paints Montreal's "openness" as a sign of "an underdeveloped collective purpose."

¹¹ As with its religionism and traditionalism, the matriarchal character of québécois society required overcoming for the fulfillment of modernity. Accordingly, representations of a pre-modern Quebec maintain this gendered representation of the province, although never without the complementary theme of its "absent male" figure.

(Straw 1992: 62)

This type of investment points to one of the means by which the téléroman articulates a québécois subjectivity and its particular collective purpose. Its individuation of political projects and concerns--everything from sovereignty to feminism--breaks down the gap between private and public realms and, further collapses the political into the personal. The téléroman's historical and political content is then insinuated into character as it takes the individual as its "natural structuring category," and makes affective, interpersonal relations the locus of broader social tensions. (McArthur 1980: 17)

At this structural level, the téléroman presents itself as a hybrid of the soap genre and more conventional forms of historic drama. Although the individual is central to both these, its purpose and play is usually quite different. As soaps are driven by the exchange of rather primary affections stitched together into very involved relationships, individual characters become the focus of a certain empathy for some, if not identification for others. Somewhat differently, the traditional historic drama--recounting the life and times of history's "great men"--employs the individual as part and parcel of something greater, proceeding from the political to the personal while adding sufficient biographical notes to lend insight to the make-up of such characters of consequence. The historic

téléroman thus distinguishes itself from the latter by borrowing from the soap in its usage of interpersonal relations as means of domesticating the political.

This conflation of private and public realms is embedded in the often-exploited category of the family in the téléroman. As the most important social unit in the province until the 1960s, and the most important for governmental management in general, the family and its various tensions have come to dominate Quebec's cultural imagery, notably being television's centre of attention (*La famille Plouffe*, *Le temps d'une paix*), as well as an important object of scrutiny for literary and cinematic endeavours.¹² While managing to maintain its personal resonance, the family thus doubles for a larger community and is thereby linked up to the nation which pares itself down for similar purposes. Consequently, its metonymic employment functions to re-present and re-produce some of the tauter tensions in québécois society: "La famille est une figure qui focalise la plus grande expérience déstabilisante que vit le Québec depuis vingt-cinq ans: celle du changement, de la mutation rapide des structures sociales. (Lockerbie 1989: 13) Thus, the political concerns and collective contradictions invested into character are worked out through familial tensions which, however,

¹² See Ian Lockerbie's discussion of Quebec's 1980's *intimiste* cinema.

complicate this process of individuation, making it inconsistent and often contradictory.

As suggested, a certain québécois history as well as an idea of our collective identity is recreated through the character of Emilie in *Les filles de Caleb*. She embodies the traits this narrative assigns to a modern *peuple québécois*: in arguing with her father, she asserts her difference which is implied as the root of her need to fulfill herself as an *institutrice*, this revealing an interest in knowledge which marks the difference between centuries as well as eras. Yet, her marriage to Ovila, a mostly *dépassé* character, and her ever-growing obstinacy show her up as anachronistic and unable to "live outside marriage, motherhood and the family." (Marshall 1992: 8) Thus, she is simultaneously and confusingly portrayed as other to herself, her obstinacy meanwhile cutting away, albeit only slightly, at the empathy or sympathy we might, rather should, have developed for her.

Ovila is riven with similar contradictions in investment. Squatting in the back of her classroom, his character is introduced several episodes into the series and plays an obviously secondary role to Emilie up until their marriage, when he begins to trouble the until-then stable relationship to the *matriarcat*. However, he does so by insinuating both antiquated needs and gestures as well as more modern concerns into their relationship. On one hand, he represents Quebec's traditionally absent male: he is

unable to stay put, especially for things domestic like farming and so sporadically runs off to fulfill himself as a *coureur de bois*, leaving Emilie behind to take care of everything, including, in a rather monumental scene, giving birth alone in the forest during an impossible snowstorm. Such consequence not only points to his anachronistic otherness but to her more than emblematic representativeness.

