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The Quest For Personal Values In The French-canadian Novel (1940-1960)

Arthur Joseph Leblanc

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THE QUEST FOR PERSONAL VALUES
IN
THE FRENCH-CANADIAN NOVEL
(1940-1960)

by
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Department of French

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Western Ontario
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ABSTRACT

The pursuit of personal values by a significant number of characters in the French-Canadian novel is the subject of inquiry proposed for consideration in this thesis. As the title suggests, the quest aspect of the question is central to the investigation. Our socio-historical interpretation of the principal novels published between 1940 and 1960 reveals that during these two decades an array of people from all segments of Quebec society sought to rid themselves of the influence of traditional values. Sociological findings extrapolated from works of fiction are corroborated with historical, sociological, psychological and economic studies.

The result of our inquiry is an all-embracing study consisting of four major parts. A survey of the traditional values that are to be supplanted by more personal attitudes is presented for consideration in the first part of the thesis, entitled: "Noble Traditions". The second and third sections of the study are devoted to an investigation of the obstacles which thwart those who seek to acquire personal values, and the methods employed to overcome the impediments. A critical examination of the personal values is conducted in "The Quest"; the last part of the thesis.

Of all the questions resolved in this study, two are particularly significant from a sociological point of

view. Firstly, the quest for personal values is an intensely personal pursuit which normal individuals automatically conduct during the formative stage of personality development. Secondly, this search, which by its very nature is intrinsically personal in scope, has evolved into a collective movement that has greatly influenced the culture, politics, and economics of the province of Quebec to the present day.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the sixties, the theme of values has been exploited so extensively by writers of all persuasions that the topic has now come into widespread use.

Everybody uses the word "values" to describe our making of the world: capitalists and socialists, atheists and avowed believers, scientists and politicians. The word comes to us so platitudinously that we take it to belong to the way things are.¹

Contemporary Quebec writers show a fondness for exposing the differences that exist between their values and those endorsed by French-Canadian traditionalists. "However, it is forgotten that before Nietzsche and his immediate predecessors, men [...] did not think they made the world valuable, but that they participated in its goodness."² In Quebec, this change in thought did not come easily nor swiftly. Until well into the twentieth century, young Quebecers were still not being prepared by their religious and social leaders for the difficult search for personal values which many would conduct, because it was assumed that the coming generation would willingly conform to the established conservative traditions of society. However, the social sciences became more important and, as they gained in popularity, they began to have a significant

¹ George Grant, Time as History (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), p. 44.

² Ibid., pp. 44-45.

impact upon the way Québeckers thought of themselves in relation to society. Psychology and sociology played a particularly important role in popularizing the notion of values since such concepts and terminology form a part of their specialized vocabulary.

For the purpose of this study, values are defined as attitudes, acts, customs and institutions which are endorsed by a people, an ethnic group, or a distinct social entity. It follows from this definition that values can be classified into various categories. For example, there are religious values, moral values, institutional values, and human values, as well as "traditional" and "modern" qualifiers for each of these categories. The specific values which fall into the above classifications are frequently regarded as social values, for they are oriented towards the group rather than the individual. This situation accounts for one of the basic differences between social and personal values; for the latter are more than attitudes, acts and customs esteemed by the individual. Personal values can be regarded as a set of views which are held by a person that help to shape his total understanding of reality. The resultant state of lucidity is an outgrowth of the concept that the self is the most important reality, not society, the public interest, nor social institutions. Because personal values evolve from the self, the seat of human life, they benefit the individual more than they do social institutions.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the quest for personal values of characters in the French-Canadian

novels written between 1940 and 1960. These dates have been chosen because they conform with established literary and historical demarcations within the literature of Quebec. However, there is always something arbitrary about historic demarcations in spite of the symbolic value they may have. Hence, we have not excluded from our study significant works solely because the date of publication might fall outside stated limits. The dates are meant as a guide, rather than fixed periods in history, thereby allowing for flexibility whenever the situation warrants it.

Our approach in this study is to isolate those human experiences which fall into the categories of traditional and personal values from the great quantity of descriptive material which appears in the novel. It will then be possible to produce a synthesis of the quest for personal values from its various elements. Since the novels consulted are grounded in reality, the values which are described therein display similar characteristics to those which influenced the society of French Canada during the forties and fifties. However, caution is essential when extrapolating from literature because novelists are sometimes prone to inject their own personal system of values into their work. For this reason, remarks about Quebec society are generally avoided unless they can be corroborated by historical, sociological or psychological data. Since psychology focuses attention upon the individual, it will be highly valuable in providing explanations for complicated behavior patterns. However, every attempt is made to minimize the use of a specialized

psychological vocabulary. Instead, symbols from mythology may sometimes be employed to clarify complicated concepts.

The four main parts of the thesis reflect a socio-historical approach to literary criticism. Before one can do justice to any examination of the quest for personal values, it is important to have an overall view of the values which prevailed during the forties and fifties in Quebec. Part I, "Noble Traditions", is devoted to a study of these values as they appear in the novel. Part II concentrates upon the shortcomings of individuals seeking personal values. To demonstrate that psychological terminology has been kept to a minimum, this part of the work is entitled, "Prometheus Chained". Part III, "Herculean Deliverance", reviews the methods employed to overcome the obstacles which keep one from acquiring a set of personal values. In "The Quest", the last section of the thesis, we endeavored to conduct a critical examination of the personal values sought after by the various groups in Quebec society.

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PART I
NOBLE TRADITIONS

The Moisans represent the type of peasant who, with a kind of spiritual fervor love, not any land, but their land because it is an extension of themselves.

The peasant of the "roman de la fidélité"¹⁰ placed a very high value in the land he occupied. For him, it represented either a work of art, the good earth, an extension of himself or a combination of these. It is important to note that the peasant, instead of possessing the land which he occupies, has allowed it to possess him. Ringuet, in Trente arpents, hints at the all pervasive influence of the land over the important aspects of the peasant's life when he asks: "Qu'y a-t-il dans la vie des paysans de plus important que la vie et la mort des leurs sinon la vie et la mort des moissons?"¹¹ Elsewhere, he speaks of life in the following terms: "La vie passait de la terre à l'homme, de l'homme à la femme, et de la femme à l'enfant qui était le terme temporaire."¹² Ringuet is not the only author to stress the important role which the land plays in the peasant's life. Louis Hémon in Maria Chapdelaine claims that the land is of such paramount

¹⁰"Nous appelons roman de la fidélité l'ensemble des oeuvres qui ont pour fonction essentielle de sauvegarder le patrimoine canadien-français. Il est caractérisé par un attachement réel à la langue, à la terre, à la foi catholique et aux traditions héritées de la mère-patrie qui, pour beaucoup de Canadiens français, est encore la France." Henri Tuchmaier, "Evolution de la technique du roman canadien-français" (Université Laval: Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1958), p. 60.

¹¹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 40.

¹²Ibid., p. 56.

universal in scope, and apply to the vast majority in a particular socio-economic designation, regardless of the locality. Hence, we have not attempted to study the distinctions that might exist as a result of regional differences within each class. Our principal aim in Part I is to examine representative segments of Quebec society for the purpose of identifying and defining the traditional values that are predominant.

Because the individuals in quest of personal values react to the collection of acts, customs and institutions that society imposes upon them, it is essential that an examination of the traditional values of French Canada form an integral part of the present study. It is this kind of investigation we propose to conduct in the following pages.

CHAPTER I

TRADITIONAL PEASANT VALUES

Of all the traditional values, those of the peasant, for two reasons, figure among the most important. Firstly, they predate the traditional values of the other social classes, for the French-Canadian peasant acquired the values which his ancestors possessed while still in France. Consequently, the assertion that the peasant's values are the fountainhead of most of the traditional values existing in French Canada is credible. Secondly, a majority of Quebeckers can trace their ancestry directly to the land. This phenomenon explains the impact of traditional peasant values upon the personal history of Quebeckers from all segments of society. That is not to say, of course, that everyone in Quebec should be identified with the traditional outlook of the peasant.

Traditional peasant values are held by the peasant segment of the French-Canadian population. Because the word "peasant" can be misleading, it becomes necessary to define what we mean by the term in this work. It is all the more advisable to do so because in the French-Canadian novel several different terms are used to designate the peasant, the distinction between them often being one of personal preference rather than one of actual

difference. For example, in Le Survenant, Didacé Beauchemin is pleasantly surprised when a stranger refers to him as a "cultivateur". "'Je peux ben être rien qu'un habitant'", he suggests. "'Y a pourtant une grosse différence entre les deux: un habitant c'est un homme qui doit sur sa terre; tandis qu'un cultivateur, lui, il doit rien.'"¹ In her lexicon, Germaine Guèvremont designates "habitant" as being synonymous with both "paysan" and "cultivateur". Webster's Dictionary defines an "habitant" (also written "habitan"), as being a farmer in Canada or Louisiana of French descent. In our definition we include the connotation of the people to whom Louis Hémon refers as "les pionniers et les sédentaires". The latter he defines in Marie Chapdelaine as, "les paysans venus de France qui avaient continué sur le sol nouveau leur idéal d'ordre et de paix immobile", and the former as "ces autres paysans, en qui le vaste pays sauvage avait réveillé un atavisme lointain de vagabondage et d'aventure."² In this work, we have used the word "peasant" to designate the whole spectrum of people whose livelihood depends upon the land.

¹ Germaine Guèvremont, Le Survenant (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1945; Fides, 1968), p. 105. Because the editions consulted for this study are generally recent reprints, we have indicated in the notes the facts of publication of the original work followed by those of the edition consulted. When the city and house of publication are unchanged, they do not appear in the latter reference. If only one set of facts of publication appears, the edition consulted is the original.

² Louis Hémon, Marie Chapdelaine (Montréal: J.-A. Lefebvre, 1916; Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1967), p. 47.

The traditional peasant's outlook depends very much upon the values that he cherishes. His relationship to the land has influenced his outlook on life more than any other single factor. Hence, the land is one of the traditional peasant's most highly esteemed values. As well, paternalism became very significant in rural Quebec because of its usefulness as an administrative tool. In the beginning, when the leaders sought to populate the French Colony, the large family had been very important. However, it was given significant impetus as a value as paternalism gained in influence. As is true of other frontier societies, hard physical work is an important value. In addition, as a result of Quebec's unique history, the Roman Catholic faith played a particularly influential role in the daily life of the habitant. Self-repression was esteemed as a value, partially as an outcome of the peasant's puritanical religious beliefs, but also in response to the harsh environment in which he existed. Seeing that uncertainty and danger lurk everywhere, security is very important in most frontier societies. Certainly it is in rural French Canada. Finally, self-respect is a very significant value in any community that seeks to develop into a separate entity. These are the eight traditional peasant values that contribute most to the habitant's unique outlook on life.

Without the land, the peasant as we have defined him would not exist. It does not matter whether he is a "défricheur" like Samuel Chapdelaine, a "sédentaire" like Didace Beauchemin, or a "cultivateur" like Euchariste Moisan. For each of these men, the land is the fundamental force that dictates his daily actions, influences his beliefs and has the ability to affect the important decisions of his life. For traditional peasants like Chapdelaine, Beauchemin and Moisan, the land is the most important traditional peasant value. This is significant because each of these characters, as well as figuring prominently in the French-Canadian novel in his own right, also represents a type of peasant, and consequently, a different epoch in the rural history of the province of Quebec. Each is distinct one from the other, in character and in way of life, yet all three are linked together by one common bond: the land.

Samuel Chapdelaine is one of the peasants who represents the original pioneer, hence, the earliest epoch in French-Canadian history. Although Maria Chapdelaine is set in the Lac St. Jean area during the twentieth century, like the original pioneer, Samuel Chapdelaine cleared the wooded land, built shelters for his family and livestock, and cultivated the soil. At the beginning of the novel we learn that he and his family had recently settled in the wilderness, twelve miles from Peribonka. It was the fifth time that they had moved, not out of economic necessity, but

because Samuel Chapdelaine has an inexorable passion to clear land.

Faire de la terre! [...] Samuel Chapdelaine en parlait avec une flamme d'enthousiasme et d'entêtement dans les yeux. C'était sa passion à lui: une passion d'homme fait pour le défrichage plutôt que pour la culture.³

Laura Chapdelaine, who had always dreamed of bringing up her children in a village like the one in which she had been raised, with a church, a school and stores, shares her husband's passion for clearing land, if not his yearning for isolation.

"S'il y a quelque chose, dit la mère Chapdelaine, qui pourrait me consoler de rester si loin dans les bois, c'est de voir mes hommes faire un beau morceau de terre [...] nu comme la main, prêt pour la charrue, je suis sûre qu'il ne peut rien y avoir au monde de plus beau et, de plus aimable que ça..."⁴

The land which the Chapdelaines cleared is like an objet d'art that they have created. Like the artist who, when he has completed a work, puts it aside to begin a new creation, Samuel Chapdelaine, every five or six years, sells the land he has cleared only to begin again deeper in the wilderness.

Didace Beauchemin represents the typical peasant in the kind of relationship he has with the land. Unlike Samuel Chapdelaine who has moved five times, Didace is the fifth generation of Beauchemins to occupy the farm at

³Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 38.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

the Chenal du Moine, a few miles from Sorel, Quebec. Whereas Samuel's passion is to create land, Didace's enthusiasm is directed towards making the land as productive as possible. For everyone in the Beauchemin family, the land represented the horn of plenty that sustains life and brings contentment to those who possess it. Even Marie-Amanda, when she was still a young girl, did not understand why men like Ludger Aubuchon, who was later to become her husband, would prefer to work for wages on a ship rather than remain on the land. "Pourquoi aller chercher sa vie au loin, se déposséder de son bien quand la terre, maternelle, offre mille bontés?"⁵ As she developed into a mature woman with family responsibilities of her own, Marie-Amanda's faith in the land became more intense, restricting her field of vision to a greater degree. For example, she refused to believe that her friend Angéline had contemplated giving up the Desmarais farm to follow the Survenant in his ramblings.

Marie-Amanda, incrédule, étendit la main: "T'aurais laissé tout ça?"

Il y avait les champs plans et féconds, il y avait la maison tassée dans sa chaleur et, à côté, le fournil si frais pour les longs jours d'été. Il y avait les granges solides, regorgeantes et, en face, la grande commune pour les pâturages. Il y avait le jardin et ses allées bordées de plantes endormies sous le paillis, mais qui s'éveilleraient plus belles à l'été: le Chenal du Moine où l'air est vaste et le monde paisible.

"T'aurais laissé-tout ça? Je te crois pas."⁶

⁵Germaine Guèvremont, En pleine terre (Montréal: Fides, 1942), p. 21.

⁶Germaine Guèvremont, Marie-Didace (Montréal: Fides, 1947; Fides, 1969), pp. 73-74.

The entire Beauchemin family is preoccupied with "la terre, ce qu'elle donnerait, ce qu'on tirerait d'elle."⁷ They are typical of the kind of peasant for whom the land represented the good earth.

Euchariste Moisan represents the type of peasant who has a spiritual attachment to his land that goes beyond the remunerative bonds which link the Beauchemin to their farm. For Euchariste "un homme qu'aime la terre, c'est quasiment comme aimer le Bon Dieu qui l'a faite et qu'en prend soin quand les hommes le méritent".⁸ The land is seen as an extension of himself for it is the force that gives him his sustenance, his self-confidence, and his pride. For Euchariste Moisan, love of the land is synonymous with the love that one has for oneself, and by extension, that which one has for God who created the land along with the peasant. Whereas Marie-Amanda Aubuchon cast an affectionate eye upon Angéline's land, Euchariste Moisan loathed his neighbour Phydime Raymond and his farm, "car ce qu'aimait Euchariste, c'était non la terre, mais sa terre". Furthermore, what Euchariste's son Etienne loved, "c'était cette même terre qui s'en venait à lui, à laquelle il avait un droit évident, irrécusable. Ils étaient les hommes non de la terre, mais de leur terre."⁹

⁷Guèvremont, En pleine terre, p. 45.

⁸Ringuet, Trente arpents (Paris: Flammarion, 1938; Montréal: Fides, 1969), pp. 134-135.

⁹Ibid., p. 225.

The Moisans represent the type of peasant who, with a kind of spiritual fervor love, not any land, but their land because it is an extension of themselves.

The peasant of the "roman de la fidélité"¹⁰ placed a very high value in the land he occupied. For him, it represented either a work of art, the good earth, an extension of himself or a combination of these. It is important to note that the peasant, instead of possessing the land which he occupies, has allowed it to possess him. Ringuet, in Trente arpents, hints at the all-pervasive influence of the land over the important aspects of the peasant's life when he asks: "Qu'y a-t-il dans la vie des paysans de plus important que la vie et la mort des leurs sinon la vie et la mort des moissons?"¹¹ Elsewhere, he speaks of life in the following terms: "La vie passait de la terre à l'homme, de l'homme à la femme, et de la femme à l'enfant qui était le terme temporaire."¹² Ringuet is not the only author to stress the important role which the land plays in the peasant's life. Louis Hémon in Maria Chapdelaine claims that the land is of such paramount

¹⁰"Nous appelons roman de la fidélité l'ensemble des oeuvres qui ont pour fonction essentielle de sauvegarder le patrimoine canadien-français. Il est caractérisé par un attachement réel à la langue, à la terre, à la foi catholique et aux traditions héritées de la mère-patrie qui, pour beaucoup de Canadiens français, est encore la France." Henri Tuchmaier, "Evolution de la technique du roman canadien-français" (Université Laval: Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1958), p. 60.

¹¹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 40.

¹²Ibid., p. 56.

importance that one can discuss it anywhere, in any circumstance. "Pour les paysans, tout ce qui touche à la terre qui les nourrit, et aussi aux saisons qui tour à tour assoupissent et réveillent la terre, est si important qu'on peut en parler même à côté de la mort sans profanation."¹³

René Ouvrard, using almost the same terminology as Louis Hémon, exposes the important role of the land in matters of love. In La Veuve, Orpha Lemire and Alidor Larose "en bons paysans, [...] mêlaient la terre à leurs amours, à leurs projets."¹⁴ Indeed, the land is so highly esteemed in the traditional peasants' system of values that it is often discussed in the same breath with subjects such as life, love and death.

Throughout Quebec's history, paternalism became one of the most highly esteemed traditional peasant values because of its widespread application in the area of land management. Paternalism is defined as a social doctrine according to which the patron alone possesses the authority of creator and administrator of the social works of the enterprise. Altered to reflect the peasant situation, it could be defined as a social doctrine prominent in the French-Canadian peasant milieu, according to which the head of the family alone possesses the authority of creator and

¹³Hémon, Maria Chappdelaine, p. 221.

¹⁴René Ouvrard, La Veuve (Montréal: Editions Chantecler, 1955), p. 59.

administrator of the land and everything connected to it, or dependent upon it, including the members of his immediate family.

One of mankind's most innate drives is to bring something into existence which is truly representative of his inner being. We generally attribute creativeness to writers, artists and highly trained technical people who hold a prominent place in society. We say that they create novels and plays, that they paint masterpieces, or that a particular bridge is truly representative of a creative genius. We generally do not think of peasants as being creative people. Yet, like the artist or engineer, Samuel Chapdelaine brought several farms into existence. Euchariste Moisan, when he received title to his uncle's farm, felt suddenly fulfilled because he would be able to make innovations, thereby recreating the Moisan farm to reflect his inner being. "Tout dépendrait de lui", he thought to himself. "Et toutes les choses de la terre et lui-même ne dépendraient plus de rien que de la terre même et du soleil et de la pluie."¹⁵ Euchariste Moisan, in his life-time, created a farm that was the envy of all his neighbours. Also, Didace Beauchemin, even though he is the fifth generation to manage the family farm, made many innovations that reflected his own temperament. "Les bâtiments neufs, solides, de belle venue, qui les a érigés, sinon lui? La

¹⁵ Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 28.

pièce de sarrasin, qui l'a ajoutée à la terre? C'est encore lui."¹⁶ By making improvements to the farm that reflect their personality, all of the aforementioned testify to the creative aspect of the traditional peasant value of paternalism.

The paternal head of the rural family realized a large measure of confidence in his personal competence when he procreated the humans who populated the farm he was building in his own image. Producing children gave the patron a renewed feeling of self-confidence, of maturity, and of self-pride, as witnessed in Trente arpents when Euchariste Moisan and Alphonsine had their first child. "[Eucharistè] qui, à peine quelques mois auparavant, n'était que le neveu recueilli sur la terre d'un autre, il se sentait devenu, de par la magie de cette procréation, le maître de cette terre où il était hier étranger [...]."¹⁷ Perhaps the best example of this aspect of paternalism is found in the novels of Germaine Guèvremont. Now a sexagenarian widower, Didace Beauchemin is not content with his lifetime accomplishments. His creative energies are frustrated because, "quand il ne sera plus là, l'homme qui fera valoir le nom des Beauchemin, Didace le cherche, mais il ne le voit pas."¹⁸ The Survenant suggests that Didace marry Blanche Variieur, the seaman's widow known as l'Acayenne, claiming that she is still

¹⁶Guèvremont, Le Survenant, pp. 33-34.

¹⁷Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 49.