At the same time, it is he who suggests visiting Montreal, a city which she appreciates only for its rural and floral aspects, and of which we are only shown one exterior shot--the Bonsecours market--in contradistinction to the camera's exceptional number of rural forays. In the same vein, his impetus leads them to Shawinigan where he lands himself a job in the city's pulp and paper factory which, this time, is filmed with the same hazy filter otherwise used to embellish the countryside, and obviously forgotten behind when shooting the set that is Shawinigan itself. Finally, it is he who aspires to a certain professionalism, despite avowed knowledge of his disempowered québécois status: "Un jour t'es un p'tit boss, l'au't jour tu l'es plus. C'est comme ça quand t'es cana'ien. (Episode 20)

And finally, their preordained rupture functions to reverse their respective roles one last time: as he prepares to flee Shawinigan fault of more drinking, bad gambling

connections and consequent debt, she leaves him to return home to the country, her brood of nine in tow and one more on the way. This closure, arrived at after repeated arguments concerning their "togetherness"--equaled only in redundancy by those between Quebec and Canada--represents an obvious choice for the narrative, yet one which leaves the content of its discourse confined to its pastoralism, as it emphasizes a return to the land and encourages a demographic boom of a *pure laine* variety.

Accordingly, "it is on the Emilie-Ovila relationship that is brought to bear that play of alterity and difference that constitutes the nation and its supposed boundaries, when the other is in fact not outside or beyond but within it." (Marshall 1992: 17) Characters here are then more than emblems of particular entities; rather they act as sort of shifting signifiers alternately evoking professionalism or agrarianism, switching roles back and forth within the same discourse, and consistently arriving at the same conclusions of difference and similitude regardless of who is filling what role or who is playing other to whose self.

Alongside this investment of otherness in character, the series also carries exterior demarcators of difference. Death invades the series, each episode dismally marked by the demise of yet another family member. In turn, each of these scenes is accompanied by long and slow tracks of the remaining family members, sitting, praying, waiting for some

salvation, their efforts however always to no avail.¹³ These passages serve the series as recurring nods to the defeatism and impotence of Quebec's ecclesiastic heritage. This impression is then reinforced by other scenes portraying a seemingly inherent distrust of the professionals circulating around and about these familial losses, thereby showing up an ancestral ignorance in matters of sickness and health, law and profession, now evidently overcome. A similar and more immediate effect is produced by the dissonance in past and present economic terms, sounded by mentions of Ovila's weekly salary and the cost of bread which smatter this text with important demarcators of historical (consumer) difference. Yet such exterior markers are fewer than those rivetting individual characters, making the irregular shifts between otherness and sameness less obvious and more insidious, and consequently making the series more productive of *l'identitaire* than it is of historical difference.

In fact, *Montréal, ville ouverte's* more recent past comes across as distinctly more alien than the latter's,

¹³ Death is structured into the series in a way typical of much québécois film and television. Lockerbie argues that death is used as a signifier of apotheosis, as a signifier of deliverance and beginnings: "C'est [l'apothéose] un motif très typique de l'imaginaire québécois...qui consiste à présenter la mort d'un personnage comme une victoire plutôt que comme un échec...le motif rejoint une forme de récupération proche de la pensée religieuse, selon laquelle la mort est un commencement et non une fin. (Lockerbie 1989: 17).

this difference highlighting the truly atavistic nature of *l'identitaire*. Whereas *Les filles de Caleb* presents a past different in its pre-economic and pre-political ways but sufficiently similar in its "culture" to ground the continuity of the *le peuple, Montréal, ville ouverte* introduces the 1940s as more foreign terrain in its depiction of a pre-legal, pre-moral society, literally out of control and thus requiring the (anticipated) arrival of good government. Accordingly, although its characters bear traces of a similar type of individuation, as alluded to by the figure of Mme Beauchamp, exterior markers of difference and continuity carry more weight here as the series dedicates itself to monumentalising and commemorating civic sites and situations.

This difference with *Les filles de Caleb* results partly from its structural hybridity and partly, I think from the concerns of its author, Lise Payette, renowned for her opinions on québécois feminism and as an ex-minister in the PQ government. She explains her choice of television as a follow-up to politics by the conviction that "Le téléroman est un véhicule extraordinaire de changement de société." (Ouimet May 6, 1990: B3) The series is consequently scattered with numbers and facts respecting conscription--72 percent of Quebecers voted against it; the makeup of the city's institutes of ill-repute--75 bordellos scattered throughout the Plateau area; and the founding and evolution

of local media organizations--a sketching of *le Devoir's* editorial direction and a listing of its more noteworthy journalists. To ensure that such facts aren't lost on the viewer, emphasis is added by such obvious statements as "le pays n'a jamais été aussi déchiré," delivered by Drapeau as he reads the April 28, 1942 issue of *le Devoir* (episode 2); or by such predestination as "*Le Devoir* doit être partout comme l'oeil de Dieu." (episode 1)

Montréal, ville ouverte also delivers more telling and typical definitions of otherness in its segregation along linguistic and ethnic lines of its morally upstanding and corrupt characters. Mme Beauchamp's only significant competition is offered by a certain Mme Delicato, a heavy set domineering Italian who has the insensitivity of showing up at Beauchamp's funeral to pass out business cards, thereby fulfilling an earlier slur about how 'ces étrangers là' are taking over the city's economy. Further distinguishing herself from Beauchamp who 'takes care of her girls', Delicato is pictured inspecting an applicant, making note of her nice legs as she asks her to turn around slowly, all this before telling her that she'll need to change her obviously québécois name to something more palatable, something more English. This objectification of woman by ethnic woman functions to send the latter into a sexist camp otherwise sufficiently occupied by the men herein and thus made to appear that much worse.

However, as Delicato only bears an ethnic stigma--her Latin origins carry her French along nicely--she is no rival for Harry Davis, the English-speaking Jewish Romanian who seems located somewhere at the peak of the city's intricate network of corruption. Based downtown at the Stanley St. Nitecap Café, Davis is instrumental in highlighting the ineptitude of Montreal's police force by continually outsmarting them. In the same vein, he contributes to the depiction of the media as this decade's salvation by continually making allusions to their influence in bringing about the show's celebrated civic clean-up: "Il faut faire attention. La police menace de fermé...C'est à cause des maudits journalistes." (episode 4) But, as his sort must be overcome, he is shot dead by the middle of this same episode. And this only one episode after Mme Beauchamp's premature death, their respective disappearances clearing ground for necessary political renewal. However, as Straw suggests, these ethnic and linguistic delineations are not necessarily particular to the city's francophone population, but rather symptomatic of the cultural imagery Montreal has allowed itself to date:

a reconstruction of post-war Montreal which links political chaos to rampant criminality and both these to ethnic diversity has been central to the cultural imaginaries of both Anglophone and Francophone communities within Quebec for several decades. (Straw 1992: 61)

The type of opening offered by the disappearance of these two characters is typical of the series as it

negotiates its collision of private and public realms by alternating political and personal scenes. And it tends to do this both between and within episodes, making the first an outline of the city's political omissions, the second a focus on its bordellos' workings; structuring this second episode by flipping from Drapeau buying the conscription edition of *le Devoir* to Mme Beauchamp in bed, to the formation of the Bloc Populaire. The individuation used in the series is thus more consequential within its own parameters--as fornication leads to political formation--yet ultimately, more ineffectual in terms of narrative aspirations:

The difficulty confronting *Montréal, ville ouverte* is that of evoking the historical necessity of municipal reform for an audience which is unlikely to react with moralistic horror to images of prostitution and gambling. The implicit displacement of targets within the series, from vice itself to the political disenfranchisement of the Francophone population, has come at the price of its narrative coherence, but it has made *Montréal, ville ouverte* a revealing and symptomatic object for analysis. (Straw 1992: 64)

All this shuffling and doubling might seem the result of some heavy-handed interpretation begging a resigned retort about how "it's just TV". But the extra media attention these series received (and continue to receive in the case of *Les filles de Caleb* and *Blanche*) and the sheer amount of para-textual information these offer respecting the shows' production, stars, authors, historical pertinence and

consequent consumption reinforce a reading of them as part of a broader nationalist discourse and a larger network of production. Daily newspaper and TV Times articles, magazine features, radio talk shows and "making of" programs offer supplementary information lacking in the prime time hour, guiding a particular interpretation, reinforcing their individualism in their dedicated attention to the shows' "stars" and usually underwriting their ideological content, making explicit their more implicit features.¹⁴