¹⁸Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 34.

young enough to bear him sons. Didace is overwhelmed at the thought: "A son 'âge? Prendre une deuxième femme assez jeune pour lui donner un ou deux garçons semblables à lui?"¹⁹ As time passed however, Didace realized that it was Alphonsine, his daughter-in-law, who would give the Beauchemin family the child he had long hoped for, the seventh Didace. When Alphonsine's child was about to be born, Didace brought down the ancient Beauchemin cradle from the attic and made it ready, for it is he, and not his son Amable, who acts like, and indeed feels like, the father of the yet unborn child. Didace's self-esteem as patron of the Beauchemin family was reaffirmed because his daughter-in-law gave him what he had wanted for so long. When Alphonsine asked for her husband, Didace answered her plea, not as Amable's father, but as patron of the Beauchemin family.

Il y a une loi pour tout dans le monde: une pour le temps, une pour les plantes, une pour la famille. Seul le maître, et non le fils, doit commander dans la maison. Amable n'avait qu'à obéir.
 "Je suis son père, dit-il, la tête haute."²⁰

Although we know that Didace is replying to Alphonsine's cry for her husband, Germaine Guèvremont, by manipulating the logical sequence of the dialogue, leaves the reader puzzled for a moment about the true significance of Didace's reply. In so doing, the author has obtained the desired result, for she wants us to infer that Didace feels like the father of

¹⁹Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 178.

²⁰Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 141.

the child. As patron of the Beauchemin family he cannot feel otherwise. Before leaving her bedside, Didace tells Alphonsine that the child's name will be Marie-Didace-- the seventh generation of Beauchemin to carry the name.

Whereas the creative process gives the peasant self-confidence combined with a renewed pride in himself, the ability to manage his creation effectively makes him feel powerful. The patron feels that because he alone is the creator of his farm he has the sole authority to direct and manage it as he sees fit. The authority that he has assumed is not limited to the management of the land, the cattle, and the buildings. It also includes the humans who are as dependent upon him and his benevolence, as they are upon the land and its fruitfulness.

As chief administrator of the farm, the patron had absolute control over its management. He retained his power for as long as he could, as witnessed in Le Survenant and Marie-Didace, when Didace Beauchemin refuses to pass on his authority, feeling more capable than his son Amable to manage the farm despite his advanced age. Euchariste Moisan in Trente arpents reluctantly passed on the reins of power to his son Etienne, but only after many costly mistakes, the last of which was the total destruction by fire of the previous season's harvest. Since democratic notions do not rank very highly in the system of paternalism, some patrons reveal themselves to be rarely disposed to accept the views of the other members of the family,

even when the decisions to be taken affected them all. Samuel Chapdelaine for example, when he got the urge to abandon the farm that he and his family had built in exchange for a plot of treed land in the wilderness, the family did not have a voice in the decision. Laura dared to utter only: "'Et bien, Samuel! C'est-y qu'on va encore mouver bientôt?"²¹ Because Samuel was the undisputed head of the Chapdelaine family, everyone followed him deeper into the wilderness with each move, without even attempting to change his mind.

The system of paternalism relegated women to the inferior role of taking care of the domestic duties and raising children. Although some women were no better off than the patron's other chattels, those who were considered good wives were given the freedom to run the home as they saw fit. Many, like Alphonsine, who had not yet proven themselves remained under the patron's direct supervision, even in their homemaking activities. "Dès qu'[Alphonsine] aperçut son beau-père, elle s'occupa à entamer le pain. Sentant le regard sévère du maître attaché à ses moindres gestes, elle devint de plus en plus gauche."²² As well as serving a practical purpose, the woman was also a status symbol which gave the farm-owner a sense of his own worth. For example, Euchariste Moisan did not feel he had complete possession of the farm he

²¹Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 230.

²²Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 32.

had inherited from his uncle Ephrem until he married Alphonsine. "D'avoir ouvert la maison à une étrangère revêtit Euchariste d'une plus complète autorité et lui donna en même temps que le sentiment de son importance celui de la possession entière du bien des Moisan."²³

The traditional peasant's low opinion of women is especially evident in some of the terminology that is used to designate them. Among the most degrading and popular is the term "créature" which is still used in some rural parts of French Canada. In La Petite poule d'eau, Gabrielle Roy states that "selon la coutume des Canadiens français, le capucin désignait les femmes par ce terme [les créatures] qu'il trouvait poli."²⁴ If the peasant really wishes to flatter, he could refer to them as "de vraies belles pièces de femmes"²⁵, as does Didace Beauchemin. Terms such as these, because they are popularly accepted by all segments of society, do not only reveal the male's overt hostility towards the opposite sex. Rather, they demonstrate his deep-seated fear of, and unconscious disdain for, the women who are so important to the proper functioning of the paternalistic society.

In this system of authority from above, the offspring, whether they be young children or mature adults,

²³Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 46.

²⁴Gabrielle Roy, La Petite poule d'eau (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1950; Beauchemin, 1964), p. 244.

²⁵Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 32.

are worse off than their mothers because they become the innocent victims of the father's absolute power. Even the older, more sympathetic peasants often reveal themselves to be stubborn tyrants. Didace Beauchemin in Germaine Guèvremont's novels is one example. He is headstrong and unyielding towards his married son, Amable, whenever he detects even a hint of insubordination in his actions: "D'abord il y a qu'un maître à la maison. Et c'est pas toi, si tu veux le savoir." [...] La colère de Didace se relâcha. Il était le maître."²⁶ Because paternalism made the children dependent upon the head of the family, for them "il n'était question que d'obéissance aveugle."²⁷ The attitudes of tyrants like Anselme Val, who maintains that "dans ma maison, c'est moi qui commande,"²⁸ has resulted in profound resentment on the part of the young for "[ce] genre de vie où le père était toute autorité et l'exerçait despotiquement."²⁹

The absolute authority that the patron possesses under the social doctrine of paternalism does not always go unopposed by those who become its victims. When threatened, the head of the farm has recourse to two measures of enforcing his wishes; legal coercion, and physical violence.

²⁶Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, pp. 30-31.

²⁷Adrien Thério, Les Brèves années (Montréal: Fides, 1952; Coll. Alouette Bleue, 1961), pp. 40-41.

²⁸Jean Pellerin, Un Soir d'hiver (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1963), p. 103. According to the author, the novel was completed in April, 1957, though it was not published until 1963.

²⁹Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 34.

When the patron obtained legal title to the land, he also acquired great power. Traditionally, the French-Canadian peasant upon his retirement always kept the parcel of land which he owned intact. Ringuet explains that:

[...] la division des terres répugne au paysan. Le père préfère en général voir ses fils puînés partir pour les terres neuves, laissant à l'aîné la possession indivise du bien familial, plutôt que le déchirer entre ses enfants. Aussi bien, le cadastre en longues bandes étroites rend-il impossible le parcellement.³⁰

The head of the family, therefore, had complete control, especially over the activities of the son who had been chosen to replace him. Always reluctant to renounce his position of absolute power, the patron did not pass on the title of the land until he thought the time was ripe for his son to take over the administration of the farm. In the case of Euchariste Moisan:

Les trente arpents qu'il avait eu hâte d'enlever à l'oncle Ephrem, Etienne était impatient de s'en emparer, d'y supplanter le maître vieilli qui ne savait en tirer juste mesure et juste profit. Mais cela aujourd'hui révoltait Euchariste Moisan.³¹

Etienne Moisan was ceded the paternal land only after many bitter quarrels. Didace Beauchemin could not bring himself to give up his authority to Amable. Upon his death, he bequeathed the farm to his grand-daughter, Marie-Didace.

As well, the patron often used physical force to demonstrate that he alone had the authority to command. In Un Soir d'hiver, Anselme Val testified in court that

³⁰Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 57.

³¹Ibid., p. 231.

his daughter never dared disobey his commands for "quand elle osait lever le nez, eh ben... ." ³² In Les Brèves années, Clair Martin describes one of the occasions when he was battered by his father. "Il a commencé par me battre et j'ai tombé par terre. Il s'est fâché encore plus et c'est là qu'il m'a donné des coups de pied pour me faire relever." ³³ Even Didace Beauchemin in Marie-Didace felt sufficiently provoked to raise his fists against his son and defend his authority as well as the family honour. "Ses épaules larges et épaisses dépassaient celles du fils, faiblement voûtées. Il s'élança pour le frapper, mais soit violence de l'émotion, soit douleur subite, son poing retomba." ³⁴ In fact, it is vital that the patron possess physical strength in the event that his subordinates challenge his power. Albert Laberge aptly demonstrated the importance of brute force in an episode in La Scouine where Raclor and Tifa, in a drunken rage, sought revenge for the years of oppression they had suffered under their father's despotic rule. "Vomissant une litanie d'horribles blasphèmes, Tifa le bras levé s'avança sur son père." ³⁵ In the description of Urgèle Deschamps, the author reveals that the once strong and courageous head of the Deschamps

³²Pellerin, Un Soir d'hiver, p. 103.

³³Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 50.

³⁴Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 99.

³⁵Albert Laberge, La Scouine (Montréal: Edition privée, 1918), p. 112.

family has fallen under the despotic whims of his stronger sons.

Usé par plus d'un demi siècle de rudes travaux pour acquérir de la terre et encore de la terre pour ses enfants, l'estomac délabré par le pain dur et amer, le vieux Deschamps, si vigoureux autrefois, qui cognait sur tout le monde et à tout propos, invalide maintenant, restait là sans bouger, répétant: Malheur... malheur... 36

When it takes the form of legal coercion and physical violence, brute force becomes one of the most effective means employed by the traditional peasant to maintain the control that he has acquired over his family and farm under the social doctrine of paternalism.

Taking the negative aspects into account, the question that immediately comes to mind is how paternalism became so prominent in the traditional peasant's system of values. There are three reasons which help to explain the phenomenon. The first finds its roots in his religion. The patron felt that the authority which he exercised over his family was a duty delegated to him by God. That is how Eudore Martin in Les Brèves années justified the tyranny he practised over his family: "Puisque son autorité venait de Dieu et qu'il fallait la sauvegarder, il avait raison de faire des reproches amers à ses enfants chaque fois que l'occasion se présentait."³⁷

The second reason can be found in man's aggressive nature and how it responded to the original method of land

³⁶Laberge, La Scouine, p. 112.

³⁷Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 41.

distribution during the centuries that preceded the Conquest. Pierre Deffontaines, in an article entitled: "Le Rang, type de peuplement rural du Canada français," states that the land was originally distributed according to the feudal system of the Middle Ages. The fief was placed in the charge of a seigneur who received a sum of money called a "cens", approximately 20 sols, per frontage acre. As was especially true under the intendant Talon: "Chaque seigneur devait subdiviser sa terre en lots et les peupler, sous peine de la perdre; il devenait ainsi entrepreneur de peuplement, il touchait un cens minime, mais perpétuel et invariable."³⁸ The "premier rang", the first to be distributed because it bordered upon the St. Lawrence, was three acres wide and as deep as the individual peasant could manage. However, in the early eighteenth century, as the available land in the "premier rang" approached depletion, the depth of each plot of land was delineated at about forty acres, and the second and subsequent "rangs" came into being inland from the St. Lawrence. The peasant in New France, unlike his cousin in Europe, did not gather together in villages, but dwelt on his own plot of land, and thus became self-sufficient to a very large degree. Furthermore, it is observed that:

³⁸Pierre Deffontaines, "Le Rang, type de peuplement rural du Canada français," La Société canadienne-française (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 21.

L'uniformité du lot, due à son géométrisme, contribue aussi à une égalité sociale exceptionnelle; le gabarit assez uniforme de la propriété donne un milieu humain sans hiérarchie marquée et un peuplement sans variété, ce qui facilite le développement de l'entraide.³⁹

Léon Gérin, in an article entitled: "La Famille canadienne-française, sa force, ses faiblesses," concludes that as a result of the equality between families, each farmer became absolute master of the small group of individuals which constitute his family: "Comme il le faisait alors, comme effectivement il l'a fait depuis la fondation de la colonie française, l'habitant se patronne lui-même, mais sans, de son côté, patronner personne autre que ses enfants."⁴⁰ Thus, the social doctrine of paternalism, whereby the head of the family could display aggressiveness, if only to the members of his immediate family, came into being.

The third reason can be found in the traditionally passive character of the woman. She looked upon her husband as the master and protector of the family. Moreover, the woman accepted the notion that she was inferior to the man who had chosen her for his lifelong mate. The woman's passive role is succinctly expressed in the novel Félix. Transcribed upon laid paper and enclosed inside a Louis XV frame, the following advice regarding a wife's duties to her husband was given to Félix's mother on her wedding day:

³⁹Deffontaines, "Le Rang, type de peuplement rural du Canada français," La Société canadienne-française, p. 29.

⁴⁰Léon Gérin, "La Famille canadienne-française, sa force, ses faiblesses," La Société canadienne-française (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 61.

"Sois-lui toujours scrupuleusement fidèle. Ne discute pas sa volonté; tu dois lui obéir car c'est le maître que Dieu t'a donné; sers-le avec reconnaissance et n'oublie jamais, ma fille, de remercier le Ciel de t'avoir accordé un époux et un protecteur."⁴¹

The French-Canadian woman's acquiescence regarding her husband's claim to absolute authority in the family greatly enhanced the part which paternalism played in the traditional peasant's system of values.

Paternalism became one of the most highly esteemed traditional peasant values because it satisfied the patron's drives: firstly, to create a farm that would truly represent his inner being, secondly, to procreate individuals in his own image who would populate it, and thirdly, to assert his administrative authority over all aspects of the universe he had created. Often, the head of the peasant family resorts to the use of physical violence and legal coercion in his bid to retain power, using the justification that his authority has been vested in him by God. However, we attribute his claim to power to more human factors which resulted from the original method of land distribution as well as from the woman's traditional submissiveness to her husband. If the absolute power which the head of the peasant family possesses under the social doctrine of paternalism has not corrupted him absolutely, it has raised some fundamental questions in the mind of his offspring that threaten the long term survival of the traditional peasant's entire system of values.

⁴¹Jean Simard, Félix, livre d'enfant pour adultes (Montréal: Variétés, 1947; Editions Estérel, 1966), p. 26.

Despite the centuries, the large family has continued to rank highly among the traditional peasant values. In part, it is an outcome of the habitant's scruples which subconsciously require him to justify his participation in the act of carnal love. Also, the large family was practical in rural Quebec, for many individuals were required to reap all that the soil had to yield. As a bonus, this value contributed to the rapid growth of the French-Canadian population, thereby fulfilling the nationalist leaders' dream of a French-Canadian empire in anglophone North America.

The traditional peasant family was very large by modern standards. Omer Bigras' wife Albertine, in Geneviève De La Tour Fondue's novel, Monsieur Bigras, had had sixteen children of whom ten were alive. Alphonsine Moisan, in Trente arpents, died giving birth to her thirteenth child, at the age of forty. Luzina Tousignant in La Petite poule d'eau, had given birth to ten children during fourteen years of married life. These figures are substantiated by demographic studies. In an article written on the birth rates in Quebec, Jacques Henripin states: "En réalité, les couples canadiens-français du XVIII^e siècle qui survivaient jusqu'à ce que l'épouse atteigne l'âge de 50 ans avaient de 8.5 à 9 enfants en moyenne."⁴² Concerning rural birth-rates during the twentieth century, Henripin observes:

⁴²Jacques Henripin, "De la fécondité naturelle à la prévention des naissances: l'évolution démographique au Canada français depuis le XVII^e siècle," La Société canadienne-française (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 218.

Il est d'ailleurs difficile de déterminer avec précision à quel moment les Canadiens français commencèrent à limiter volontairement le nombre de leurs enfants. [...] En 1951, la fécondité des femmes vivant dans les régions agricoles du Québec était, semble-t-il, aussi grande qu'au XVIIIe siècle.⁴³

Since the birth rates have not changed significantly in rural Quebec from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century, one must conclude that the high value which the traditional peasant placed in the large family continued until very recent times.

As well as satisfying the authoritarian male's creative drive, this traditional peasant value reflects the scruples that many experience regarding carnal love. The strict moral code that prevailed until recently in rural Québec dictated that one engage in sexual intercourse for the sole purpose of procreating. Hence, the popular notion that women did not derive any pleasure from the act other than that of dutifully acquiescing to their husband's demands. In addition, because birth control in any form was out of the question, the woman soon found herself responsible for the care of a large family. Many, like Luzina Tousignant in La Petite poule d'eau often resented the heavy burden they had to carry:

"Comprenez-moi, mon Père," Luzina confesse to the Capuchin, "les enfants que j'ai déjà, je n'en donnerais pas un pour tout l'or du monde, mais j'aimerais quasiment mieux ne pas en avoir autant. C'est mal de penser comme ça, hein, mon Père?"⁴⁴

⁴³Henripin, "De la fécondité naturelle à la prévention des naissances: l'évolution démographique au Canada français depuis le XVIIe siècle," La Société canadienne-française, pp. 219-220.

⁴⁴Roy, La Petite poule d'eau, p. 241.

Luzina's negative feelings regarding the responsibilities that accompany a large family are typical of many mothers in her situation. Such attitudes demonstrate that the value of the large family is partially in consequence of religious conviction rather than out of a genuine desire to be constantly surrounded by a horde of a dozen or more children.

Also, in rural Quebec at the time, the large family had major practical significance. The peasant who strove to become self-sufficient could only achieve his goal if there were enough pairs of hands, each with a particular skill, to exploit the land to its fullest potential. Consequently, when the peasant thought of marriage, he looked for a woman who could give him many strong, healthy children. It was this preoccupation that occupied Euchariste Moisan's thoughts when he decided upon Alphonsine for his future wife: "De visage avenant, bien tournée de sa personne, elle lui donnerait des gars solides [...]."⁴⁵ Indeed, women like Alphonsine Beauchemin in Le Survenant are treated with contempt by traditional peasants like old Didace because they do not measure up to the ideal of a "vraie belle pièce de femme" who should have "un enfant à faire baptiser presque ment à tous les ans."⁴⁶

From the very beginnings of the French Colony, the large family was highly valued because it was the most effective

⁴⁵Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 17.

⁴⁶Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 33.

way of assuring what Jack Warwick has termed the rayonnement designs of French-Canadians.⁴⁷ Those who had large families felt that they were fulfilling an important spiritual mission of patriotic significance. Inasmuch as each peasant child was handed a legacy at birth "sous forme de traditions, de coutumes, de règles de conduite,"⁴⁸ he became a building-block in the French-Canadian empire that was taking form. Of course, the traditional peasant represented the mason who hewed the building-blocks into shape before mortaring them firmly into place. On her good days, Luzina Tousignant in La Petite poule d'eau saw herself and her husband in this light. "Peut-être étaient-ils de ces bâtisseurs de pays dont Mademoiselle parlait avec tant de chaleur. Ah! si tel était le cas, Luzina n'en pourrait supporter la gloire sans pleurer un peu. Son oeil s'humecta."⁴⁹

The large family was highly regarded by the traditional peasant not only because it satisfied the patron's creative role. As well as reflecting the strict moral code by which he lived, this traditional value also served the practical purpose of providing the farm-hands that were necessary for the peasant's self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the large family assured the rapid growth and survival of the French-Canadian nation.

⁴⁷Jack Warwick, The Long Journey: Literary Themes of French Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), see pp. 48-70.

⁴⁸Gérin, "La Famille canadienne-française, sa force, ses faiblesses," La Société canadienne-française, p. 60.

⁴⁹Roy, La Petite poule d'eau, p. 84.

Because hard physical work was of such consequence to the survival of the habitant in centuries past, it became rooted so firmly in the traditional peasant's system of values that it would not give way when the more recent farmer was presented with an alternative in the form of modern agricultural technology. As a result, the traditional peasant's outlook on the status of women as well as the treatment meted out to his offspring has remained unchanged, despite the decades of progress.

The habitant's attitude towards work is not only presented in the form of discussions on the subject, but more significantly it appears in the physical descriptions of the traditional peasant. The strength of the male characters' arms and hands receives special attention. For example, the sketchy physical description of Didace Beauchemin in Le Survenant consists of the following sentence: "Malgré ses soixante ans sonnés, il gardait encore le poignet robuste et le coup d'oeil juste."⁵⁰ Ringuet, in Trente arpents, describes the young Euchariste Moisan and his future father-in-law, Monsieur Branchard in the following terms: "Leurs bras et non leurs yeux les reliaient à la grande nourricière [la terre], leurs bras trapus que le dimanche paralysait et faisait pendre inutiles le long des montants de leur chaise."⁵¹ The author sums up

⁵⁰Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 26.

⁵¹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 14.

with a description of their hands. "Les mains seules apparaissaient hors les manches de grosse étoffe, des mains brutes et calleuses, semblables chez ces deux hommes d'âge pourtant différent, tant les mains vieillissent vite à tenir le mancheron, à manier la fourche et la hache."⁵² Even the priest in María Chapdelaine, "[...] sous sa soutane avait tout d'un homme de la terre: le masque jaune et décharné, les yeux méfiants, les larges épaules osseuses. Même ses mains dispensatrices de pardons miraculeux étaient des mains de laboureur, aux veines gonflées sous la peau brune."⁵³ The portraits which the authors paint of their characters are not only physical descriptions. They also reflect the peasant's attitudes concerning work.

The reason for the emphasis that is placed upon hard physical labour is that, historically, the habitant's very survival depended upon his strength and endurance, especially in the struggle against the reluctant soil, forcing it to produce what was needed to keep body and soul together. The act of working was indeed so important to Charles de Montbrun that he even laboured in the fields on the morning of his wedding. Mme. de Montbrun noted that:

⁵²Ringuet, Trente arpents p. 14.

⁵³Hémond, María Chapdelaine, pp. 152-153.

Jamais elle n'avait entendu dire qu'un marié se fut conduit de la sorte; mais après y avoir songé, elle se dit qu'il est permis de ne pas agir en tout comme les autres, que l'amour du travail, même poussé à l'excès, est une garantie précieuse, et que s'il y avait quelqu'un plus obligé que d'autres de travailler, c'était bien son mari, robuste comme un chêne.⁵⁴

In fact, Charles de Montbrun thought that work was so important that he refers to it, not only as a value, but as a law. "Mon cher Maurice, il est aussi d'une souveraine importance que vous acceptiez, que vous accomplissiez dans toute son étendue la grande loi du travail, loi qui oblige surtout les jeunes, surtout les forts."⁵⁵ This statement is all the more remarkable because it comes from a "seigneur" whose daily survival is less dependent upon work than was true for the typical habitant of the time. Hippolyte Douaire is a typical peasant of the nineteenth century. Léo-Paul Desrosiers in Nord-Sud, relates why he and others like him had to work so hard:

Levé toute la semaine avant le soleil, il trimait dur jusqu'à la brunante. Car sa ferme composée d'une centaine d'arpents en culture, d'une vingtaine en forêt pour le chauffage d'hiver, de cinq ou six au Petit-Nord en foin de marais, ne lui laissait pas de répit. Grains, beurre, sucre d'érable, légumes, étoffe, flanelle, filasse, toile, chapeau de paille, volailles, oeufs, cuir, il entassait de tout dans sa charrette, le vendredi soir, pour le marché du samedi à Berthier. Il vendait beaucoup, achetait peu, mais en revanche que de charges!⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Laure Conan, Angéline de Montbrun (Québec: Brousseau, 1884; Montréal: Fides, 1967), p. 25.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

⁵⁶ Léo-Paul Desrosiers, Nord-Sud (Montréal: Editions du Devoir, 1931; Fides, 1960), pp. 26-27.

Despite the decades of technological progress that have reduced the need for hard physical work, it has remained in the traditional peasant's system of values and influences many unrelated aspects of his daily life.

The traditional peasant of the twentieth century retains notions about women, for example, that are outdated, inasmuch as they are of little consequence to his survival in the new era of agricultural mechanization. Recent peasants such as Euchariste Moisan in Trente arpents even allowed their preoccupation with work to influence their decision regarding the ideal wife. In choosing Alphonsine Branchard, "[Euchariste] savait fort bien ce qu'elle pourrait lui donner: forte et râblée, pas regardante à l'ouvrage, elle saurait à la fois conduire la maison et l'aider aux champs à l'époque de la moisson."⁵⁷ Didace Beauchemin, discontent with the performance of his daughter-in-law Alphonsine, compares her to:

[...] les femmes de la famille Beauchemin, depuis l'ancêtre Julie, puis ses tantes, puis sa mère, puis ses soeurs, sa femme ensuite jusqu'à sa fille Marie-Amanda [...] de vraies belles pièces de femmes, fortes, les épaules carrées, toujours promptes à porter le fardeau d'une franche épaulée, ne s'essoufflent jamais au défaut de la travée. Elles ont toujours tenu à honneur de donner un coup de main aux hommes quand l'ouvrage commande dans les champs.⁵⁸

As Claude-Henri Grignon so aptly remarks about Séraphin Poudrier's attitude towards Donald: "Ses hautes qualités de paysan retors le poussaient à rechercher, dans la femme,

⁵⁷Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 17.

⁵⁸Guèvremont, Le Survenant, pp. 32-33.

la bête de travail beaucoup plus que la bête de plaisir."⁵⁹

In this, Séraphin reacted like a typical peasant.

In work as well as in other activities, the children come under the direct control of the patron. Even Etienne Moisan at the age of twenty-nine, is treated like a mere boy who cannot show initiative due to the paternalism that exists in the Moisan home. "'Mais c'est toujours pareil'", complains Etienne, "'les enfants, c'est bon pour travailler; à part ça, ça a pas un mot à dire!'"⁶⁰ In Les Brèves années, Eudore Martin's favourite Biblical quotation is: "'Tu gagneras ton pain à la sueur de ton front.'"⁶¹ As chief administrator of the farm, he made sure that his children followed his instructions to the final detail. Ainsi quand le père demandait qu'on fasse telle chose, ce devenait une dérogation aux lois divines si un des enfants accomplissait le travail en y faisant quelques changements."⁶² The high priority given to one's capability to accomplish strenuous physical labour leads traditional peasants like Didace Beauchemin to reject the weaker members of the family, like Amable: "Il est pas Beauchemin pour mon goût. L'ouvrage lui fait peur, on dirait. Toujours éreinté ou ben découragé."⁶³ Repudiated

⁵⁹Claude-Henri Grignon, Un homme et son péché (Montréal: Editions du Totem, 1933; Sainte-Adèle: Editions du Grenier, 1969), p. 12.

⁶⁰Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 221.

⁶¹Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 42.

⁶²Ibid., p. 40.

⁶³Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 177.

by his father, Amable became employed at the Montréal dockyards where he was accidentally killed. Yet, when the child did what was expected of him, as Tit Bé Chapdelaine demonstrates, things were different. Even though he was only fourteen years old, he smoked a pipe and joined in the conversation with the adults.

Il avait encore sa figure imberbe d'enfant, aux traits indécis, des yeux candides, et un étranger se fût probablement étonné de l'entendre parler avec une lenteur mesurée de vieil homme plein d'expérience et de le voir bourrer éternellement sa pipe de bois; mais au pays de Québec les garçons sont traités en hommes dès qu'ils prennent part au travail des hommes, et de leur usage précoce du tabac ils peuvent toujours donner comme raison que c'est une défense contre les terribles insectes harcelants de l'été: moustiques, maringouins et mouches noires.⁶⁴

If the child is willing to follow orders, and if the father is a benevolent patron, he may receive some recognition for the work he does by being treated like a man.

However, in the final analysis, the traditional peasant value of work is outdated, because it emphasizes those skills that have little relevance in the modern technological age, even on the farm. Furthermore, it adversely affects the way in which the traditional peasant views women. Though it can turn a boy into a grown man, it can also make a mature adult feel like a worthless misfit.

Religion is a highly significant feature in the daily life of the peasant. Because the Church is the instrument which gave the habitant the means to acquire salvation, it was unequalled as an institution for the

⁶⁴Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, pp. 36-37.

influence it wielded upon society. In fact, according to The Tremblay Report, the Roman Catholic Church supplied French Canada with its thought, its way of life, and the majority of its social institutions.⁶⁵ In keeping with the paternalism that prevailed in rural Quebec, the Church propagated those spiritual notions that stressed the Old Testament God of Justice. We also find frequent associations of a primitive nature between religion, death and superstition. The rigid moral code that characterizes the peasant's religion is of such consequence that we shall defer discussion of it until our examination of the traditional value of self-repression.

The Roman Catholicism practiced in French Canada has been branded a form of Jansenism by its defenders as well as its critics. It is based upon the philosophy that:

Man exists in order that he might earn eternal salvation for his immortal soul. That is the overriding task of this world, and by comparison all other human activities pale into insignificance. Faith is a prerequisite to salvation and the Church is God's chosen instrument of salvation. Because the saving of souls is the chief end of this life it follows that anything which disturbs faith must be proscribed. Similarly, because the Church is the sole instrument of salvation it follows that all other institutions and authorities must subordinate themselves to it.⁶⁶

Hence, the parish priest was looked up to by the peasant as the undisputed intermediary between himself and eternal salvation. Jean-Charles Falardeau maintains that the priest's

⁶⁵The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), see introduction, p. xiii.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. xv.

initial area of influence was rapidly broadened to include more than the spiritual aspect of the peasant's life.

Le chef incontesté de la paroisse fut le prêtre, dont le rôle de ministre spirituel et d'arbitre moral de ses ouailles se transposa en celui de protecteur naturel, de conseiller et, pour tout dire, de pasteur au sens littéral. C'est le curé de paroisse qui, directement, profondément, inéluctablement, marqua le tempérament de l'habitant canadien-français.⁶⁷

The relative ease with which the clergy gained control of the peasant in rural Quebec is a result of a deep religious conviction on the part of the faithful that Pierre de Grandpré has termed the "'fiat' de la résignation".⁶⁸ Just as the habitant looked upon himself as the chief administrator of his family, he realized that there was an ultimate authority in the parish as well. Jean-Charles Harvey in Les Demi-civilisés congratulates the peasant for giving in to the clergy, attributing this resignation to innate good judgment on his part:

Dans leur champ, [les paysans] pensent juste, et leur pensée s'arrête à la limite que leur prescrit l'autorité, non pas parce qu'ils sont dupes ou veules, mais parce qu'ils savent qu'il est nécessaire d'obéir à quelqu'un en ce monde. La soumission du bon sens, quoi. C'est cet esprit qui les a grandis et les a poussés à des actes d'un courage et d'une beauté inouïs.⁶⁹

However, the peasant's submission to clerical control is also a tradition that dates back to the beginnings of the French Colony where the hierarchy in the parish was as follows:

⁶⁷Jean-Charles Falardeau, "Rôle et importance de l'Eglise au Canada français," La Société canadienne-française (Montréal: Hurtubise, HMH Ltée., 1971), p. 352.

⁶⁸Pierre de Grandpré, Histoire de la littérature française du Québec (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1967), I, 241.

⁶⁹Jean-Charles Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés (Montréal: Les Editions du Totem, 1934; Editions de l'homme, 1966), p. 152.

"[...] immédiatement après le curé et le clergé venaient le seigneur, le capitaine de la côte, les juges de la seigneurie s'il y en avait, les marguilliers et ensuite les fidèles sans distinction."⁷⁰ Falardeau insists in his studies that:

La société canadienne-française a été, depuis les débuts même de son établissement, à tel point circonscrite, contenue et dominée tout entière par le clergé et les chefs ecclésiastiques, que son histoire se confond en tout point avec celle de l'Eglise canadienne.⁷¹

The peasant's notion of God closely reflects the paternalistic society in which he lives. Thus, characters like Eudore Martin, stressing the authoritarian concept of God, "oubliait volontiers 'l'amour de Dieu' pour ne penser qu'à la 'crainte' qu'il se faisait fort d'interpréter à sa façon."⁷² Indeed, as André Langevin noted about rural Quebecers in Le Temps des hommes, "même l'idée de Dieu en eux était confuse. Ils l'associaient à leur mère et à leur mort."⁷³ In the peasant milieu, to experience religion means to observe the accepted moral and ethical code of conduct laid down by the Church and the parish priest. Naturally, for the head of the family there exists the added responsibility of assuring that the moral laws are followed by the offspring, as we discover in Les Brèves années.

⁷⁰ Jean-Charles Falardeau, "La Paroisse canadienne-française au XVII^e siècle," La Société canadienne-française (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise, HMH Ltée., 1971), p. 41.

⁷¹ Falardeau, "Role et importance de l'Eglise au Canada français," La Société canadienne-française, p. 349.

⁷² Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 41.

⁷³ André Langevin, Le Temps des hommes (3^e édition; Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1956), p. 62.

through Eudore Martin:

[...] Il fallait leur faire une morale sévère [à ses enfants] et leur mettre souvent sous les yeux l'exemple de ceux qui, ayant dérogé aux lois éternelles, avaient été punis ou par un accident, ou par une infirmité dans la famille, ou par un événement où l'on disait que Dieu lui-même avait parlé. Dans ce genre de morale, le père excellait et la conclusion s'avérait toujours la même, que le Maître avait donné des lois sévères et qu'il fallait leur obéir.⁷⁴

The peasant's religion consists of blind faith: in God and His teachings, whether they be interpreted by the parish priest or by the authoritarian head of the family.

Due to the impregnable wall placed around the observance of moral laws, the peasant's notion of eternal life rarely embraces any concrete concept of heaven. However, notions of hell are frequent. Knowing only the land and the hardships it has caused him, the peasant presumably can see only more of the same after death. Even the realistic Didace Beauchemin who is not at all convinced that there is a hell "avec des flâmes, des démons à grand'fourchés, le yâble et son train, comme sur l'image de la mauvaise mort,"⁷⁵ insists upon having a High Mass sung for his salvation after his death, as indicated in his last will: "'Je prends pas de chance,'" says he to his lawyer. "'J'ai pas envie que l'yâble me souffle du feu au derrière pendant l'éternité.'"⁷⁶ The mystical feature of the peasant's religion is veiled by a shroud of superstition and death. For example, when a

⁷⁴Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 41.

⁷⁵Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 125.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 126.

barn swallow flew through an open window into the Moisan kitchen, Alphonsine insisted that the family kneel and say the rosary: "'Tu sais ce que ça veut dire, un oiseau dans la maison: c'est signe de malheur... c'est signe de mort!' [...] Ce qu'Alphonsine ne dit pas, c'est qu'elle a vu l'oiseau de malheur frôler la tête de son homme."⁷⁷ Euchariste also, when he hears his son Ephrem berate the land in favour of working in industry, reminds him of what had happened to Pitro as an infant when his father had cursed the land. The heavens had replied with a bolt of lightning which had caused the infant's mother to drop him, thus breaking his leg. "'Pi c'qu'i y a surtout de pas ordinaire,'" claims Euchariste, "'c'est qu'on a eu beau faire venir les meilleurs ramancheux, même le Siffleux, qu'est pourtant un septième garçon pi qu'a en plus du sauvage, personne a jamais été capable d'y ramancher comme i' faut."⁷⁸ Because he conceptrates upon the punitive rather than the redemptive aspects of his religion, the traditional peasant emphasizes the traditional concept of hell rather than an eternity in His presence in heaven.

The traditional peasant value of self-repression is highly esteemed for two reasons. Firstly, the suppression of one's natural instincts forms an integral part of the peasant's religion, inasmuch as self-restraint finds its roots in Jansenist piety. Secondly, the traditional peasant

⁷⁷Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 120.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 135.

assumes that by denying his desires and instincts, he makes himself less vulnerable to the destructive forces in the environment that constantly threaten to destroy those who lose their self-control.

The peasant believed that, above all else, the mission he had to perform on earth was to prepare for eternity. It was assumed that he lived in a corrupt world where temptations had been placed in his path in a devious attempt to divert him from this calling. Because the temporality of man was considered inferior to his spiritual aspect, human instincts and desires, sentiments and feelings were deemed to be lowly and frivolous at best.

It is Man who makes his salvation, and he makes it because, as a reasonable and thus free being, he chooses, in the intimacy of his own conscience, to act according to divine grace in each and every one of his actions. He does this by the judicious use of his faculties, and by the well-regulated exercise of his calling as a man.⁷⁹

As a man, he is called upon to quell the tumult of his natural instincts in favour of the prevailing moral code. For Euchariste and Alphonsine in Trente arpents, self-control during the first year of marriage meant that: "[...] en plein jour ils n'osaient pas même s'embrasser, par une espèce de pudeur qui leur faisait détourner leurs regards lorsque l'idée leur en venait."⁸⁰ However, the practice of self-restraint is manifest in other situations as well. When M. Larose advised his son that he wanted to

⁷⁹The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick, p. 68.

⁸⁰Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 48.

talk to him about a serious matter: "Alidor pressentit ce qui allait se passer. Cette pudeur morale qu'éprouvent les hommes lorsqu'ils abordent certains sujets, les empêchaient de se regarder."⁸¹ Self-repression was called for because the two men were discussing Alidor's future marriage to Orpha Lemire. Over a long period of time, the practice of putting down the free communication of feelings and sentiments can lead to the inability to express one's genuine emotions, as demonstrated by Euchariste Moisan when he bid his son Oguinase farewell at the door of the seminary. "Moisan mit la main sur l'épaule de son fils en une étreinte limitée; c'était le seul moyen qu'il trouvât d'exprimer son émotion à se séparer de lui."⁸²

At the time, the traditional peasant's reserve had practical ramifications, for he was forced to deny the feelings and sentiments that could weaken him in his struggle against the cruel environment in which he lived. Preservation for the characters in Maria Chapdelainé meant that the heroine refrain from showing her grief at the loss of François Paradis, the man she loved. The parish priest warns Maria:

"[...] De te désoler de même et de te laisser pâtir à cause d'un garçon qui ne t'était rien, après tout, ça n'est pas bien, ça n'est pas convenable... [...] Te chagriner sans raison et faire une face à décourager toute la maison, ça n'a pas de bon sens et le bon Dieu n'aime pas ça."⁸³

⁸¹Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 40.

⁸²Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 104.

⁸³Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 154.

Ringuet claims in Trente arpents that an individual like Euchariste, locked in a constant struggle with the elements of nature, soon learns to control the feelings that could weaken him, even when they are related to the death of a close relative. When his uncle Ephrem died,

Euchariste, lui, ne pleurait point, pas plus qu'il n'avait pleuré quand il avait perdu d'un coup sa famille entière. Il était trop jeune alors pour les larmes; il était trop vieux pour elles, aujourd'hui. Son chagrin était un chagrin d'homme habitué à lutter contre les éléments et à les vaincre parfois, mais qui devant la mort se sent impuissant.⁸⁴

Louis Hémon concurs with the observation that the traditional peasant, for practical reasons, practises restraint in the expression of his feelings, even when the sentiment of love is involved.

Les paysans ne meurent point des chagrins d'amour, ni n'en restent marqués tragiquement toute la vie. Ils sont trop près de la nature, et perçoivent trop clairement la hiérarchie essentielle des choses qui comptent. C'est pour cela peut-être qu'ils évitent le plus souvent les grands mots pathétiques, qu'ils disent volontiers "amitié" pour "amour", "ennui" pour "douleur", afin de conserver aux peines et aux joies du coeur leur taille relative dans l'existence à côté de ces autres soucis d'une plus sincère importance qui concernent le travail journalier, la moisson, l'aisance future.⁸⁵

The traditional peasant value of self-repression, whether it emphasizes the suppression of one's natural instincts and desires for moral reasons, or the restraint over one's feelings and sentiments for practical reasons, continues to enjoy the favour of today's traditional peasant.

⁸⁴Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 36.

⁸⁵Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, pp. 148-149.

To be free from doubt and anxiety about the future is to enjoy security. Despite inherent uncertainties resulting from uncontrollable factors, the land above everything else, symbolizes security for the traditional peasant. On the short term, the farm assures the farmer and his family of their daily sustenance. Furthermore, it assures the patron of a retirement income, since the farm amounts to a capital investment. Naturally, these forms of security apply only to the owner who not only holds legal title to the land but also has all of the family's savings invested in his name. For women, the only form of security is realized in the protection benevolently accorded to her by her husband.

Seeing that we have already examined the immediate advantages that the peasant and his family derive from the land that is characterized as the good earth, we shall concentrate here upon how the farm provides for the security of the peasant in his retirement as well as upon how it is viewed as a genuine symbol of wealth. Since the farm is a capital investment, the peasant expected a certain rate of return on the total monetary worth of the enterprise upon his retirement. By virtue of the legal process of "donation", the traditional peasant passed on the legal title of the land to one of his sons in return for security in his old age. In Nord-sud, Desrosiers describes the contractual arrangement that Antoine Douaire had made with his son Hippolyte:

Celui-ci devenait propriétaire de la ferme et du matériel d'exploitation, mais à charge de payer les dettes, de le nourrir, de le loger, de le vêtir, lui, le vieil Antoine et son épouse, de tenir une voiture à leur disposition, de leur assurer un peu de monnaie pour le tabac, une bouteille de vin de Madère, du pain blanc, etc.⁸⁶

In fact, the traditional peasant did look upon his land as tangible wealth, like money. Euchariste Moisan's actions support this contention.

[...] Il se penchait machinalement pour prendre une poignée de cette terre inépuisable et bénie, de cette terre des Moisan, que personne n'eût pu blesser sans atteindre en même temps cruellement les hommes qui y vivaient enracinés par tout leur passé à eux, et par toute sa générosité, à elle. Doucement il la savourait de ses doigts auxquels elle adhérait, mêlant sa substance à la sienne. Puis il se mettait à l'émietter, d'un mouvement du pouce glissant sur les autres doigts, le mouvement de celui qui pièce à pièce compte les écus de sa fortune.⁸⁷

Indeed, there is a striking resemblance between Moisan's affection for the land and Séraphin Poudrier's fascination for the money he kept hidden in one of the three grain sacks in his attic.

Il plongeait sa main osseuse et froide dans le sac. Avec lenteur, avec douceur, il tâtait, il palpait, il fouillait parmi les grains d'avoine, et lorsqu'il sentait enfin--ô suprêmes attouchements!--la bourse de cuir ou simplement les cordons, sa jouissance atteignait à un paroxysme que ne connut jamais la luxure la plus parfaite, et son coeur battait, fondait, défaillait.⁸⁸

Certainly, money played a more significant role in the traditional peasant value of security than the peasant himself liked to admit.

⁸⁶ Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 62.