Tony Bennett refers to these secondary sources as "textual shifters" and determines their competency as sorts of organizers of the relations between text and reader: "they do not act solely upon the reader to produce different readings of the same text but also act upon the text itself, shifting its very signifying potential so that it is no longer what it once was." (Bennett 1990: 442) In this context, these secondary texts act as bridges between the series' "then" and the viewers' "now; they then endorse the values and beliefs put forth by the téléroman as more than merely metaphorical, but rather topical. In fact, in terms

¹⁴ In fact, in four years worth of daily press articles from two Montreal papers, I found only one article which contradicted the ideological merits of these series: "Si les séries historiques servent à mieux éclaircir le présent et à ne pas répéter les erreurs du passé comme le soulignait Lise Payette, *Montréal, ville ouverte* aura peut-être l'effet contraire en nous montrant à quel point la ville encanaillée des années 40 était plus vivante et folle que la ville propre et dorée des années 90. (Petrowski, March 22, 1991: B2)

of the historic téléroman, the "textual shifters" heighten their textual/temporal instability as they contribute to smudging the already-blurry line between past and present, while having the added effect of occasionally fusing fact and fiction. In effect, they add to the meanings of the programs' figures and ultimately produce an odd although structuring coupling of these last four factors, rendering a fictionalized history for the nation and its selectively factualized present.

For instance, over the course of the last five years, "making of" and similar "fact" oriented shows have come to occupy a dedicated slot preceding or following the scheduled appearance of a new historic drama. Aside from the production information proffered and the backstage-pass scenarios portrayed, such programs serve the added purpose of colouring the upcoming series as relevant fiction. The documenting treatment of *Desjardins: la vie d'un homme, l'histoire d'un peuple* offers an almost extreme example of this relationship. After each of the two episodes, Radio-Québec aired hour-long shows featuring panel discussions. In one case, a well-known economist, Desjardins' current president, and the head of one of Quebec's two largest unions were assembled to assess "la situation actuelle du mouvement des Caisses Desjardins en regard des intentions premières de son illustre fondateur." (Cayouette 1990: C3)

In the same vein of shifting from television to "real" life, press preliminaries stage such gimmicky events as holding the press conference for *Montréal, ville ouverte* at City Hall, despite the fact that none of the series was shot in site, but in front of a more aesthetically-appealing bank several blocks away. Meanwhile, *Les filles de Caleb's* press conference was held on site in la Mauricie and brought together actors, production crew, the author and her 71-year-old aunt, the last surviving daughter of the program's protagonist.

Press media continues this registration in its elaboration of Quebec's star system.¹⁵ It is within these pages that are offered the now-routine perspectives of Emilie as "une femme du futur, première féministe québécoise, une héroïne des temps modernes" and "une femme d'aujourd'hui", none of which are discussed as the result of interesting production techniques, but rather offered as an endorsement of some continuing national character.¹⁶

¹⁵ Within Canada, Quebec is definitely distinct in terms of the size and nature of its domestic cultural production, and the *appartenance* both assigned to it and which it is meant to engender: "the same private production and distribution companies...are responsible for the bulk of narrative cinema and television programs. The same directors, writers, cinematographers and actors work in both domains quite interchangeably. Indeed, it is quite common to see the same combination of actors and directors working together in serial projects." (Allor 1993: 72)

¹⁶ Quotes respectively from: *La Presse*, Aug. 16, 1989; *La Presse*, Aug. 20, 1989; *Le Devoir*, Jan. 30, 1991 (for the last two.

Actually, the press coverage *Les filles de Caleb* received gets even stranger. Within more mundane discussions of production moneys and distribution companies, the series gets positioned, quite unquestionably, as a moment in québécois history. Speaking of a scene I found more evocative of irony than erotica, Louise Cousineau says:

Cette main d'Ovila qui se pose sur la nuque de la Belle Brume [Emilie] pendant que les chevaux hénissent de désir, le visage d'Emilie qui s'alourdit de plaisir, cela restera un des grands moments de l'érotisme québécois à la télévision. Et cela a coïncidé avec un grand moment de désir collectif de libération du Québec. Là aussi, je me demande si *Les filles de Caleb* n'a pas eu une plus grande influence sur les événements politiques de l'automne [the defeat of the Charlestown proposal]. (Cousineau, February 28, 1991: E1)

And, along with the registration of the series' contemporary consequence comes that of collective continuity: the actors are said to resemble not only each other (as casting required some similarity given the show's family dynamics), but Cousture's actual family members:

'Lorsque Arlette a vu Marina, elle a été super émue. Pour elle, c'était Emilie, sa grand-mère'... Et outre la ressemblance purement physique, la comédienne semble correspondre au type caractériel de l'héroïne des *Filles de Caleb*. (Turenne 1989: D20)

Roy Dupuis is privy to the same treatment as another article claims that "[il] ressemble comme deux gouttes d'eau aux Pronovost de St-Tite [Ovila's family]." (Lemay 1989: A14) And all this atavism finally culminates in confusion with an ancestral accession to stardom: "Emilie Bordeleau, grand-mère d'Arlette Cousture, héroïne de l'un des livres les plus

lus au Québec et 'première féministe québécoise' deviendra vedette de télé." (Turenne 1989: D20)

Montréal, ville ouverte was subject to a different sort of discussion, focussing less on the types of characters it portrayed and more on its historical veracity. In fact, the series' uncritical depiction of Drapeau went almost completely unquestioned despite his less-than-illustrious filing in our civic archives. Alongside the earlier-mentioned nod to its well-researched quality, the series was rather predictably framed as an urban alternative to digging up more rural roots, and something of a *risqué* one at that: "'Nous avons toujours vu l'histoire de la campagne...Mais pour moi [Payette] qui suis une fille de la ville, je reste convaincue que le Québec a aussi des racines urbaines'." (Petrowski, March 22, 1991: B2)

But perhaps most importantly, this series and the version of history it depicts became the subject of some ethical debate. Victor Lévy-Beaulieu, another old stock separatist who had been dedicating his time and attention to writing a series on the same seemingly worthy period, accused Payette of stealing his idea and TVA of pushing production to get a head-start on acquiring period-piece advertising. *Le Devoir* somehow stuck itself in the middle of it all, receiving missives and expediting apologies, finally giving air-play to both authors. Beaulieu's defense, which works to pit *people* against politicians, also has the

interesting effect of undermining both the series' approach and its journalistic underwriting:

Je ne m'intéresse pas du tout à Pax Plante ni à Jean Drapeau. Je considère que se sont des gens plates, des légumes qui ont fait du capital politique sur le dos du crime organisé alors qu'ils organisaient leurs propres partouzes...Moi je veux avant tout parler des gens de l'autre bord, ceux qui avaient de l'allure malgré le milieu de corruption dans lequel ils vivaient. (Petrowski, April 3, 1991, A1)

Thus, while TV politicians fight it out in the pages of one of the city's better weeklies, trying to determine the origins of the idea of penning an urban history, who and what might be of historical relevance is somehow lost sight of. So much so that when Radio-Canada interrupted an episode of *Les filles de Caleb* to announce the first launching of Scud Missiles during the Gulf War, two-hundred local viewers called the network to complain of their interrupted entertainment. The next day, the network actually apologized and reran the episode, sadly ensuring that the lessons of history wouldn't be lost on this narrow nation.

Such contrived connections between past and present, and fact and fiction add to making the historic téléroman a reference point against which to gauge similarities and differences, a means of affirming an atavistic continuity while emphasizing the ruptures distinguishing the present from the past, and us from them. The corporate and governmental backing that these téléromans receive, and the

media underwriting they obtain function to solidify this television's connective capacity, and to incorporate what is considered entertainment into the more purposive system of governmentality in Quebec.