⁸⁷ Ringuet, Trente arpents, pp. 161-162.

⁸⁸ Grignon, Un Homme et son péché, pp. 25-26.

Frugality and thriftiness best characterize the peasant's attitude towards money. In keeping with this trend, a stranger would never have guessed that Euchariste Moisan owned a very productive farm and had several thousand dollars in savings besides, for:

Ses habits étaient d'un pauvre; il en coûtait trop cher pour vêtir tous les ans de chaux fraîche les bâtiments, et les champs chaque année de leur simarre de blé d'or ou de trèfle rouge, pour que l'on pût songer à gaspiller en nippes pour le maître des champs et des bâtiments. En effet, auprès des gens de la ville, il avait presque l'air d'un gueux.⁸⁹

It would even appear that there was a tendency among the peasants of the past to consider one's health with no more of a sense of urgency than the purchase of a new suit of clothes, especially when it became a question of consulting a doctor. One will recall that Séraphin Poudrier allowed his wife, Donalda, to become gravely ill before getting a doctor, claiming: "[...] je ne suis pas riche, il faut ménager."⁹⁰ Similarly, when Laure Chapdelaine took ill no one gave it a second thought until she exclaimed: "Je vas mourrir!"⁹¹ Even then, all that Samuel planned to do was travel to the general store to get some medicine. When the services of a doctor were finally obtained it was too late to save Laura's life. Being a traditional peasant, Samuel Chapdelaine reacted accordingly:

⁸⁹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 146.

⁹⁰Grignon, Un Homme et son péché, p. 61.

⁹¹Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 193.

"Ce médecin-là n'est bon à rien, et je le lui dirai bien, moué. Il est venu icitte, il lui a donné un petit remède de rien dans le fond d'une tasse et il s'en est allé coucher au village comme s'il avait gagné son argent. Il n'a rien fait que fatiguer mon cheval; mais il n'aura pas un cent de moi, rien en tout, rien... " 92

The traditional peasant's frugality, which at times even includes denying his loved ones the care of a doctor until it is too late, stems from what Ringuet calls "le sentiment obscur que l'argent qui vient de la terre appartient à la terre qu'il ne faut point voler." 93

However, one's propensity to hoard away more money than required goes beyond the bounds of a legitimate quest for material security. Hence, the conduct of characters like Euchariste Moisan in Trente arpents is interpreted as a form of instinct that is inherent in peasants of Norman or Picard stock.

"Certes, [Euchariste] eût été bien empêché de dire quel instinct le poussait ainsi à thésaurier. Il n'avait pas à craindre la vieillesse, puisque son capital était là, trente arpents de bonne terre qui ne devaient rien à personne, payant tous les ans leur rente généreuse et n'exigeant de lui que ce qui est naturel à l'homme et ne coûte rien: du travail. A présent que son Oguinase avait terminé ses études, il n'avait assurément plus besoin d'argent, puisque ses fils n'auraient qu'à vivre à même la ferme. Et pourtant, sans être rapiat, il liardait sans que jamais l'envie lui vînt de faire danser ses écus au soleil plutôt que de les enterrer dans le coffre-fort du notaire. C'était là une force plus puissante que lui, une de ces tropismes communs aux hommes et aux animaux; comme les fourmis qui entassent au fond de

⁹²Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 206.

⁹³Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 148.

leurs galeries une provende pour des générations qu'elles ne verront point, dont elles ne connaissent même pas l'existence future. Un instinct impérieux et majeur, hérité de ses ancêtres, les paysans normands ou picards qu'il continuait, comme les continuerait ses fils, ses petits-fils, et les lointaines générations qui sont l'avenir fait chair.⁹⁴

Although money as well as the land represents security for the traditional peasant, the hoarding practices of many signify little more than a habit that has lost its original meaning, so wrapped up the peasant has become in the activity, while losing sight of the objective.

Because the woman is totally dependent upon her husband, her notion of security is contingent upon his material success, since he represents the protector as well as the husband that has been given to her for life. Therefore, the woman's quest for security is generally seen in her search for a husband. This was the case with Alphonsine, who after teaching in Montreal for a year returned to the Chenal du Moine. "Le salut lui était apparu dans l'image d'Amable-Didace, le grand garçon honnête, paisible et doux, qui saurait prendre soin d'elle, puisqu'il l'avait demandée en mariage."⁹⁵ As a wife and mother, she will have an important role to play in peasant society. Alphonsine looks forward with great anticipation to the day when, "[...] après le règne de la mère Mathilde, à son tour elle serait reine et maîtresse. Là était le salut, la sécurité pour toujours!"⁹⁶ Also, Didace's second wife,

⁹⁴Ringuet, Trente arpents, pp. 147-148.

⁹⁵Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 35.

⁹⁶Ibid.

Blanche Variieur had married him, "[...] pour la sécurité de ses vieux jours; de coeur, elle appartenait au Cayen Variieur."⁹⁷ Almost without exception, the peasant woman sees marriage as her only form of security.

Although the traditional peasant value of security finds its roots in the land, the role of money has become highly significant in recent decades because it better serves the objective of freeing the habitant from doubt about his future material welfare. Consequently, one is often exposed to portraits of thrifty farmers whose frugal management of the farm verges upon miserliness. For the woman in the peasant milieu, the only security she will find is alongside the husband who, when he married her, promised to protect her for the remainder of her life.

In every traditional peasant there exists a large measure of self-respect, for without it the emergence of the distinctive French-Canadian culture could not have taken place, opposed as it was by the Anglo-American society that surrounded it. The peasant exhibits a high regard for the value of self-respect by his characteristic behavior in three specific areas. Firstly, he takes great pride in adhering to the traditions of his ancestors. Secondly, he delights in his achievements, sometimes to the point of manifesting arrogance. Thirdly, his actions are often inspired by feelings of patriotism.

⁹⁷Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 103.

There are plenty of farmers who experience a sense of their own worth, especially during those moments when they endeavor to imitate their forebears in the practice of their traditions. Indeed, some like Eudore Martin in Les Brèves années believe themselves capable of outdoing their ancestors. Eudore's pride was made up of many elements, but

C'était d'abord l'orgueil du chef de famille, conscient de sa souveraineté, qui doit exercer son autorité comme étant le représentant de Dieu et ne pas permettre un seul petit accroc à ce pouvoir, même s'il était justifié par les circonstances.⁹⁸

Also, the peasant's self-respect is often associated with his stamina, especially in relation to physical labour. Some of the terminology peculiar to the French idiom of Quebec illustrates the prestige that is attached to the act of working. For example, a hard worker is known as someone who is "vaillant". The term valiant immediately conjures up notions of chivalry, nobility, courage, and strength. On the other hand, those who are lazy or who lack endurance are known as "des flancs mous".⁹⁹ In other practices as well, one is respected for one's unremitting loyalty to established custom. With regard to the exercise of his religion:

Eudore Martin le redisait souvent à ses enfants: dans la paroisse où il avait été élevé, il n'y avait pas de famille plus catholique que la sienne. Il n'y avait pas de famille plus régulière à assister aux offices, à la messe, aux funérailles, enfin à pratiquer tous les genres de dévotions imaginables.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 40.

⁹⁹Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 177.

¹⁰⁰Thério, Les Brèves années, pp. 41-42.

Even in areas more intimately related to what could be termed the sanctum sanctorum of private thought, one is led to believe that self-repression is highly commendable, for "le bon Dieu sait ce qui est bon pour nous; il ne faut pas se révolter ni se plaindre."¹⁰¹ Indeed, the self-esteem that one experienced by remaining loyal to one's traditions, "c'était un orgueil, implanté depuis des générations, qu'on incorporait à la religion pour le défendre plus aisément."¹⁰²

The pride that the practice of one's traditions might inspire in an individual can also affect the opinion that others acquire of that individual. As a result, certain people and families are more respected by society than others. In Vézine, Nelson Thibault remarked "que dans le monde on classait encore divers degrés de noblesse, qu'on observait des distinctions rigides, qu'on échelonnait, du haut en bas de la société, une série de hauts lieux inaccessibles aux familles inférieures; il voyait des castes partout, même à la campagne et là peut-être plus qu'ailleurs."¹⁰³ We previously noted¹⁰⁴ that, as a result of the uniformity of the plots of land granted to each habitant, a high degree of equality was achieved in rural Quebec. Despite the fact that individual peasants could not take

¹⁰¹Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 155.

¹⁰²Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 43.

¹⁰³Marcel Trudel, Vézine (Montréal: Fides, 1946; Coll. Alouette Bleue, 1962), p. 141.

¹⁰⁴See this chapter, page 24, footnote 39.

pride in owning more land than another:

Il y a des distinctions qui s'établissent entre les rangs, les gens de tel rang sont plus considérés; en général, ceux des côtes, au bord de l'eau, sont les plus importants, ceux des rangs plus éloignés, dans les hauts (on dit avec un ton péjoratif, ceux des concessions) qui sont de colonisation plus récente, jouent un rôle moindre.¹⁰⁵

In Trente arpents, Euchariste's concern over Ephrem's rowdy behavior is not only aroused by his son's abuse of alcohol. "Bien pis, n'allait-il pas jusqu'à fréquenter chez certains gens du rang des Pommes, une maisonnée de dévergondées où les filles étaient des filles à tout le monde!"¹⁰⁶ The main reason for Euchariste's objection to his son's habit of frequenting "des gens qui n'étaient pas les siens"¹⁰⁷ is that he felt his family had distinguished itself from the other farmers of the area. The Moisans had arrived, not only because of (the enviable farm they had all worked to create, but also as a result of other achievements, notably the accomplishments of Oguinase who had been ordained into the priesthood. Euchariste was especially proud of the distinction of having a priest in the family. Consequently, when his oldest son dies, it is his pride that hurts most, for:

¹⁰⁵Deffontaines, "Le Rang, type de peuplement rural du Canada français," La Société canadienne-française, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 121.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 120.

Ce qu'Euchariste Moisan venait de perdre, c'était son prêtre, et cela lui était dur; celui pour lequel il avait fait tant et de si pénibles sacrifices d'argent; celui qui était son orgueil. Celui par lequel il se sentait au-dessus des autres [...]. Cette perte le rejetait parmi la foule banale de tous ceux qui n'ont dans leur famille que quelques religieuses ou quelque frère enseignant.¹⁰⁸

A large measure of self-esteem that one has for oneself is a direct outcome of the respect that is bestowed upon one by society.

Also, for the traditional peasant, self-respect is intimately allied with patriotism because, rightly or wrongly, the habitant feels that his very survival is threatened by those who would like to put an end to his traditions. Consequently, he clings feverishly to those aspects of life that identify him as a French Canadian. The land is the most important one of these symbols because embodied in it is the traditional peasant's system of values as well as his self-esteem. For example, Ephrem Moisan loses all self-respect when he decides to move to the United States, for his action is interpreted as a form of disloyalty to his background as well as his province.

Un Moisan désertait le sol, le pays de Québec et tout ce qui était leur depuis toujours pour s'en aller vers l'exil total; vers un travail qui ne serait pas celui de la terre; vers des gens qui parleraient un jargon étranger; vers des villes lointaines où l'on ne connaît plus les lois ni du ciel des hommes, ni du ciel de Dieu.¹⁰⁹

Geneviève De La Tour Fondue, through the protagonist of Monsieur Bigras, stresses that even powerful businessmen,

¹⁰⁸Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 199.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 182.

as long as they have retained their patrimonial self-respect, always look back to the land as the ultimate reality. The powerful Florimand Bigras, after his wife's death, bought a farm in his native "rang", near Varennes, because,

"[...] c'est que nous, habitants des villes, soyons tellement enracinés à notre sol. Nos pères y ont vécu, nous y retournerons demain, car pour nous le seul intérêt de l'argent, c'est qu'il nous permet de garder ce contact avec la terre." 110

By investing in rural land, citified Quebeckers like Florimand are fulfilling a patriotic mission, for "'dans la mesure où nous posséderons le sol, nous échapperons à tout contrôle et à toute corruption.'" 111 As well, Monsieur Bigras is satisfying a deep-seated psychological need, for he feels that: "'La possession de la ville est toujours incomplète et laisse insatisfait, tandis que l'autre, celle de la terre, c'est une souveraineté qu'on ne partage qu'avec Dieu.'" 112 Indeed, the notion of patriotism, along with the satisfaction one derives from personal achievements, and the devotion one manifests in French-Canadian traditions form the congruent elements of the traditional peasant value of self-respect.

All of the traditional peasant values discussed in this chapter are ingredients which in the isolation of rural Quebec, came together to form the identity of the French-Canadian habitant. However, the peasants who lived according to these values were not so much concerned with creating a

¹¹⁰ Geneviève De La Tour Fondue, Monsieur Bigras (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1944), p. 238.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 239.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 249.

distinct French-Canadian personality as they were with the basic drive to survive in their brutal environment. The acts, customs and institutions which became the social values according to which they lived had originally come into being out of necessity. Paternalism had been necessary because of the relative isolation of each family. The necessity for a strong leader, protector, and administrator therefore came into being to defend the peasant and his family against the harsh environment. The large family was necessary because of the mutual benefits that could best be realized in a group of persons loyal to the same cause. One of these benefits was the division of work. The hard, physical labour was performed by the men while the domestic duties of cooking, cleaning and sewing were executed by the women. A strict adherence to a moral and ethical code was also necessary, for the peasant often needed the persuasive force of the severe laws that Roman Catholicism dictated to drive him onward in the performance of those obligations upon which his life and well-being depended. In order to fulfill his obligations, the peasant found it necessary to practice self-restraint, especially over his feelings and sentiments. Perhaps in response to the inherent uncertainties of his situation, the habitant shows a high regard indeed for the value of security. Lastly, self-esteem, which for the peasant includes a pride in himself, his family, his society, and the social values according to which his community functions is imperative if his way of life is to survive. Originally, the peasant had no alternative but to adhere to

those laws which guaranteed his survival. Even though progress has eliminated the compulsion that one might have experienced in the past to live according to the traditional values, the peasant continues to do so, because these acts, customs and institutions came to form an integral part of his personality. It is because of his values that the traditional peasant became a distinct entity on the North American continent. Furthermore, the identity that was created out of dire necessity became admired for itself. Consequently, the traditional peasant values which are responsible for the creation of the habitant personality proudly stand today, uncorroded, like marble pillars, testifying to the indestructibility of the traditional peasant of rural Quebec.

CHAPTER II

TRADITIONAL PROLETARIAN VALUES

The traditional Quebecker's personality, as outlined in the preceding chapter, was very much affected by the powerful influence of the rural environment. The peasant's customs, institutions and system of values came about in response to the needs and desires that could flourish only in a rural setting. Despite the calculated isolationist tendencies preached by the élite, the first phase of the industrial revolution made itself felt in rural Quebec as early as 1880. However, it was not until the second phase, which began with the First World War, that agriculturalism was confronted by a genuine opposing force. Regarding the destiny of the rural values, described in The Tremblay Report as the traditional French-Canadian system of values, it is observed that:

Industrialization, with its large masses of wage workers, brought about a radical transformation of this system. If the conquest put the French Canadians out of tune with the political institutions, the industrial revolution put them out of harmony with the social institutions.¹

The economic factors that prevailed in the industrial working-class ghettos were responsible for the attitudinal changes experienced by the first-generation worker. This

¹The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick, p. 42.

is particularly relevant to the traditional way of thinking that had hitherto formed an important part of the Quebecker's personality. "Men think along certain lines, but they are induced to live along certain lines, and they end up thinking as they live."²

Although each individual has a unique way of adjusting to new situations, it can be stated with a high degree of certainty that first-generation industrial workers are generally very much opposed to change. Granted that stubbornness is partially responsible for this phenomenon, one cannot lightly dismiss the obvious reality that for any culture to survive and flourish,

[...] a national community must have the faculty of freely expressing itself and, therefore, in the very first place, of creating its own institutions and of organizing its economic and social life by itself and according to its own spirit.³

It follows, then, that the first-generation workers were destined to experience difficulty in finding a place in the economy of the period, because "[...] it was neither conceived for, nor organized by, them."⁴ The dire outcome of this situation is revealed in novels like Bonheur d'occasion, Au milieu la montagne, Le Diable par la queue, as well as in the works of Roger Lemelin which depict the lives of Quebec City workers.

²The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick; p. 50.

³Ibid., p. 44.

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

The first-generation worker who had moved to the mushrooming industrial urban centres did not willfully create an alternative to the way of life he had known in the country. He found it difficult to reconcile the values that had been taught to him on the farm with the completely different way of life that was demanded of him in the urban milieu. Like Basile and Amélie in Le Diable par la queue, there are many who find it very difficult to adapt. They regret their move to the city: "'Pourquoi fallait-il qu'on vienne moisir à Montréal!'"⁵ For many workers, the rural life was a beautiful souvenir existing in the past, like the dried flower in Françoise Tremblay's missal.⁶ The quality of life that was sought by the worker could not be recaptured in the polluted, over-crowded ghettos where they were forced to exist.

The traditional proletarian system of values is indicative of the workers' attempts to adapt to a new environment. In many cases, the values they cherish are peasant values that have been transformed only slightly to meet the challenges of their new situation. Paternalism, one of the cornerstones of the traditional peasant value system, falls into this category. It was modified to take into account the vastly changed role of the woman in the proletarian milieu. It was consequently supplanted by

⁵Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 8.

⁶Claire France, Autour de toi Tristan (Paris: Flammarion, 1962), p. 125.

parental authority. The large family continued to flourish among the city workers even though it functioned as an economic rather than an agricultural unit. Excessive pride is a frequent phenomenon, especially among the unemployed tradesmen and the working poor. It is true that some skilled tradesmen manifest a regard for work that goes beyond the basic drive to provide for one's family. However, because the worker is not self-sufficient to any degree, generally he is not free to entertain any notion regarding work that is not based upon his personal welfare. Consequently, the value of work has become greatly inflated, particularly since the Depression, for like every other scarce commodity, it continues to be widely sought after by everyone who depends upon it for his daily sustenance. The Roman Catholic religion enjoys preferred status in the proletarian's system of values, partially in consequence of the solace that is experienced in prayer. As in the peasant situation, the emphasis continues to be placed upon the puritanical aspects of life. The notion that pleasure is inherently bad is not only reflected in the practice of restraint over one's feelings and sentiments but also in the notion that mental and physical suffering contains enormous possibilities for good. Resignation can be viewed as a characteristic traditional proletarian value because it is founded upon fatalism, and yet combines the human qualities of patience and endurance with the shortcomings that are generally associated with surrender and defeat. The ideals that are manifest in nationalism,

in the popular attitudes toward the Second World War and particularly in the drive towards trade and labour unions demonstrate that the traditional worker harbours feelings of abiding respect for idealism. Indeed, it can be said of the traditional worker that, because the values he cherishes resemble those found in rural Quebec, he regards himself to be little more than a peasant who has been transplanted into a completely different environment.

Parental authority was not a value that would have identified with the first-generation industrial worker until that period in history when economic conditions became hopelessly bad for the majority of the urban population. The moment of reckoning for the proletariat is generally set at the time of the Depression and the war years. For several reasons, the male worker was forced to relinquish the absolute power accorded him under the social doctrine of paternalism. As a result, the working-class mother became more of a partner. She was entrusted with a share of the power in consideration of the responsibilities she shouldered in raising the family. Out of a sense of spiritual mission, the parents strove together to pass down the values that they possessed to their children. In the process, they often reveal themselves to be overly possessive. As is the case with paternalism, the traditional proletarian value of parental authority implies the use of physical force or other forms of coercion. In point of fact, however, the parents were so ill-equipped to deal with their offspring that the older children were the ones who decided

whether or not they would tolerate parental interference in their lives, and if so, to what extent. Consequently, the parents understandably lost confidence in themselves, and often reacted to situations in ways that caused a further erosion of confidence between themselves and their children.

When the farmer migrated to the city, he carried with him the belief in paternalism as the ideal method of rearing children. However, the family's poor economic situation, which the chief bread-winner was not capable of improving, effectively forecast the demise of paternalism among the majority of the industrial proletarians. As well, the important role that the mother was forced to assume in the working-class home contributed to the change that took place. Whereas the peasant woman existed to serve her husband and children, the proletarian mother often had the added responsibility of working outside the home as well. Indeed, the importance of the working-class mother can be assessed by comparing the presence of the woman in the novels that deal with the peasants against those that treat the proletariat. In the traditional peasant novel, the strong patron is always in the foreground. For example, in Angéline de Montbrun, Terres stériles, Le Survenant, and Marie-Didace, the head of the family is a widower. In Marie Chappelaine, Trente arpents, Les Brèves années and Un homme et son péché, the woman dies during the course of the novel. Because the land gave the traditional peasant

his sustenance, his self-confidence and his pride, he did not need to corroborate the decisions that he took with anyone, not even his wife. Regarding Euchariste Moisan after he became a widower, Sister Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère states: "l'absence de la femme qu'on remarque dans Trente arpents est largement comblée par la présence de la terre."⁷ Indeed, for all traditional peasants, from Samuel Chapdelaine to Didace Beauchemin, including Séraphin Poudrier and Euchariste Moisan, the land effectively replaced their need for women. "C'est que depuis toujours Euchariste ne vit que pour la terre. La terre, c'est la vraie mère des Moisan [...]. Euchariste rend donc à la terre les devoirs de soumission, d'affection, de respect dus à une mère [...]."⁸ Due to the all-pervasive influence of agriculture, the woman played a subordinate role in the hierarchical paternal society that evolved in rural Quebec to administer the land.