And the historic téléroman's incorporation therein plays an important role in maintaining the upwards and downwards continuity of government. The téléroman's domestication of broader political projects--a process which functions both in terms of taming and personalizing--and its reproduction of discourses of *l'identitaire* proceeds through the subtraction of difference and possibility to project that which is already well-known. In this respect, it is the continual tension between the affirmation and negation of a definition of collective identity which represents both the interest and the complexity of this medium as, ultimately, it celebrates both rupture and continuity.

And, as such, it situates itself as transitional, curiously reflecting the temporal positioning of its narratives--the turn-of-the-century for *Les filles de Caleb*, and an immediately pre-modern 1940s for *Montréal, ville ouverte*. So ultimately, in the same self-defeating spirit which brought about the initial subtraction of anything different, the historic téléroman threatens itself with its own a-historicity as it continually places itself on the cusp of defining the present:

"Le téléroman participe à l'histoire d'une culture unitaire, presque sans faille, parce que

redondante. Et elle est redondante parce que cette culture historique vise à devenir une culture a-historique, une culture presque uniquement préoccupée de définir la norme du jour." (de la Garde 1993: 19)

Conclusion

*Our image of happiness is indissolubly
bound up with the image of redemption.*

Walter Benjamin

Theses on the Philosophy of History

Whether it be its religious overtones or its allusion to an historical consciousness, the idea applies well to Quebec. I think it has to do with the sentiment it evokes; the spirit it raises responds well to the pervasiveness of this society's objective of becoming. Because becoming what we were, what we are meant to to be doesn't just involve finally attaining the "truth" of our authenticity--something that would be an achievement in itself--but, it also involves the promise of a little respite from the duress of the trip there. And that reprieve, or the promise thereof, has something to do with happiness: the happiness of finally being there, wherever that may be; the relief of having made good on everything that preceded this idyllic point, place or time. And that, I think, is redemption.

Now, although redemption might be a little overbearing ecclesiastically, it is this idea of finally making good that I believe underlies the promises of policy and the notions of Quebec's narratives. And, as previously mentioned, it's not that I have any objection to the idea of improvement or to a spirit of overcoming. Actually, quite the contrary, which is precisely why I don't think that the figures which articulate a collective québécois identity as a virtuality have much to do with this idea or this spirit.

It's not as if the discourses of *l'identitaire* suggest that we merely overcome the more deadening or constraining aspects of our past. Rather, as they've been articulated in policy documents and narrative television, these discursive formations would have it that contemporary québécois society results logically and chronologically from a continuous cultural trajectory. And this despite the historical distance of this society's modernity. In this respect then, the formation of a collective québécois identity pieced together according to the dictates of *l'identitaire* doesn't only remain a fairly complex creation, but one that comes at a high cost.

The first price of the imbrication of governmentality and *l'identitaire*, then, is put on our specificity. Just as policy documents level out ethnic, territorial and cultural differences in favour of governmental and economic initiatives, narrative television continually compromises any and all of these differences in order to represent the continuity of québécois culture, insinuating present concerns into the past and domesticating political projects in terms of this objective. And it's not that difference is any kind of end in itself, it being a trope just as easily emptied out as any other. But, like many another place, it is Quebec's difference, its specificity and particularities which make it an interesting place and, potentially, one of interest. And throughout, that has been the point.

Quebec is a hybrid. I can't think of it any other way. Recognizing the strength of its francophone specificity and making political allowances for everything that has ensued from the social recognition of this fact, and the governmental initiatives predicated upon it, I still believe that the adoption of a standard nation-state model based on the precept of sovereignty is an imposition. An imposition which is not only misplaced but one that kills other possibilities.

Now, granting that "il faut que jeunesse se passe" in and for Quebec, that is, that it proceed through different and often typical developmental phases, this model still remains an imposition. And the first reason is that the parameters of this model don't even fit québécois history or its heritage. Not very well, anyhow. The colony, the territory or the province, whatever its political incarnation, has always been a linguistic hybrid. Native peoples lived here long before the French arrived. Then the English, Irish, Scottish. Then others: Italians, Greeks and the Portuguese; then more others who were and are still even more "other": North Africans, Haitians and the Vietnamese. The list isn't finished but it is boring because it seems almost ludicrous to have to make it in the first place. But it does prove a point quite easily, which is that language is of little essence here, and is consequently a poor predicate for the nation, although perhaps an instrumental

follow-up to Qubece's more recent socio-political re-organization. And if this ethnic diversity isn't substance enough to dispute the rather tenacious equation of one people-one nation, then at least it may be functional in disrupting the singularity of a québécois culture, a conceptualization which also seems inconceivable the minute Quebec is even remotely relativized.