The situation is reversed in the novel dealing with the proletariat. The woman plays a much more vital role in these novels. For example, Eva Boisjoly in Pierre le magnifique, Joséphine Velder in Elise Velder, and Mme. Marier in Le Feu dans l'amiante are all widows. Théophile Plouffe in Les Plouffe, and Sylvain Brisson in Le Feu dans l'amiante die during the course of the novel. Furthermore, the male head of the working-class family can

⁷Soeur Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère, "Mythes et symboles de la mère dans le roman canadien-français," Le Roman canadien-français, Archives des Lettres Canadiennes, Tome III, (Montréal: Fides, 1964), p. 199.

⁸Ibid.

be absent for extended periods of time without adversely affecting the family's welfare. This is born out in Bonheur d'occasion when Azarius Lacasse enlists for overseas military service, leaving behind his wife and a large family. In Autour de toi Tristan, Gustave Lapierre's six-month stay in a sanitarium for alcoholics is actually a blessing for the family. At first glance, it would indeed appear as if it were the female head of the proletarian family who plays the dominant role in the industrial working-class community.

Some critics suggest that the traditional peasant value of paternalism was supplanted in the proletariat by a kind of matriarchical society. In Mythes et symboles de la mère dans le roman canadien-français, Sister Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère hints at such a conclusion when she observes that: "avec tact, sans avoir l'air d'empiéter sur l'autorité du père-chef, la femme joue un rôle prépondérant chez nous. Elle est vraiment au coeur de notre vie collective et l'on pourrait peut-être parler de matriarcat spirituel."⁹ However, the behavior of many working-class mothers disputes the above assertion. For example, Julienne Lapierre in Autour de toi Tristan feels inferior to her husband:

⁹Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère, "Mythes et symboles de la mère dans le roman canadien-français," Le Roman canadien-français, p. 197.

"Les idées [de Julienne] sur la condition des femmes se résumaient en un mot: servir."¹⁰ Subservient though she might feel, the reality of the situation dictates that women like Julienne Lapierre play a dominant role since the husband is not capable of deciding what is best for the family. Gustave Lapierre is an alcoholic. Although Azarius Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion does not have a drinking problem, Gabrielle Roy portrays him as a dreamer who leaves all of the family decisions up to his wife. Like Julienne Lapierre, Rose-Anna Lacasse would have preferred to play a more subservient role.

Au fond, la plus grande souffrance de sa vie de mariage tenait peut-être justement à ce sentiment que, dans les décisions importantes, elle ne pouvait prendre appui sur aucun des siens [...]. Pourtant, il lui avait fallu essayer de conduire leur barque et, en agissant ainsi, souvent éloigner d'elle-même son mari, ses enfants. De toutes ses tentatives, entreprises timidement au fond, il lui restait en effet, au coeur plus de gêne que de fierté et l'impression qu'en ayant eu raison contre Azarius, souvent elle avait élargi la distance entre eux.¹¹

Even the most authoritarian of mothers would have been only too happy to relinquish some of her responsibilities, provided that the husband had been prepared to assume the obligations which in the peasant situation would have rightfully fallen under his jurisdiction.

¹⁰ France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 43.

¹¹ Gabrielle Roy, Bonheur d'occasion (Montréal: Société des Editions Pascal, 1945; Librairie Beauchemin Limitée, 1967), p. 146.

Even those domineering mothers whom Roger Lemelin created needed the support of their husbands. For example, in Les Plouffe, the strong-willed Joséphine handled the reins of power only as long as her husband Théophile concurred and brought home his weekly salary. Her role in the family changed drastically after Théophile became paralyzed and unemployed.

Depuis que son mari était impotent et qu'elle ne recevait plus d'argent de ses mains, elle ne se sentait plus maîtresse dans la maison. Quelque chose était changé, comme si elle était aussi devenue très vieille et paralysée.¹²

The realities of working-class life dictated that the woman play a dominant role in the home, at least during the hours when the wage earner was away at work. During times of crises, when the worker found himself unemployed, the woman took it upon herself to go work for the paltry sums she could earn as a charwoman as well as continue with her usual duties in her own home. As an outcome of the woman's broadening responsibilities, the marriage became more of a partnership than one might have expected. For example, Basile in Le Diable par la queue is genuinely grateful to Amélie for the important role she has assumed in the family. "Par chance que je t'ai eue, bonne femme; à deux, on peut tirer à franc collier."¹³ Rather than being supplanted by a

¹²Roger Lemelin, Les Plouffe (Québec: Bélisle, 1948), p. 306.

¹³Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 8.

matriarchy, in the industrial working-class family, paternalism gave way to the social value we have termed

"l'autorité des parents"¹⁴

The traditional pro-Christian value of parental authority embraces the notion that parents have a sacred duty to protect their offspring from the corrupting influences that flourish in the urban environment. The woman plays a particularly significant role in this area. Often portrayed as the standard-bearer of traditionalism, the mother is assigned the role of maintaining ironclad control over the foreign influences that are permitted in the family milieu. In Les Plouffe, Joséphine squares off against the Protestant, Reverend Tom Brown, because of his attempts to recruit Guillaume into one of the American major-league baseball teams. "Joséphine, atterrée, s'interposa entre son fils et l'Américain dans un élan qui signifiait: 'Pour l'avoir, vous me marcherez sur le corps.'"¹⁵ Madame Plouffe's quarrel with Brown, which begins to take on religious significance when she consorts with Father Folbèche,¹⁶ quickly flourishes into a full-scale crusade:

La seule héroïne que madame Plouffe se rappelait était Jeanne d'Arc qu'elle admirait avec humilité. Et voilà que soudain une occasion d'héroïsme lui tombait du ciel! Elle en était toute bouleversée et elle frémissait de l'ardeur du brave qui va affronter le champ de bataille pour la première fois. Le Seigneur, par la voix du curé Folbèche, lui intimait

¹⁴Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 263.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 36.

l'ordre de repousser le protestant Tom Brown hors de sa maison et de la paroisse, comme il avait chargé Jeanne d'Arc de repousser les Anglais hors de France.¹⁷

Sister Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère implies that behavior such as that revealed by Mme. Plouffe is common in French Canada, for: "Du prêtre, gardien de la foi et de la race, [la mère] s'est toujours montrée l'auxiliaire la plus généreuse et la plus dévouée."¹⁸ Further examples of women who keep the curé informed of the goings on in the parish are frequent in the proletarian novel. Mme. Marier in Le Feu dans l'amiante and the Latruche sisters in Au pied de la pente douce are but two further examples.

Upon close scrutiny, the working-class father reveals himself to be as stern as his wife in the defense of his children and the traditional proletarian values. Bill Lafrenière in La Bagarre is a good example. When it is suggested by Lebeuf that the intellectual potential of his daughter Gisèle would best be served if she enrolled at Sir George Williams University, Bill objects on the following grounds:

"Mais quoi ce qui arriverait si elle s'amourachait d'un Bloke tout d'ein coup?[...] Ca s'est vu, affirma Bill avec animation. Dis-moué pas que ça s'est pas vu, ça s'est vu. Y avait une fille qui restait pas loin de chez nous quand j'étais jeune. Elle s'est en-mourachée d'ein grand Anglais, pis, cré-moué, cré-moué pas, elle l'a marié, oui, Monsieur! H'ai pas besoin de t'dire que ça a fait une maudzite commotion dans

¹⁷ Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 84-85.

¹⁸ Soeur Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère, "Mythes et symboles de la mère dans le roman canadien-français," Le Roman canadien français, p. 197.

la cabane. Le bonhomme, baptême, il portait pas à terre!... Hé ben, moué, je voudrais pas que ça arrive chez nous. T'as pas de fille, toué, mais si t'avais une fille, tu voudrais-tu qu'alle marie ein Bloke?"¹⁹

The reader quickly realizes that Bill's prime concern is with the traditional values that Gisèle would probably lose during the course of her advanced studies. In the final analysis, it is his daughter's education that frightens Bill most of all:

"J'vas t'dire, e'L'beuf. Moué, j'sus ein balayeur. H'ai pas voulu aller à l'école, et c'est pas le père chez nous qui m'aurait poussé. J'me plains pas. J'suis ce que j'suis. Mais si y avait un petit moyen, h'aimerais ben que la Gisèle, elle aye quèque chose d'un peu mieux. J'sus pas fancy, ni ci, ni ça, mais h'aimerais ben qu'elle aye un peu mieux. J'sais pas, moué, eine bonne job propre, pis qu'elle marie un gars qu'aurait un peu d'instruction, un gars qui se tient su'ses pieds..."²⁰

Like Joséphine Plouffe who saw only the danger in Reverend Brown's assessment that Guillaume could have a brilliant baseball career in the United States, Bill Lafrenière concentrated upon the dangers confronting his daughter's traditional values if she were to further her studies at an anglophone university.

It is widely held by the French-Canadian proletariat that the Catholic worker's spiritual mission is to mark urban society with God's image by doing all that is necessary to establish in the family and community those

¹⁹Gérard Bessette, La Bagarre (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1958), p. 199.

²⁰Ibid., p. 200.

values that constitute His greatness and dignity.²¹ In accordance with this desire, the first-generation workers strove to inculcate an affection for the traditional values in their children, showing little regard for their personal ambitions. A particularly striking illustration of the enthusiastic role that some mothers play in this regard occurs in Roger Lemelin's novels. Regarding her nineteen year old son, Denis, Flora Boucher in Au pied de la pente douce experiences, "[...] quelle fierté de le garder chaste, intact de toute fréquentation féminine!"²² Her continual reluctance to give in to her son's demands for more independence becomes a source of constant irritation between them. "'Et bien! oui, je t'aurai, mon fils, je te préserverai des filles. Je me ferai mourir, mais je t'empêcherai d'aller te perdre avec cette Lévesque dans le bois Gomin."²³ The "culte du célibat"²⁴ that characterizes many of Lemelin's over-protective mothers is also found in other novels, such as Autour de toi Tristan. By prescribing the priesthood for her son, "[Mme. Depeyre] croit sauver Paul des oeuvres du diable."²⁵ The deep admiration that many working-class

²¹See The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick, especially the section sub-titled "The Christian Concept of Man and of Society", pp. 88-90.

²²Roger Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce (Montréal: Editions de l'Arbre, 1944), p. 186.

²³Ibid., p. 190.

²⁴Ibid., p. 252.

²⁵France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 495.

mothers have for the 'priesthood' is, in part, an outcome of a secret desire to safeguard the celibacy of that son who has been chosen by her to abstain from all sexual activity.

The suggestion that the proletarian mother subconsciously feels guilty for partaking in the act of carnal love, and longs to redeem herself for her past sins through her celibate son's sexual abstinence is not new. This altruistic explanation accounts for the mother's peculiar behavior towards the son singled out to receive preferential treatment. In Au pied de la pente douce, Lemelin emphasizes that there is a difference in Flora's comportment towards Denis and that meted out to the other boys in the family. "Ce fils [Denis], elle l'avait élevé dans le droit chemin, en lui inculquant le culte du célibat, car elle avait encore des petits pour suffire à son instinct maternel."²⁶ Despite the suggestion that Mme. Boucher has deluded herself regarding her conduct towards Denis, the reader cannot help attributing her actions to purely selfish motives.

A force de s'auto-suggestionner sur son devoir de garder son fils pur, elle en était arrivée à se croire coupable si, par faiblesse, elle n'exécutait pas son dessein. Il ne fut même pas question de doute. La jalousie qu'elle éprouvait à l'endroit de Lise aveuglait trop son jugement pour qu'elle se confinât à une rage de cuisine. Il s'agissait surtout de le dégager de cette étrangère; dont le péché consistait à être aimée par un Denis qui n'embrassait jamais sa mère.²⁷

²⁶Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 252.

²⁷Ibid., p. 270.

A similar relationship exists in Les Plouffe between Joséphine and her twenty-eight year old son, Ovide. Though she had always planned for the day when he would enter the monastery, when the time arrived, Joséphine felt defeated, as if by a rival. "Cette vocation religieuse d'Ovide, qu'elle avait toujours désirée, lui faisait peur maintenant qu'elle menaçait d'être imminente."²⁸ Joséphine was not consoled by the fact that she was losing her son to the Church rather than to another woman. When he returned home less than a year later, having decided that he did not have a religious vocation, "[Joséphine] ne savait que faire de ses mains, ni comment sourire, car cette décision d'Ovide venait couronner le secret espoir qu'elle nourrissait de le garder à jamais près d'elle."²⁹ She was overjoyed to have regained possession of her son, for in keeping him celibate, that had been her secret design all along. To a large degree, possessiveness and jealousy are the prime motives behind the mother's drive to keep one of her sons chaste. This fact has led one critic, Georges-André Vachon, to label these French-Canadian mothers who go to great lengths to prevent their sons from frequenting women as "les mères castratrices".³⁰

²⁸ Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 146.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 343.

³⁰ "The term was coined by Georges-André Vachon, 'L'Oeuvre de Roger Lemelin', unpublished notes for a lecture course prepared in 1964, and refers to the strong tendency noticeable in Flora Roucher and Joséphine Plouffe to prevent their sons from frequenting women." Ben-Zion Shek, "Aspects of Social Realism in the French-Canadian novel, 1944-1964" (University of Toronto: Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1968), p. 214. The work under the title of Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel is soon to be published by Harvest House Ltd., Montreal.

Latent incest is also a factor in the possessive feelings that the father exhibits towards his daughters. His fantasies are often disguised in the form of aggressive verbal attacks launched against the young men who come to call. This is how Florian Malo in Au milieu la montagne reacted to Jacqueline's friends. "Il avait peur de ces jeunes gens qui, disait-on, n'avaient plus aucun respect pour les filles les plus honnêtes. Il avait peur d'eux, et il en était jaloux, sans être conscient de sa jalousie."³¹ Florentine Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion is her father's pride and joy. Although Azarius is not fully conscious of his incestuous fantasies, he found himself in the act of suppressing them one night on his way home after twelve hours of chauffeuring a truck.

D'habitude, c'était l'image de Rose-Anna qui l'accompagnait dans ces retours nocturnes, quand, les mains molles au volant, il céda à un demi-sommeil et chantonait pour ne pas complètement perdre conscience. [...] Mais ce soir, c'était toujours Florentine qu'il avait vu courir devant les immenses pneus mordant le gravier. Florentine, si svelte, si petite, que son coeur en était resté tout serré. Florentine, mise comme pour une fête, et courant à en perdre haleine sur le grand chemin obscur! Alors, pour se décharger d'un vague malaise, il avait pris vis-à-vis lui-même l'engagement formel de se montrer généreux envers Florentine.³²

Due to jealousy, Florian Malo could not resist staying up with his son-in-law, Donat, on his wedding night, long after everyone else had gone to bed, in a futile attempt to

³¹Roger Viau, Au milieu la montagne (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1951), p. 91.

³²Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 154.

keep him and his daughter Jeannette apart for as long as possible. When Donat finally decided to join his bride in the next room: "Florian resta seul ne pouvant se décider à quitter la cuisine. Sa fille était là, dans la chambre voisine. Avec un étranger... Il voulait chasser les idées qui lui venaient à l'esprit. Jeannette, et les yeux de Donat..."³³ Working-class parents prove to be over-zealous in the normal parental instinct of possessiveness. When such feelings are as intense as those witnessed in relation to some of the characters examined above, it is difficult to ascertain where one should draw the line between the value of parental authority and unconscious incestuous fantasies.

The notion of authority suggests the exercise of force or other forms of coercion. Sometimes, when defenseless children are involved, the corporal punishment meted out by an outraged parent can resemble child-battering, as is the case in Le Feu dans l'amiante. Jeanne Brisson had an uncontrollable temper, and her small children bore the brunt of her tantrums when her husband Sylvain was at work, as he discovered when he came home unexpectedly one day.

Armée d'un rondin, elle poursuit les enfants. Sylvain se fige de surprise. Il devinait que Jeanne maltraitait les enfants. Il leur voyait souvent des bleus et parfois Adrien, cinq ans, venait se blottir près de lui comme pour demander protection mais il n'osait le faire. La Jeanne lui promettait encore des coups sans doute s'il parlait.³⁴

³³Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 239.

³⁴Jean-Jules Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante (Montréal: Chezlauteur, 1956), p. 16.

There are instances where liquor is responsible for outrageous behavior on the part of parents, resulting in the abuse of their children. Gustave Lapierre in Autour de toi Tristan felt courageous when he was inebriated and often demonstrated it by venting his rage upon his teen-age daughter, Marie-Marthe. One stormy night, he ordered her out of the house, blaming her for intentionally placing an ironing board in his path as he stumbled into the darkened kitchen, intoxicated.

"Tu ris de ton père? Tu tends des pièges pour faire tomber ton père? Dehors! Va-t'en, maudite fille! Je ne veux plus te voir ici! Jamais!"

Et comme Marie-Marthe, subitement roidie, encaissait ses invectives sans bouger: "Dehors, hurla-t-il avec tant de férocité que Mme. Lapierre répéta trois fois: 'Voyons, Gustave' d'une voix de moins en moins perceptible."

Dans une invraisemblance de cauchemar, Marie-Marthe ouvrit la porte et s'infligea la nuit.³⁵

However, such behavior on the part of parents is not tolerated by the victims for very long. As Odette Marier forewarns her neighbour, Jeanne, in Le Feu dans l'amiante:

"T'abuses de tes enfants comme [les patrons de la compagnie] abusait des ouvriers. Tu vois ce qui leur est arrivé, ils se font taper à leur tour. Quand tu seras dix ans plus vieille, c'est toi qui te fera battre. Tes enfants vont te haïr assez pour te battre. Te haïr, comprends-tu? Te haïr comme les ouvriers haïssent Duplessis et la P. P." ³⁶

Indeed, the descendants of the first-generation industrial worker were not victimized by parental authority for long, if at all. The parents learned in short order that they possessed very little in the way of genuine power.

³⁵France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 113.

³⁶Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 268.

It is apparent that in this regard some parents learn more slowly than others, perhaps because they were rarely required to demonstrate their authority. In Les Flouffe for example, Théophile's reaction to his son's lack of cooperation regarding the demonstration planned to protest his dismissal from "L'Action Chrétienne" is most inappropriate.

"Théophile, tremblant d'une colère théâtrale, s'avança lentement vers son fils en brandissant la large ceinture de cuire. 'Tu veux défier ton père, lui désobéir?'"³⁷

The thirty-three year old Napoléon, perhaps for the first time in his adult life, defies his disillusioned father, and threatens him as well: "'Avancez, j'ai pas peur de vous, le père, avec votre petite ceinture. Mais frappez-moi jamais.'"³⁸ However, physical violence is not the most frequent form of intimidation employed by working-class rivals. In Au pied de la pente douce for example, the passive Jos Boucher preferred to employ non-violent forms of discipline with his children. To illustrate, he decided to put a stop to the ongoing battle between his wife and son regarding the latter's frequent visits at the home of Lise Lévesque by putting Denis' bicycle up for sale, thereby depriving him of his only mode of transportation. However, his son retaliated the following evening by revealing that he had in his possession a compromising poem Jos had once written. Out-witted, the older Boucher, who had earned

³⁷Lemelin, Les Flouffe, p. 262

³⁸Ibid.

a reputation for being quite the "vers-libriste"³⁹ in his youth, concedes that he has not yet found a buyer for the bicycle: "'Je t'en prie, papa, n'en trouve pas.' [Denis] marcha un peu, jongleur, puis se retourna, l'air naïf: 'Ça ne te fait rien que j'en aie pris copie, de ces vers? Ça me fait un beau souvenir de tes compositions.' J'os sentit le chantage."⁴⁰ As well, Flora was often coerced into relenting when Denis threatened to expose what he suspected regarding the infatuation she had for Noré, her childhood sweetheart. Indeed, working-class parents were confronted by all forms of opposition when they attempted to exercise parental control over their offspring.

It becomes almost tragic when parents are obliged to submit to a juvenile's demands because the family's very existence is dependent upon the money that the son or daughter earns. Granted, some characters like Florentine Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion and Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne are often justified in reminding their over-protective parents that they are entitled to some independence. However, blunt pronouncements like, "'Je travaille, j'ai le droit de faire à mon goût....'"⁴¹ only cause the parents to lose face. Some errant teenagers like Georgette in L'Argent est odeur de huit take much pleasure

³⁹Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 22.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 191.

⁴¹Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 90.

in challenging parental authority: "Je gagne ma vie maintenant. Je n'ai pas de comptes à rendre."⁴² When Rosa stands her ground, demanding the respect that is due her, Georgette replies mercilessly:

"C'est à vous de ne pas me parler comme vous le faites. Si vous ne cessez pas de me traiter comme une petite fille, je finirai par passer la porte. Et vous serez les premiers à être mal pris. L'argent que je vous donne, vous en avez pas mal besoin. Une grosse famille, c'est dur au début, mais quand les plus vieux commencent à travailler, ça rapporte pas mal d'argent, n'est-ce pas? Je me demande si ce n'est pas pour cela que vous en avez tant!"⁴³

The crushing blow for the parents comes when they realize that they are at the mercy of pitiless juveniles like Georgette Ethier. She stubbornly continues to jeopardize her personal safety by dating the hooligan, Félix Dastoue, against her parents' orders. Seeing that he would deprive the family of Georgette's much-needed contribution to the budget were he to insist upon strict obedience from his daughter regarding Félix, Georges does not pronounce an irrevocable sentence upon her. However, in the heat of the argument, he does risk giving notice that if she persists, he would ostracize her from the family.

"Que je ne te reprenne plus avec lui. Si cela arrive, tu auras ce que tu désires et je te mettrai à la porte. Tu verras comment on peut vivre avec ton salaire..."

Il ne put terminer sa phrase; Rosa s'était placée en face de lui et le suppliait en silence de se taire. Elle avait l'air effrayée. Lui aussi, à ce moment-là, eut peur que sa fille le prit au mot.⁴⁴

⁴² Jean Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1961), p. 91.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 92.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 93.

Although the working-class mother and father have a high regard for parental authority, the dismal circumstances in which they find themselves often do not permit them to act, except from a position of extreme weakness.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the first-generation industrial worker should have serious misgivings about his parental role. In L'Argent est odeur de nuit, Georges Ethier consistently asks: "Pourquoi tout-était-il combat dans cette vie qu'il n'avait pas choisi de vivre, comme si sa naissance avait été un accident, comme s'il était apparu sur cette terre à un mauvais endroit, à une mauvaise époque?"⁴⁵ The Ethier family belong to that proletarian category known as the working poor. As a result of his shattered expectations, the male head of the family has become a hostile member of society.

Toute sa vie n'avait qu'un but, être un bon père... choyer ses enfants, les nourrir, les habiller chaudement et proprement, travailler jusqu'au bout de ses forces. Voilà la bonne volonté dont il était capable! Que produisait-elle? "La misère, toujours la misère, de plus en plus grande." Il n'en pouvait plus de ce combat interminable contre lui-même, contre les autres, contre la pauvreté, contre le désespoir!⁴⁶

Others like Azarius Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion and Florian Malò in Au milieu la montagne, who are confronted by a similar set of circumstances, react by escaping into an unreal world where hope for the future still exists.

⁴⁵Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 15.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Pendant les longs mois d'hiver, Florian élabore des projets qui lui apporteront la fortune. Avec le retour des beaux jours, il oublie vite le camion et l'outillage qu'il s'était promis d'acheter, et il ne se prive plus de rien. Et pendant la disette de l'hiver suivant, il reprend ses projets de l'hiver précédent.⁴⁷

While shattered men with their escapist illusions like Florian dreamed about future prosperity, the family, which must continue to exist from day to day, experiences the full brunt of the realities of its dismal condition. As a result, confidence in those parents who live in a dream-world is eroded even more, as witnessed in the Malo household. "Il y a tant d'années qu'on entend [Florian] répéter la même chose, qu'Aurélie l'écoute à peine quand il rêve tout haut, et les enfants eux-mêmes ne croient plus à leur prochaine prospérité qui durerait à longueur d'année."⁴⁸

It is because the unemployed worker has lost his self-confidence that he elaborates unrealistic plans for the future during the idle winter months. In so doing, however, he loses the confidence of his family.

Similar anxieties also plague the working-class mother. For example, Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion experiences grave doubts concerning the effectiveness of her role as the mother of nine children. She is forced to struggle every day to keep enough food upon the table and warm clothes on the backs of her children. Consequently, when Florentine unexpectedly gave her two dollars, Rose-Anna

⁴⁷Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 17.

⁴⁸Ibid.

found herself torn between the desire to buy a gift for Daniel on impulse, and the wish to adequately provide for everyone in the family.

Au fond du magasin, Rose-Anna s'était arrêtée au comptoir des jouets. Elle examinait une petite flûte de métal qu'elle remit vivement à sa place lorsqu'une vendeuse s'approcha. Et Florentine sut qu'entre le désir du petit Daniel et cette flûte brillante il n'y aurait jamais que la bonne intention combattue de sa mère.⁴⁹

Mme. Lacasse desperately wants to be a good mother. In a long glance transmitted across the store to the lunch-counter, she seeks the guidance of her daughter, Florentine:

"Qu'est-ce qui est le plus important? Une flûte comme un éclat de soleil entre les mains d'un petit enfant malade, une flûte joyeuse, qui exhalera des sons de bonheur, ou bien, sur la table, la nourriture de tous les jours? Toi, Florentine, dis-moi donc ce qui est le plus important."⁵⁰

The situation is tragic because both of these things are equally important to the sick child. It is because Rose-Anna is continually forced to choose between the essentials of life that she harbours feelings of anxiety regarding the manner in which she is fulfilling her role as a mother.

The traditional proletarian value of parental authority grew out of the paternalism of rural Quebec. The first-generation worker was forced to relinquish the sole authority he had known on the farm over his family and accustom himself to the modified version where the woman shared the powers as well as the responsibilities of raising

⁴⁹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 109.

⁵⁰Ibid.

the children. However, the task was not easy, for the value of parental authority was challenged by the descendants who looked at the world from an entirely different point of view. Feeling that their entire system of values was threatened, the parents sought to minimize the effect of worldly influences upon the family. In the process, they reveal themselves to be overly protective and possessive. However, the use of physical force and coercion hardly ever produced what the parents sought to accomplish. Recognizing that their offspring, in some important instances, were better equipped to deal with urban living than they, working-class parents developed feelings of inadequacy regarding their roles. In a very real sense, parental authority stands out as the most significant traditional proletarian value because it reflects the wearisome struggle that the first-generation worker went through to remain in control of his own family during an era when he was, as an individual, under the almost complete domination of society's arbitrary forces.

Though modified somewhat to satisfy the conditions of the city dweller, the traditional peasant's high regard for the large family continued to flourish in the proletarian's system of values. Like the rural family, it was considerable in size. Flora Boucher in Au pied de la pente douce raised ten children. Although her counterpart in Les Plouffe, the fecund Joséphine managed to save only four of her descendants, she had gone through the astonishing

number of twenty-two pregnancies.⁵¹ In L'Argent est odeur de nuit, Rosa Ethier is expecting her ninth child after only eighteen years of marriage. In Autour de toi Tristan, there are thirteen children in the Lapierre family. If there exists a non-religious explanation for this phenomenon, it relates to the worker's optimistic disposition. As is the case with Rose-Anna in Bonheur d'occasion, the birth of a child is often linked to the proletarian's vague hopes for future prosperity. After she gave birth to her eleventh child at the age of forty, Rose-Anna Lacasse sensed "[que] l'enfant, c'était l'avenir, [...] l'enfant c'était vraiment leur jeunesse retrouvée; c'était le grand appel à leur courage."⁵²

The changes that took place in the family when the first-generation worker emigrated from the farm came as a result of the altered environment in which the group functioned. The peasant thought of the family as an agricultural unit where each member had specified duties to perform, all of which were directed towards a common goal: the land. In the working-class situation, the family functioned as an economic unit. Being limited only by monetary considerations, the individual members pursued their own goals as much as possible, as indicated by

⁵¹Lemelin, Les Plouffe, see pages 257 and 258.

⁵²Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 330.

Florentine Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion: "Ils sont tous ici, dans cette maison, éloignés par les songes qu'ils élaborent chacun de son côté."⁵³ Nevertheless, each individual contributed whatever resources he had to offer so that the less fortunate members of the family might survive. The most obvious form of support came in the way of money. However, one's savoir-faire in unfamiliar situations was also of significant consequence to the family's well-being. Generally, it was left up to the older children to excel in this area because, unlike their parents, they quickly adapted to urban living. Strong ties, based upon compassion and love, were woven between the individual members of the family as an outcome of the mutual support that each contributed to the group. Nevertheless, as witnessed in the case of Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne, most proletarians do not realize how strong their family ties are until it is demonstrated to them by an extraordinary event:

La mort de Jeannette accabla Jacqueline plus qu'elle ne l'eût cru possible. Elle comprit que les liens qui unissent les familles ne sont pas de ceux que l'on brise à volonté. ~~Même s'ils paraissent relâchés~~ dans le cours normal de la vie, un événement d'importance, un grand bonheur et encore plus un malheur les resserrent aussitôt. La famille forme un tout. La disparition de l'un de ses membres crée un vide qui rapproche ceux qui restent. Elle qui s'était crue détachée de ce clan voyait qu'elle lui était liée plus que jamais.⁵⁴

⁵³Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 148.

⁵⁴Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 297.

The proletariat did not have much of a choice regarding how the family would function in the urban working-class ghettos. Many, like Basile in Le Diable par la queue, who found themselves completely destitute in an unfamiliar environment, were left with the single belief that, as a unit working together, the family could survive. "L'important, c'est de pas prendre le mors aux dents, de se tenir ensemble et de tirer à franc collier. On va s'en tirer comme d'habitude, je t'en passe un papier."⁵⁵ Due to the constant struggle for survival that is the plight of the working class during the first few decades of the twentieth century, the head of the family expected financial assistance from his children when they were old enough to work. It was this shattered expectation which, in part, troubled Florian Malo in Au milieu la montagne when his oldest son died in the 1929 theatre fire in Montreal.

Florian ne pouvait penser à Midas sans se rappeler qu'il avait perdu son fils au moment où celui-ci allait commencer à travailler. Florian se reprochait ces bas calculs, mais comment ne pas les avoir, quand depuis des mois, il escomptait le travail de son aîné.⁵⁶

As a rule, the working-class children did not have to be coerced into doing their share. Like Picot in Le Diable par la queue, the majority rallied to the cause with great enthusiasm:

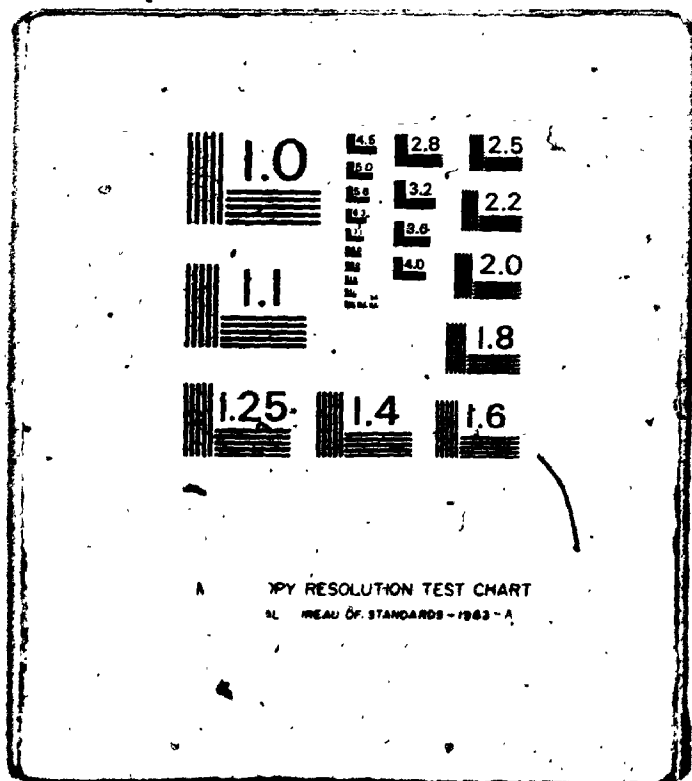
⁵⁵Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 69.

⁵⁶Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 27.

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Attristé d'abord du découragement d'Amélie, Picot se rallie volontiers à l'optimisme paternel. "Et moi, dit-il, je vais travailler chez Gervasi... Une piastre par semaine, c'est quelque chose! [...] Et puis, renchérit l'enfant, pourquoi j'irais pas au port ramasser du charbon comme "tout le monde?" 57

As it turned out in Au milieu la montagne, it was Jacqueline Malo who fulfilled the role that had been expected of Midas. At the age of fifteen, she began working full-time as a sales-clerk, sacrificing her ambition to continue her formal education in order to assure that there was enough bread on the table. Her strong sense of duty to the family is demonstrated when her employer, Mr. Miller, offered to sell her the dress that she had greatly admired at cost price. "'Même à ce prix-là, je peux pas l'acheter [Jacqueline admits]. Je donne presque toute ma paye à la maison.'" 58 For two years, she was the chief provider in the Malo family. This greatly surprised Gilbert Sergent, her boy-friend from Outremont: "'Fallait bien que quelqu'un nourrisse la famille [she replies with a matter-of-fact gesture]. On est six à la maison, et mon père chôme depuis 29. Sans moi on aurait crevé de faim.'" 59 It is interesting to note that working-class heroines like Jacqueline Malo and Florentine Lacasse take over the traditional male role and, as a result of their financial assistance, make the most significant contribution to the survival of the family.

57 Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, pp. 69-70.

58 Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 73.

59 Ibid., p. 165.

In the city, the strength to survive is measured in terms of how quickly one can adapt to unfamiliar situations, not upon physical prowess as in rural Québec. Furthermore, it is often the older children who make some of the most important decisions for the family, especially when the parents demonstrate a serious lack of insight regarding the techniques that are necessary for survival in the urban milieu. The housing situation of many proletarian families demonstrates the glaring inadequacies of parental efforts to provide their offspring with this essential human requirement. In Au milieu la montagne, the Malo parents show that they are unable to act quickly to secure alternate housing when their landlord threatens to evict them in three days if they do not pay their back rent.

Le lendemain, Aurélie et Florian revinrent abattus de leur longue tournée pour trouver un logement. S'il y avait une multitude d'affiches "A louer", peu de logements étaient libres avant le premier mai, et les rares logis vacants leur avaient été refusés, quand les propriétaires avaient appris que Florian ne travaillait pas.⁶⁰

Whereas her parents failed, Jacqueline quickly found an apartment after her day's work. Using common sense, she went to a district of Montreal where the family was unknown and deceived the landlord by stating that her father's working hours did not permit him to sign the lease in person. Furthermore, she falsified receipts indicating that they had paid their present rent in full. Even though she succeeded where they had failed, Jacqueline was forced to

⁶⁰Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 107.

justify her actions to her parents. All she could do was present them with the hard facts: "On était pas pour coucher dans la rue. On se débrouille comme on peut dans la vie. Ça fait pas de mal à personne, parce que huit piastres, je pense qu'on va être capables de payer ça,"⁶¹ Although Jacqueline's parents do not approve of the manner in which she acquired the apartment, they are forced to take it, being incapable of procuring one themselves by strictly honest means.

Although most of the parents disapprove of the Machiavellian techniques that their children employ seemingly without suffering even a twinge of conscience, the majority, like Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion, are aware of their dependence upon them. Unlike her husband Azarius, her oldest son Eugène, and even herself, Rose-Anna realizes that Florentine is "si différente des autres, si pratique!"⁶² She even concedes that: "Florentine, si débrouillarde, si assurée, serait leur salut. Elle fera ceci... Elle décidera cela; ce sera à elle de décider puisqu'elle nous aide tant..."⁶³ Florentine willingly assumed the responsibilities that the other members of the family had abdicated, not because she was coerced to do so by parental authority. In carrying out her self-imposed duty to her family, she was allowed to experience a sense of

⁶¹Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 108.

⁶²Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 146.

⁶³Ibid., p. 147.

personal satisfaction. "Oui, désormais, [Florentine] serait pour sa mère un sûr soutien. Qu'importe qu'Azarius et Eugène ne fissent pas leur part? Elle n'abandonnerait jamais sa mère à leur insouciance."⁶⁴ After her father and Eugène left for overseas military service, Florentine took over full responsibility for the family's welfare. "Elle considéra l'achat de vêtements neufs pour sa mère et les enfants. 'Enfin, nous allons bien vivre', ne cessait-elle de se répéter avec une satisfaction étonnée, une vanité qui la remplissait d'aise."⁶⁵ Florentine remained faithful to the promise that she had made never to abandon her mother and family.

Issuing out of compassion and love, a secure bond links the members of the proletarian family together in a value which is responsible for the survival of many of the weaker members of the impoverished working class. In an objective sense, the proletarian family reveals itself to be an economic unit where each member contributes according to his own ability to the survival of the group. However, when one takes the human dimension of the large working-class family into account, one realizes that this value is an outcome of profound human feelings that link one member to the whole group, often as a recompense for great personal sacrifice.

⁶⁴Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 227.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 344.

The boundless pride of the worker became a social value that permeated all segments of the working class as a result of the serious lack of self-esteem that the proletariat as a group was made to experience by the other elements of society as well as by the conditions in the proletarian milieu itself. As a result of the difficulties experienced in maintaining parental authority, the high degree of dependence of the parents upon their offspring, and most important, the inability of many workers to provide for the family because of the high rate of unemployment or poor-paying jobs, the traditional proletarian often felt lowly, ashamed and humiliated. The first-generation worker, reacting to these feelings as a normal human being, fought aggressively to overcome them. The eventual outcome of this response is what one author has termed, "l'immense orgueil des pauvres."⁶⁶

Roger Lemelin divides the proletariat of Quebec City into two distinct groups: the "Mulots" and the "Soyeux".

The "Mulots" are those living in abject poverty, the unemployed, the families on "relief", and the seasonal day labourers who work annually on the sewer main. They include, too, heads of families whose scant earnings in unskilled occupations [...] are insufficient for them to live on. The "Soyeux", on the other hand, apart from a few middle-class elements, are made up of those who, because of steady employment and slightly higher earnings than their "Mulot" neighbours, are not exposed to constant insecurity. These differences, although not fundamental in economic terms, do have distinct social manifestations.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 60.

⁶⁷ Shek, "Aspects of Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel, 1944-1964," p. 218.

Though it would be technically incorrect to designate Montreal workers as being either "Soyeux" or "Mulots", since these particular labels were created to describe the Lower Town Quebec proletariat, workers everywhere fall into one or the other of the following categories: they either live with insecurity in abject poverty or they enjoy steady employment. Each group manifests the pride of the worker in its own distinctive way.

Often, the only characteristic that sets the "Soyeux" apart from the other Quebec City working-class elements is their arrogance. In Au pied de la pente douce, Flora Boucher even rebuffed her son's friend because he was a "Mulot". "Flora entr'ouvrit la porte: 'C'est toi, le Jean Colin. Tu peux t'en aller, mon garçon n'est pas de ta classe!'"⁶⁸ Although the Bouchers were financially no better off than their neighbours, Flora imagined that her family was superior. She did not hesitate to flaunt their achievements to the residents of St. Sauveur.

[...] Madame Boucher s'estimait une femme parvenue à un certain rang, à une certaine condition. Elle n'était plus, ou plutôt elle tenait de ne plus être une Mulote. Elle était arrivée, c'est-à-dire qu'elle faisait partie de cette classe d'ouvriers qui, à St-Sauveur, sont susceptibles de devenir marguilliers, de connaître le grand jour de gloire. Espoir d'autant plus fondé que M. Boucher était un homme calme, silencieux,--ce qui lui donnait un air digne--et que ses parents étaient des bourgeois ruinés.⁶⁹

In Les Plouffe, the Plouffe family had earned a rightful place in the ranks of the "Soyeux", thanks to Théophile's

⁶⁸Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 133.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 20-21.

steady position as typesetter at "L'Action Chrétienne". As a result, individual members of the family could excel in activities not directly related to the question of survival. Guillaume, while still a teenager, displayed exceptional talent as a baseball pitcher and became a source of pride for the entire family. He represented Théophile's hope that the Plouffes, as well as Lower Town Quebec, would earn a place of distinction in the world of sports.

"Ma femme, on a un enfant qui a du sang de Plouffe dans les veines, du sang de champion. Il commence à être temps qu'on soit connu dans le monde entier. C'est le temps de prouver que nous autres, de la Basse-Ville, on est capable d'atteindre les sommets, même à l'étranger."⁷⁰

Along with a certain measure of security guaranteed by steady employment, the "Soyeux" acquired a high degree of confidence in themselves. This pride led to further aspirations which tended to set them apart from the working-class masses who lived with insecurity in abject poverty.

The "Mulots" and their counterparts in Montreal, on the other hand, experienced a sense of pride in themselves if they accomplished the feat of measuring up to the insufficient standards established in the working-class ghettos. Some viewed poverty as a relative condition which did not affect their self-esteem as long as they remained hidden, indistinguishable from others in the throng of human misery. That which has been termed the

⁷⁰Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 264-265.

pride of the poor was called into play only when an event threatened to expose the individual's inferior economic position vis-à-vis another social grouping. For Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion, it was the prospect of being humiliated by her country relatives that horrified her:

[Rose-Anna] était fier, Elle endurait leur pauvreté avec assez de courage à condition qu'elle n'eût pas des gens de la famille pour témoins. Aller leur montrer ses enfants en guenilles! Non, elle ne s'y résignerait jamais. Là-bas, on les croyait à l'aise; et cette idée qu'on ne connaissait pas toute leur misère avait toujours été une manière de consolation pour Rose-Anna. [...] Elle silencieuse, songeait que la pauvreté est comme un mal qu'on endort en soi et qui ne donne pas trop de douleur, à condition de ne point trop bouger. On s'y habitue, on finit par ne plus y prendre garde tant qu'on reste avec elle tapie dans l'obscurité; mais qu'on s'avise de la sortir au grand jour, et on s'effraie d'elle, on la voie enfin, si sordide qu'on hésite à l'exposer au soleil.⁷¹

Others, like Florian Malo in Au milieu la montagne, found themselves constantly struggling just to remain perched one insignificant degree above the Tremblays, "des gens qui se font vivre à l'année par la Saint-Vincent-de-Paul".⁷² When he was employed, Florian made foolish purchases in order to impress his neighbours as well as to prove to himself that he was their equal, and not like the Trémblays. The last spring that he worked, he purchased a radio on credit that cost \$129.95, a sum that he could ill afford. The previous year he had bought a fur coat for his wife Amélie at the cost of \$150.00, and the year before that,

⁷¹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 153.