Whether contextualized in terms of its linguistic specificity in a continental setting, or according to Marcel Rioux's depiction of the Québécois as a people caught between time (Europe) and space (America), Quebec stands out. Or maybe in between. Whatever the interpretation, its geo-political situation bears as much on the constitution of its "culture" as do the province's other linguistic and ethnic influences. And by culture I do mean, quite precisely, the ways we live: everything from the models of government we adopt and adapt, to what gets televised here (because that's what will be bought here), and to other broader collective cultural references. But even this definition remains rather standard in its invocation of founding peoples and discovered territories, and thus functional in maintaining a typical historical contingency. So, bypassing it is a definition of the province which recognizes that the cultural influences existent in Quebec today also reach beyond the restrictions of these two continents, and towards a few others.

But even this contextualization needs to be bypassed. Despite the importance of recognizing Quebec's multifarious cultural influences (partly because it serves as a reminder of Quebec becoming modern within the context of what are frequently referred to as postmodern conditions), I believe that there's a purposive limit to defining one thing through a series of others merely because of that one thing's unconformity. There has to be a limit to being "like" other places and peoples if Quebec is going to be anything more than a derivative. At some point, derivatives form compounds of their own. So, as much as Quebec's cultural influences are multitudinous and reach beyond the province's territorial limits, making it similar to many other places, they are also creative of a very particular conjuncture. And this, I think, breeds a specific compound, albeit one that isn't "like" much else. And, to me, that compound, or the potential thereof, is Quebec's specificity.

So, it is because all the difference within Quebec gets sidelined or, worse, virtually obviated by a definition of specificity which relies on the supposed homogeneity of *le peuple québécois* and our distinct society, that there is reason to intervene. As I've tried to make clear, the problem isn't only situated at the level of representing this diversity and hybridity, that is, at a political level of equality and justice. Rather, the problem with asserting our specificity as our sameness (the difference being

established with Canada or North America) is that it proceeds through an absorption of the difference within Quebec. That is, Quebec's unceasing tendency to define and form a national identity through comparison with its federal counterparts has impeded the development of a relational approach to its own character, and a conjunctural and developmental conception of its culture.

And this, I think, represents the second cost of the imbrication between our system of governmentality and *l'identitaire*. It is also at this level that the importance of both these concepts becomes most apparent because it is here that they play off each other. Governmentality provides means for understanding the aspiration to a standard nation-state model and the ways it gets mapped onto our society; that is, our system of governmentality's intricacy explains the pervasiveness of *l'identitaire* and the level of its impregnation in Quebec. *L'identitaire*, on the other hand, designs a collective identity for Quebec predicated on the model of sovereignty that our governmentality requires. And in this respect, their occasional symbiosis functions to restrict.

As exemplified by the discursive formations of cultural policy and narrative television, their restrictions are not just in the realm of representation, but also in that of imagination. And as policy and television project everything as already done, as completed and closed, they necessarily

backfire on the interest Quebec's "projet de société" should arouse. Such a project is only worthy of attention in terms of the possibilities it allows, the dynamism it engenders and the imagination it inspires. But if everything is already done, closed down and agreed upon--as the nature of our culture and identity are represented--then there isn't much left to partake of, think about or imagine.

Our governmentality's insinuation of the state into our cultural imagining has functioned to deaden what's possible by narrowing the realm of the acceptable. In turn, the acceptable has been curtailed by the circulation of an aspiration to become something that I'm quite sure doesn't hold anything for anyone today. Except perhaps a pretty vacant, though comforting security in the past. And the promise of redemption. And none of this strikes me as very modern, nor very interesting, but quite unfortunate for a place that is young enough to aspire to something more dynamic and dialectical, and diversified enough to invest in its difference.

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