⁷²Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 29.

a clock that was as large as it was expensive. They could not even find a place to put it in their small and already over-crowded apartment. Roger Viau explains that Florian's extravagances permitted him to maintain his self-esteem:

Et c'était un peu la raison qui poussait Florian à faire ses folles dépenses: impressionner le voisinage. L'homme souffre de se sentir inférieur dans son milieu. Posséder le plus puissant appareil de radio [...] posséder au moins tout ce que possèdent les autres autorise à porter haut la tête. Par ses dépenses exagérées, Florian prouvait à ses voisins, en même temps qu'à lui-même, qu'il était leur égal.⁷³

Because of the contempt that society reserves for its poor, the unemployed worker who finds himself in a distressed state is loath to admit his poverty-stricken condition, even to himself. In conformity with this, Florian Malo refuses to understand the compulsion "qu'on a d'appeler les sans-travail des pauvres... On est pas des pauvres, vèra! on peut pas se trouver de job, c'est tout..."⁷⁴ He demonstrates how proud he is when the family ran out of fuel in the middle of winter. He refused to allow his son to fetch some from the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul society: "'Yvon, je t'ai dit mille fois qu'on est pas des pauvres, on est des chômeurs.'"⁷⁵ Even when the health of his family was jeopardized, Florian refused to give in. For example, when his oldest daughter Jeannette, who is seriously ill with tuberculosis, proposes that she seek treatment

⁷³Viau, Au milieu la montagne, pp. 39-40.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 82.

⁷⁵Ibid.

at the free medical clinic, the proud Florian is enraged: "Au dispensaire! Nous prends-tu pour des quêteux maintenant? Avant de mettre les pieds dans un dispensaire, j'aimerais mieux mourir."⁷⁶ Florian Malo, one of the many working-class victims of the Depression, has accepted the odious propaganda expounded by society that poor people are inferior individuals. As a result, to the detriment of his family's welfare, "il refuse de se considérer comme un pauvre".⁷⁷

Charitable institutions are largely responsible for the negative attitudes which poor people have of them. Although they exist for the purpose of giving free help to individuals who find themselves in a distressed state, the administrators of these plans extract exorbitant payment in the form of humility from the poor who are given benefits. Consequently, proud workers like Florian Malo in Au milieu la montagne hold out for long periods of time before accepting help from the Catholic Charities of Quebec. However, these conditions are universal wherever communities have opted for alms-giving rather than the principle of equality. In Le Diable par la queue for example, Basile, like Florian Malo, cannot swallow his pride and put himself through the humiliations demanded by The Salvation Army. Consequently, he asks his son Picot

⁷⁶Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 28.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 16.

to endure the disgrace in his place:

"J'irais bien moi," explains Basile apologetically, "mais tu comprends, mon anglais... ." Picot rongea son frein et, toute la soirée, s'efforça de surmonter sa répugnance. A contre-cœur, le lendemain, il prit un sac et se mit en route.⁷⁸

It is the practices of charitable institutions that pose the greatest threat to the self-respect of the proud worker who, during the Depression, was often forced to humiliate himself in return for the meagre handouts that would help his family to survive.

The traditional proletarian value of pride manifests itself in accordance with the worker's social position within the working-class. Those who enjoy steady employment and therefore can concentrate upon improving their standard of living, are proud of their efforts to distinguish themselves from their less-privileged counterparts. On the other hand, those workers who are often destitute as a result of unemployment or poor-paying jobs, try to preserve their human dignity by maintaining a level of existence that does not vary significantly from that of their neighbours. Ironically, it is the very institutions that society established to help the worker survive periods of distress that threaten to take away the last vestige of self-respect that he has retained.

Seeing that the traditional proletariat is defined in relation to work, it is not surprising that this, the prime activity of the class, should rank highly in the

⁷⁸Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 132.

individual's system of values. For some, especially among the inexperienced and semi-skilled group of workers, it is the state of being employed rather than work per se that is of greatest consequence because the individual's family is often totally dependent upon the weekly salary that he brings home. However, for others the practice of a particular craft or skill furnishes that individual with a source of legitimate pride which in turn causes him to value work for reasons that go beyond the unskilled worker's desire to provide for his dependents. However, when he becomes unemployed, and the potential to support his family is taken away from him, the traditional worker experiences humiliation, frustration, and profound feelings of worthlessness. Yet, the irony of the working-class situation is that the working poor are often at a greater disadvantage than those who do not have a job at all, for in an emergency, the latter can count upon the state to pay for the expenses, whereas the former are totally dependent upon their own meagre resources.

For a majority of the first-generation workers, "le travail c'était le pain de la famille, le lait des enfants."⁷⁹ In Le Feu dans l'amiante, Jean-Jules Richard's novel dealing with the miners of the Eastern Townships, it is stated that : "la peur de perdre son emploi est la pire de toutes pour les hommes gris. C'est la peur qui prend racine dans les entrailles."⁸⁰ The employers

⁷⁹Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 112.

⁸⁰Ibid.

made certain that the individual miners constantly lived with this fear, pointing out that, like the inexperienced and unskilled labourers of other industries, they could be replaced without difficulty. The company also intimidated the employees as a group: "Au moindre signe d'insoumission, au moindre indice de rébellion de cette colonie d'esclaves, les officiels de la mine présentaient systématiquement et toujours la même menace: 'On ferme la mine.'"⁸¹ Indeed, for many of the first-generation proletariat, the value of work issues from the agonizing fear of being unemployed.

Nevertheless, the traditional proletarian value of work goes beyond the very basic drive to provide for the bare essentials of life. If Théophile Plouffe's concept of work had been limited to this notion, he would not have been distraught at losing his job, since, as Eustache Lafrance points out, "la famille de Théophile est élevée. Il a de grands enfants qui travaillent."⁸² However, as Denis Boucher emphasizes in his defense of M. Plouffe, skilled tradesmen incorporate in their concept of work,

"cette fierté légitime de l'homme qui veut suffire à ses propres besoins, [et] cet attachement que possède pour son métier l'artisan qui a cœur. [...] En enlevant à un homme comme monsieur Plouffe l'occasion d'exercer son métier, vous lui enlevez sa raison de vivre et vous en faites dès cet instant un vieillard."⁸³

A skilled worker's self-esteem is often contingent upon the kind of work he does. That is why the proud Azarius

⁸¹Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 112.

⁸²Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 204.

⁸³Ibid.

Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion, who, for eight years had not been employed in carpentry, "refusait toujours les petits emplois que des amis, par l'entremise de Rose-Anna, cherchaient à lui obtenir, déclarant qu'il n'était point né pour des besognes de gagne-petit."⁸⁴ Unlike Azarius who overcompensated for the humiliations he suffered, by indulging in reverie where he was the building contractor, Florian Malo, the unemployed bricklayer in Au milieu la montagne, "n'était pas de la trempe de ceux qui aspirent à devenir même de modestes patrons."⁸⁵ He willingly accepted to work for someone else, however:

Il satisfaisait son orgueil en refusant de jouer le jeu des hommes. Il ne tolérait pas qu'on s'adressât à lui sur un ton supérieur. Il s'indignait du peu d'initiative de ses patrons, il claquait la porte si l'on se moquait de ses idées, mais jamais, il n'aurait osé tenter de mettre lui-même ses théories en pratique.⁸⁶

There were types of work that the excessively proud Florian considered too demeaning, not only for himself, but also for his wife. For example, he refused to allow Aurélie to give up her respectable house-cleaning practice in favour of a higher paying job in a tobacco factory:

Que sa femme travaillât pour des particuliers, passe encore. Dans une usine, ah non! "Jamais de la vie!" cria-t-il. C'est pas une job pour toi. C'est bon pour les Polonaises du Parc Fréntenac de respirer le tabac toute la journée!"⁸⁷

⁸⁴Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 142.

⁸⁵Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 40.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 41.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 25.

Work is conceived of by the skilled tradesman as a source of pride which goes further than the notion of employment at any price.

During the Depression, skilled workers were forced to swallow their pride and seek employment in poor-paying jobs for which they were ill-suited because economic conditions forced them and their families to live from hand to mouth. During these hard times, everyone anguished at the thought of becoming unemployed. As Amélie remarks in Le Diable par la queue: "Un homme sans ouvrage et qui sait pas ce qui va arriver demain: ça devient terrible. Ça change à vue d'oeil; on ne le comprend plus."⁸⁸ Many workers discovered that the disgrace of working in poor-paying jobs could not be compared to the humiliation they experienced when they could no longer provide for their families. In Au milieu la montagne, Florian's attitudes and actions, after he became unemployed, are symptomatic of a serious lack of self-esteem:

Florian se tourmente. Son oisiveté l'humilie. Lui flâne à la maison, pendant que sa femme s'éreinte au travail. Il est mal à l'aise, le matin, lorsqu'il la voit partir à la hâte après s'être levée tôt pour préparer la soupane des enfants. Le soir, Aurélie revient épuisée par sa journée et sa longue marche dans la neige et le froid. Sans prendre de repos, elle se remet au travail. Florian, en apparence indifférent à la fatigue de sa femme, continue à se bercer lentement.⁸⁹

⁸⁸Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 179.

⁸⁹Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 17.

The material deprivation experienced by the unemployed and their families is probably the most bearable condition resulting from the worker's idleness. Far more demoralizing is the mental anguish that takes over when the unemployed worker feels he has lost his reason for being, when he is plagued by uncertainties about the future, or when he becomes incapable of providing for those he loves.

Ironically, the unemployed worker, in many instances, is better off than those who are classified as the working poor. Georges Ethier in L'Argent est odeur de nuit does not make enough money to fulfill his familial obligations even though he works every day. He cannot even afford to send his wife Rosa to the hospital when their ninth child is due. "Si j'étais sans travail," he exclaims, "tu pourrais y aller, à l'hôpital. Quand il s'agit de se faire aider, les plus chanceux sont ceux qui n'ont rien du tout."⁹⁰ Oftentimes, the hardships and mental anguish suffered by those workers who are unemployed, are paralleled, if not surpassed, by the terrifying demands that circumstance places upon the working poor.

The traditional proletarian value of work exists because the working class depends upon the money they derive from their employment to survive. However, there are individuals, especially among the craftsmen, who experience a sense of pride in the outcome of their production as well. Those who do not fear unemployment are few indeed, even

⁹⁰Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 25.

though steady work is no guarantee, as demonstrated by the working poor who are, in many instances, more destitute than those who are unemployed.

The worker's religious values are based upon traditional Roman Catholic concepts which served the French-Canadian cause well throughout the centuries. Like the hardy forebears who had settled in the austere wilderness, the first-generation industrial worker was faced with untold hardships when he attempted to integrate himself into the social fabric of the industrial slums. As a result, many workers looked to their religion for the strength and determination they needed to resist the natural inclination towards despair. Through the vehicle of prayer, the traditional workers counted upon the God of Justice for assistance in their plight. It is significant that the proletarian should view God in the light of the Old Testament, for it demonstrates the extent to which he relies upon traditional dogma, especially that associated with Jansenism. In accordance with these beliefs, the worker suppresses his natural instincts, sentiments and feelings as much as possible. Furthermore, the act of suffering came to be regarded as the ultimate test of one's faith in God. Without the support of his religion, the first-generation worker would not have acquired the courage to continue in his struggle for survival.

In Au pied de la pente douce, Denis Boucher succinctly expressed the French-Canadian worker's feelings regarding his religion when he concluded that, whereas the

European writers were searching for God in their works, "A St-Joseph, on comptait sur Dieu comme sur l'oncle à l'héritage."⁹¹ Using the vehicle of prayer, the Montreal and Quebec City proletarians implored God to create the much-needed jobs upon which their livelihood depended. Novenas were the preferred form of devotion, and Saint Joseph, "le patron des ouvriers"⁹² was generally the one to whom they prayed when work was sought. In Au milieu la montagne for example, when Florian found himself unemployed, Aurélie exclaimed: "'J'ai honte de ne pas avoir pensé à ça avant [...] à partir de demain matin, on commence une neuvaine pour que le père trouve de l'ouvrage.'"⁹³ In Le Diable par la queue, Amélie demonstrates her special affection for novenas as well. When, after several months without a job, Basile is still unable to find employment, his wife does not lose confidence in prayer: "'Faut pas trop s'en faire! La neuvaine n'est pas finie... On peut encore avoir des surprises!'"⁹⁴ Jean Pellerin adds: "La surprise fut que Basile passa tout l'été et tout l'automne sans ouvrage. Saint Joseph n'était décidément pas pressé..."⁹⁵ Like Flora Boucher in Au pied de la pente douce, there are many individuals

⁹¹Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 256.

⁹²Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 11.

⁹³Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 217.

⁹⁴Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 151.

⁹⁵Ibid.

who believe that a Just God would not leave their prayers unanswered without a just cause. Consequently, Denis' mother does not relent in her quest of an explanation for the failure of the Boucher restaurant, especially after she had invested so many prayers for the financial success of the enterprise:

Et Flora, qui veillait jusqu'à minuit derrière un comptoir désert, se demandait quelle idée le bon Dieu avait derrière la tête pour l'empêcher de prospérer. Elle mettait la faute sur Denis, qui n'avait pas fait la neuvaine pour la faillite du restaurant d'en face.⁹⁶

When one examines some of their declarations, one is tempted to assume that the working-class males are less devout than their wives. For example, Georges Ethier in L'Argent est odeur de nuit becomes exasperated with his wife because of her persistent appeals to prayer: "'Prier... prier: s'exclama-t-il presque en colère. Qu'est-ce que ça a donné jusqu'ici? Et puis, est-ce que c'est l'affaire des hommes de prier?'"⁹⁷ Tit-Blanc Colin in Au pied de la pente douce shocks his wife when he retorts: "'Aujourd'hui, on peut plus rien faire sans avoir le bon Dieu dans les jambes. Dans not'temps, Y étais pas si achalant que ça.'"⁹⁸ Rather than a lack of devotion, what statements like the above demonstrate is a profound sense of frustration which is an outcome of man's awareness that he does not have control over his own destiny. Even hardened alcoholics

⁹⁶Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 141.

⁹⁷Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 25.

⁹⁸Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 49.

like Gustave Lapiere in Autour de toi Tristan, when not directed by fits of anger, reveal themselves to be most fervent in their religious beliefs. For example, at church the morning after he had driven his daughter Marie-Marthe out of the house into a raging storm: "Gustave Lapiere tomba à genoux dans une ferveur qui le précipita, poings liés, en plein Confiteor. Les mots le transperçaient comme des balles et pourtant il s'en délectait, croyant y liquider ses torts."⁹⁹ Claire France emphasizes that Gustave is not a Tartuffe.

En réalité, sa foi l'empoignait dans la même violence que son vice. Il en usait inconsciemment comme d'un contre-poids, se justifiant de ne rien sacrifier à sa passion tant qu'il ne négligeait rien de ses pratiques religieuses.¹⁰⁰

Likewise, Tit-Blanc Colin in Au pied de la pente douce placed all of his faith in God when he was sober. He demonstrated the sincerity of his beliefs by his actions the day he was told that his son was dying of scrofula.¹⁰¹

Cet homme recourait à la chance de salut suprême, l'acte de foi merveilleux que savent avoir les plus durs à cuire de St-Sauveur: le pèlerinage à pied de Ste-Anne de Beaupré, sans halte, sans provision autre que l'espoir, et qui se décide quand on ne peut plus résister à la détresse.¹⁰²

Tit-Blanc's pilgrimage and his promise not to drink again

⁹⁹ France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 130.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "L'origine de la scrofule se trouve surtout chez les parents, les unions consanguines, la syphilis, l'alcoolisme [...]." Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 285.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 313.

if his son is cured are in themselves a source of comfort for him: "Cette explosion puérile de foi le soulagea.. Sa promesse était trop héroïque pour ne pas guérir un homme au moins."¹⁰³ It is apparent that the act of devotion itself is highly significant for the worker. Consequently, prayer contributes an important aspect to the traditional proletarian value of religion.

The important role of religious devotion and prayer in the life of the Quebec working class cannot be overemphasized. Not only does it reflect the worker's confidence in God, but also his preoccupation with the Christian concept of justice, and especially that aspect of it that dwells upon chastisement. It is common for workers like Georges Ethier in L'Argent est odeur de nuit to regard their state of abject poverty as a form of punishment inflicted upon them by Providence for past transgressions.¹⁰⁴ Family tragedies, and personal catastrophe as well, are often viewed as forms of castigation for misdeeds. For example, in Au milieu la montagne, Florian Malo views his son's death in the theatre fire as punishment inflicted upon the youngster by God for having been disobedient to his parents who had forbidden him to go to the cinema. Whereas Florian feels that "[Midas] a été assez puni comme ça par le bon Dieu,"¹⁰⁵ his wife

¹⁰³Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 313.

¹⁰⁴"Peut-être ses misères présentes étaient-elles la juste punition que méritait son peu de confiance en la Providence?" Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 15.

¹⁰⁵Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 27.

Aurélie "le voyait condamné pour des années au purgatoire pour expier sa désobéissance."¹⁰⁶ Notions of this nature flourished in the industrial milieu partially as an outcome of the frequent attempts of persons in authority to instill the fear of God in those individuals they wished to influence. In an attempt to change her husband's plans regarding the establishment of a restaurant that would be in competition with Gaston Boucher's enterprise, Féda Colin warns Tit-Blanc that Gaston could cast an evil spell upon them, and "le bon Dieu pourrait nous punir ensuite!"¹⁰⁷ The God of Love does not exist for the traditional worker, no more than He did for the peasant.

The Jansenist notion that man exists in a corrupt world compels the faithful to disapprove of worldly pleasure which, in turn, plays havoc with one's natural human instincts, feelings, and sentiments. Because the religious leaders never really came to accept the city, the concepts which stress the dangers of Epicureanism and the inevitability of moral decay constituted an important element in the religious education of working-class youth. Consequently, adolescents like Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne, when confronted by the natural desires that accompany the various stages of human development, manage to suppress them for a time, finding refuge in religious piety.

¹⁰⁶Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 27.

¹⁰⁷Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 49.

Plus le plaisir de Jacqueline augmentait d'être remarquée des hommes, plus elle était rongée de scrupules. [...] Pour se défendre contre ses propres pensées, elle s'enferma dans la ferveur religieuse. Chaque jour, elle priait la Vierge de lui donner la force d'éviter le mal. Sa chair naissante luttait avec sa volonté de résister. [...] La nature en elle semblait s'élever contre l'éducation donnée à coups de sermons et de menaces. [...] Alors elle priait davantage pour dompter les désirs désordonnés qui grouillaient au plus profond d'elle-même.¹⁰⁸

Generally, working-class parents recognize that they should play an important role in assuring that their children receive adequate and proper sex instruction. However, most are like Simon Tremblay in Autour de toi Tristan.

"Ses rancunes d'adulte contre une enfance janséniste ne le sauvaient pas du jansénisme."¹⁰⁹ As a result of his own inhibitions regarding sex, Simon became very anxious when he realized that his oldest son, Pascal, had entered the phase of development where sexual drives had to be reconciled with religious interdiction.

[Simon] savait leur aîné vulnérable et fier. Comment le mal le touchait-il? Aurait-il la force de le connaître et de le repousser; ou le seul instinct de le nier? [...] [Simon] savait bien au fond que ce n'est pas l'instinct, mais l'éducation qui pousse à nier le mal au lieu de se blinder contre lui. [...] La phase des découvertes apparaît alors comme une étape de curiosité malsaine. On confond la faute et la tentation, la prise de conscience et l'acceptation.¹¹⁰

Though it is an obvious exception to the rule, some authors treat the subject of sex and the proletarian humorously.

¹⁰⁸Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 55.

¹⁰⁹Francé, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 321.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 320.

such as patience and endurance, are as fundamental to the value of resignation as the human shortcomings that are characterized by acquiescence and surrender.

The most significant aspect uniting the impoverished traditional worker of the Depression era to his counterpart of more recent decades is "[sa] vie sans but, sans espoir".¹²² Like all the hapless mothers we have encountered in this chapter, from Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion and Rosa Ethier in L'Argent est odeur de nuit, to Amélie in Le Diable par la queue and Joséphine Lapierre in Autour de toi Tristan, Aurélie Malo in Au milieu la montagne, "pouvait se résigner à cette triste existence sans chercher à savoir si elle était heureuse."¹²³ Likewise, couples like Basile and Amélie in Le Diable par la queue, though they sporadically hope for a better life style, sense that they are forever trapped into a miserable existence, like prisoners in a cell, without any hope of escape.

"On pense toujours à la même chose. On est prisonnier de sa petite vie: une petite vie où il se passe rien de rien, t'entends, rien. On espère toujours que ça va changer. Vas-y voir! Hier ressemble à aujourd'hui, et, demain -- t'en fais pas -- y aura pas de miracle. [...] Pour nous autres, les quêteux, y a pas de surprise. C'est toujours pareil; c'est toujours triste; c'est toujours assommant!"¹²⁴

¹²²Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 286.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 48.

a godsend, "pour 'purifier' davantage notre foi, me disait-on."¹¹³ Indeed, as L'Abbé Bongrain in Au pied de la pente douce demonstrates, the clergy require more of the hapless worker than the courageous acceptance of misfortune. For example, Bongrain was very concerned about Jean Colin's attitude concerning his deteriorating physical condition because "le malade acceptait son malheur, fièrement, et l'idée de la punition de Dieu ne semblait pas s'y glisser."¹¹⁴ As stated by the priest:

Cet orgueil, ce mutisme sans partage dans la souffrance ne devenaient-ils pas le plus grand des péchés, le péché suprême de l'indifférence à un Dieu qui a soif de ceux qui souffrent, qui leur ouvre les bras?¹¹⁵

It is a fundamental religious precept that mental and physical pain is meted out by a Just God, either as a form of punishment, or as a test of one's religious faith.

Nevertheless, it is evident that many of the people who experience constant or severe pain are reluctant to surrender, even to God, the last vestige of personal gratification left open to them. Like Jean Colin, individuals often indulge in a kind of personal assurance, based upon an awareness one acquires of the capacity of human beings to endure whatever mental and physical torment that looms on the horizon. It is just such a sentiment that gave Jean the power to greet his impending amputation with confidence.

¹¹³Pierre Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique (Ottawa: Editions Parti Pris, 1968), p. 235.

¹¹⁴Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 310.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 311.

Il arrive que nous avons l'eau à la bouche à l'évocation de choses atroces. Tel était l'état fiévreux de Jean, qui'il imaginait avec une joie sanguinaire des scènes cruelles. Par exemple, il se plaisait à se voir étendu sur la table d'opération, sous le couteau. On attachait les veines les unes aux autres, le sang coulait, âcre et abondant. Le chirurgien, le visage attentif, tenait la jambe coupée dans ses mains, enflée et noir, la pliait avec une facilité qu'elle n'avait pas quand Jean l'avait. Ensuite, on enterrait ce membre, comme un mort-né. [...] Le malade eut une mimique protectrice. Il serait sympathique à ce membre tronqué, irait même le voir, murmurer quelques prières sur lui, le jour de la Toussaint. Un sourire sarcastique étira ses lèvres. Ce serait bien le cas de dire qu'il aurait des accointances dans l'au-delà et un pied dans la tombe. Quelle exclusivité: il serait ange, cadavre et homme vivant. Il arriverait à la supériorité par l'amputation. 116

It is significant that not only idealistic adolescent workers in quest of a social cause, but also mature women, like Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion, look kindly upon the acceptance of suffering. Rather than attempting to forget her daughter's ungrateful act for example, Rose-Anna,

préférerait penser à ce qui lui causait une si vive souffrance, au départ de Florentine. La seule chose qu'elle souhaitait, c'était peut-être justement d'être seule encore quelque temps avec sa peine et de la goûter, de là goûter, de la savourer jusqu'au bout. 117

Regarding physical pain as well, Rose-Anna Lacasse found inner satisfaction when she could muster up the courage to suffer in silence. She demonstrates her fortitude in the face of pain during the birth of her last child. Her

116 Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 311.

117 Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 314.

conduct leads the mid-wife to comment upon the immense courage she displays:

"Pas une plainte," songea Rosa-Anna. Qui donc avait déjà prononcé ces mots? Puis elle se souvint: c'était la sage-femme qui avait assisté sa mère. "Pas une plainte..." Rose-Anna se sentit plus près de sa mère, soudain, qu'elle ne l'avait jamais été. Une certaine fierté, une sorte de courage gonflèrent son coeur, comme si, étrangement, une force nouvelle venait de lui être transmise par le souvenir de la vieille madame Laplante.¹¹⁸

Rose-Anna Lacasse found a meaning in suffering: a sense of closeness to her mother which in turn boosted her courage and gave her renewed pride in herself.

During the Depression, the proletariat, more than any other sector of French-Canadian society, depended upon Roman Catholicism and the religious leaders for the fulfillment of temporal needs, as well as for spiritual salvation. The worker prayed for gainful employment in an attempt to acquire the means of providing for his family's requirements, and for the courage to endure the hardships that loomed large upon the horizon. He envisioned his God more as a dispenser of penance than an all-loving Being. Furthermore, his Jansenist leanings meant that human sentiment, as well as natural instincts, had to be suppressed. Also, human suffering was regarded with esteem, partially as a result of religious conviction, but also in consequence of a pressing human need to feel more courageous than the mediocre norm. Without a doubt, the worker's deep religious faith was the most significant factor in his successful

¹¹⁸Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 327.

struggle for survival during the dismal years which saw him cast in the humiliating role of society's oppressed victim.

Resignation is one of the most characteristic traditional proletarian values. As one might expect, religious faith plays a significant role in this value, so much so that it can be likened to the water which assists the worker in swallowing "son petit pain."¹¹⁹ Christian theology preaches quiet submission, not only to the will of Providence, but also to the human condition. The proletarian milieu is abundant in symbols bearing religious significance which remind the worker of the dichotomy that exists in society between himself and those who are more prosperous. Atop Mount Royal, Jean in Bonheur d'occasion, reflects upon the following: "Ici, le luxe et la pauvreté se regardent inlassablement, depuis qu'il y a Westmount, depuis qu'en bas, à ses pieds, il y a Saint-Henri. Entre eux s'élèvent des clochers."¹²⁰ Similarly, Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne sees Montreal as: "une ville divisée en deux, et au milieu, la Montagne, sa croix géante tournée vers l'Est pour rappeler aux petits gens que tout leur espoir est dans l'au-delà."¹²¹ Although the worker reveals himself to be naturally disposed to accept everything as inevitable and predetermined by fate, human qualities,

¹¹⁹Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 187.

¹²⁰Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 33.

¹²¹Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 64.

such as patience and endurance, are as fundamental to the value of resignation as the human shortcomings that are characterized by acquiescence and surrender.

The most significant aspect uniting the impoverished traditional worker of the Depression era to his counterpart of more recent decades is "[sa] vie sans but, sans espoir".¹²² Like all the hapless mothers we have encountered in this chapter, from Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion and Rosa Ethier in L'Argent est odeur de nuit, to Amélie in Le Diable par la queue and Joséphine Lapierre in Autour de toi Tristan, Aurélie Malo in Au milieu la montagne, "pouvait se résigner à cette triste existence sans chercher à savoir si elle était heureuse."¹²³ Likewise, couples like Basile and Amélie in Le Diable par la queue, though they sporadically hope for a better life style, sense that they are forever trapped into a miserable existence, like prisoners in a cell, without any hope of escape.

"On pense toujours à la même chose. On est prisonnier de sa petite vie: une petite vie où il se passe rien de rien, t'entends, rien. On espère toujours que ça va changer. Vas-y voir: Hier ressemble à aujourd'hui, et, demain -- t'en fais pas -- y aura pas de miracle. [...] Pour nous autres, les quêteux, y a pas de surprise. C'est toujours pareil; c'est toujours triste; c'est toujours assommant!"¹²⁴

¹²²Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 286.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 48.

The notion that: "quand on est né pour un petit pain, faut s'arranger pour avoir un petit appétit,"¹²⁵ forms the principal rule of conduct of all sensible first-generation workers.

A way of life which is lacking in hope, combined with fatalism, affects most areas of the worker's existence. In Le Feu dans l'amiante, Mme. Gingras displays the popular fatalistic approach towards death. When her son Marcel discloses that the union leaders have ordered that an autopsy be performed on Sylvain Brisson in an attempt to gain some insight into the cause of the frequent deaths in the asbestos industry, Mme. Gingras feels that the action is wrong.

"On meurt quand c'est son tour et qu'on est appelé dit la mère d'un ton de piété et de compassion. [...] S'il est bon catholique ton inspecteur, il devrait bien savoir qu'il faut se soumettre quand on est appelé." ¹²⁶

The widespread acceptance of death, especially under such questionable circumstances, is an example of the characteristic approach of workers towards most of the important aspects of existence. In Autour de toi Tristan, Gustave Lapierre demonstrates that his fatalism has rendered him insensitive, even to the abject poverty experienced by his family.

¹²⁵Pellerin, Le Diable par la queue, p. 187.

¹²⁶Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 64.

La pauvreté de sa maison ne l'affectait aucunement. Il l'affrontait comme une épreuve, rejoignant en ceci le fatalisme de son épouse. Pour lui et pour elle, une ribambelle d'enfants défendait toute anomalie, consacrait même toute misère.¹²⁷

Notwithstanding the dangers inherent in fatalism, the benefits of this approach to the worker of the Depression era must not be overlooked. In Au milieu la montagne, it is observed that:

L'ouvrier canadien-français, même sans travail, est rarement morose; il accepte, sans rechigner, sa condition, peut-être à cause de sa discipline religieuse. Il sait courber l'échine pour mieux porter sa croix. Ces gens ne semblaient pas saisir la profondeur de leur détresse. A leur place, Gilbert se voyait sombrant dans le plus hallucinant des désespoirs. Pour eux, cette adversité paraissait presque naturelle.¹²⁸

The fatalism which forms an important part of the traditional proletarian value of resignation goes a long way towards affirming that even the most destitute member of the proletariat can continue to live, if not with hope, at least without despair.

Patience is an important factor in the value of resignation, especially where interpersonal relationships are concerned. Alcoholism, to mention but one problem among many plaguing the proletariat, probably has the greatest potential to poison familial ties. Consequently, victimized wives and mothers, like Mme. Lapierre in Autour de toi Tristan, develop a fatalistic approach towards alcoholism:

¹²⁷France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 130.

¹²⁸Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 198.

Comme [Mme. Lapierre] avait le coeur fait aux épreuves et le caractère formé aux compromis, le vice de son mari lui semblait un tourment logique. Servile devant son destin, elle n'espérait pas le voir changer. L'alcool empoisonnait sa maison, mais cette menace lui était devenue familière, telle une infirmité qu'elle aurait eue à supporter sa vie durant. La religion l'aidait [...].¹²⁹

Others, like Aurélie Malo in Au milieu la montagne regard patience as the only suitable course to follow when the unemployed wage-earner seeks consolation in a bottle:

Depuis longtemps elle avait surpris son manège [à Florian], mais elle n'avait pas voulu l'exaspérer, et elle n'en disait mot. Elle avait vu trop de femmes qui, s'acharnant sur leur mari pour quelques verres, les avaient poussés à boire davantage. Si Florian aimait à prendre une goutte par-ci par-là, autant l'accepter, puisque de toute façon il boirait.¹³⁰

Patience, one of the positive aspects of the value of resignation, also has great potential in the area of promoting better human understanding.

Along with patience, endurance is a quality that is absolutely vital to the well-being of the worker since he has so little control over a wide range of factors that affect his daily existence. Endurance is the aspect of resignation that Julienne Lapierre most admirably displays. Claire France describes Julienne's character in the following terms:

Résignée. Oui; née avec cette obscure complaisance de certains êtres devant la misère. Elle allait son chemin les épaules courbées à l'avance. Si elle avait de l'énergie, c'était non pas pour se

¹²⁹France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 43.

¹³⁰Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 26.

défendre: pour supporter. Elle jugeait de sa vie à partir des épreuves et peinait en attendant les coups, sourdement satisfaite d'enregistrer des malheurs qui la délivraient de l'attente du malheur.¹³¹

Jean-Jules Richard concludes in Le Feu dans l'amiante that the colonizers of Quebec, be they profit-hungry industries or foreign governments, have had an easy time of exploiting French Canadians because of the latter's capacity to endure, and their desire to please.

Deux cents ans que les nationaux luttent contre l'élément anglais parce qu'ils se savent chez eux au Canada et deux cents ans qu'ils endurent par complaisance. LE DEFAUT DES CANADIENS, C'EST UNE QUALITE, C'EST LA COMPLAISANCE. [...] La complaisance c'est une disposition à s'accommoder aux désirs des autres. C'est le désir de plaire et en même temps la crainte de déplaire. On est tellement aimable qu'on se fend en quatre pour satisfaire tout le monde. On est tellement inquiet d'offenser qu'on se laisse manger la laine sur le dos. On nous a étudié et on nous comprend et ceux qui sont sans scrupules en profitent. Ils nous tondent et ils disent ensuite, en se moquant, qu'on est des arriérés.¹³²

The willingness to please on the part of the Quebecker has frequently been attributed to acquiescence: a quiet acceptance of conditions which cannot be changed.

There is a great leap from acquiescence to surrender, yet, when one thinks of resignation, one generally understands it in terms of giving up the struggle. Surrender is generally the first stage which the worker, who has fought all of his life to better his existence, goes through before despairing altogether. Florian Malo in Au milieu la montagne is typical of such a tragic figure.

¹³¹France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 43.

¹³²Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 233.

After many years of constant struggle, he surrendered to the harsh realities of his existence, and finally accepted what he was: a poor person.

A bout de résistance, docilement, il est allé de lui-même s'enregistrer pour toucher des secours. Sa vie est maintenant finie, son être maté. Il a dû se plier aux règles du jeu des hommes. Il est un homme fini. Cinquante ans. [...] Un homme fini avant d'avoir pu donner sa mesure. Sa vie, une vie ratée et sans possibilité de reprise. 133

Because the Depression and its aftermath spanned over an entire decade, many strong-willed unemployed tradesmen underwent the humiliation of the final surrender, like Florian Malo. They were among the least judicious members of their class.

The wisest workers were flexible enough to apply the different aspects of resignation to their particular situation. It is those for whom the value of resignation included the judicious belief in fatalism and patience, the courageous willingness to endure, and the valor to be acquiescent who did not have to undergo the humiliation of a final surrender. They had recognized the realities of their situation all along, and consequently, had already accepted those things that they could not change.

¹³³Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 314.

Notwithstanding the worker's propensity towards resignation, the sort of idealism which is based upon a concept of things as they should be, or as one would wish them to be, found a prominent place in the traditional proletarian system of values. Nationalist sentiment, for example, is based upon ideals which are grounded either in the negativism of Anglophobia, or, if the worker is a positive thinker, in the Francophile emotions that become rejuvenated in Quebec during times of crises. The Second World War was just such a period. The world conflict not only awakened the worker's nationalist conscience. It was viewed by many as a highly acceptable state because of the opportunities it opened up for the majority of those who were shackled to a drab, uneventful existence. Perhaps as a result of the renewed personal confidence that generally accompanied better employment opportunities, the union movement came to represent an ideal towards which much working-class effort was directed. Nationalist sentiment, the war, and the labour union movement are ideals in which the Quebec workers of the period under study closely identified.

Nationalist sentiment and the patriotic drive towards independence are applauded by the great democracies of our time whenever they apply to those of the Third World who have experienced colonial status for many decades and centuries. However, when similar movements flourish in developed countries, international good will hardly ever

extends to groups espousing a nationalist view. Few indeed are the country's allies who would support the aims of the ardent Canadian nationalist. Within the Canadian context itself, public reaction grows to hysterical proportions whenever Quebeckers are led to express their feelings regarding French-Canadian nationalism. Federalists from all walks of life, from Pierre Elliott Trudeau¹³⁴ to the editor of The Tremblay Report do their best to discredit the nationalist movement in Quebec. In an attempt to draw support away from Quebec Nationalism, the principal attackers denounce the movement as "a xenophobic retreat from the realities of the world."¹³⁵ However, closer scrutiny reveals that French-Canadian nationalism, rather than reflecting a fear and hatred of foreigners in general, is demonstrative of specific Anglophobic tendencies, counterbalanced by nebulous Francophile leanings.

In Les Plouffe, Denis Boucher understates reality when he claims that: "monsieur Plouffe n'aime pas les Anglais."¹³⁶ Théophile, one of the best examples of this

¹³⁴"A mon avis, les Canadiens français peuvent réussir mieux en évitant de se replier sur eux-mêmes et en luttant d'arrache-pied pour réussir comme c'est le cas pour les autres minorités, notamment les Juifs, qui ont réussi à se créer une place au soleil.

Il ne nous servirait à rien de nous replier sur nous-mêmes pendant que le reste du Canada va de l'avant nous laissant des centaines de milles derrière." Le Devoir, 17 X 67 as quoted in: Le Séparatisme? Non! 100 fois non! Paul Bouchart d'Orval, ed. (Montréal: Les Presses Libres, 1970), p. 15.

¹³⁵The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick, p. xvi.

¹³⁶Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 24.

traditional negative aspect of French-Canadian nationalism, carries his Anglophobia to the point of climax when he defies an episcopal decree which ordered that everyone who lived on the Royal Parade route fly the Union Jack rather than the provincial Fleur-de-lys during the King's visit to Quebec. To display the British flag was interpreted by ardent nationalists like Théophile as a sign of support for the military recruitment efforts of George VI. He had crossed the Atlantic in an attempt to persuade his Canadian subjects that the European conflict, which by the spring of 1939 was about to explode into full-scale war affecting all of Europe, was also Canada's battle. "Quand je dis [exclaims Théophile], que je suis contre les Anglais, je le suis pour tout le temps. Le roi comme les autres."¹³⁷ According to Lemelin, the close alliance which binds the bishop of Quebec to the British élite in this instance is characteristic of the historical relationship between the leaders of the two founding races.

Nos évêques croient, par cette association, assurer notre liberté et notre durée, quand, au fond, elle sert aux Anglais à nous garder les esclaves de l'Empire. Victime de sa sincérité et de son but élevé, notre Episcopat est donc la dupe des Anglais. Heureusement les braves curés de notre bas clergé, ignorants de ces subtiles tactiques, continuent de huer l'Angleterre et s'étonnent de voir notre admirable cardinal recevoir les souverains anglais à bras ouverts.¹³⁸

¹³⁷Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 162.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 211.

In his analysis of the conscription crisis of 1942, André Laurendeau supports the view that there was collusion between Cardinal Villeneuve and the British.

On se disait entre soi que le cardinal suivait la tradition britannisante de la hiérarchie québécoise; mais plusieurs évêques ne pensaient pas comme lui, et cela se savait. Le bas-clergé, dans son ensemble, réagissait avec le peuple. Le cardinal, lui, s'en sépara; c'était d'autant plus douloureux que, simple père Villeneuve, il avait jadis épousé la cause du Canada français, et qu'il agissait avec une parfaite sincérité. On le reconnaissait, mais un jour on ne voulut plus suivre ses conseils, dans un domaine essentiellement politique, donc libre.¹³⁹

Unlike the laity, the lowly parish priest was not at liberty to act contrary to his Bishop's orders. Consequently, perceptive parishioners like Théophile could see through the conduct of men like Father Folbèche, and he did not hesitate to make the priest answer for his political stance.

"Pensez-vous qu'un bon Canayen comme vous, un fils de cultivateur de chez nous, tous vous autres, les bons curés qui nous avez appris comment les-Anglais nous ont envahis, comment ils ont essayé de nous faire perdre la Foi, notre Langue, comment vous les avez combattus, comment vous nous avez conservés tels qu'on était, pensez-vous qu'un bon Canayen comme vous va me faire accroire qu'il est pour le roi des Anglais? Voyons! voyons! fit Théophile, bourru, clignant de l'oeil. Vous devez obéir, c'est entendu."¹⁴⁰

Unlike the clergy who had to obey orders, Théophile Plouffe did not betray his ideal. He clung to his Anglophobia. Had he known in advance the terrible price that would be extracted from him for remaining true to his ideal, he undoubtedly would have gone the way of his old friend, Father Folbèche.

¹³⁹André Laurendeau, La Crise de la conscription: 1942 (Ottawa: Les Editions du Jour, 1962), p. 64.

¹⁴⁰Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 163-164.

Not all French-Canadian workers claim to have a deep-seated fear for and a hatred of England. On the other hand, as Gabrielle Roy indicates in Bonheur d'occasion:

Tous ces hommes, même les plus durs, les plus taciturnes, aimaient la France. Il leur était resté à travers les siècles un mystérieux et tendre attachement pour leur pays d'origine, une clarté diffuse au fond de l'être, une vague nostalgie quotidienne qui trouvait rarement à s'exprimer mais qui tenait à eux comme leur foi tenace et comme leur langue encore naïvement belle.¹⁴¹

Raouï, the Frenchman in Autour de toi Tristan, is surprised by the Francophile sentiment that was prevalent wherever he travelled in Quebec. In a letter written to a friend in France, he remarks:

En réalité, ce n'est pas moi qu'ils aiment, c'est la France, une France d'ailleurs idéalisée, transposée, recréée, conservée; un pays qu'ils ont édifié dans une bonne foi cruelle et revendicatrice. Notre réalité ne détruira jamais pour eux ce pays-là. C'est idiot, mais c'est touchant.¹⁴²

Expressing surprise, André Laurendeau claims also that he had not expected his fellow countrymen from Quebec to react as they did to the fall of France in 1940.

Ce qui m'a le plus étonné alors, c'est la douleur morne des foules montréalaises. Je ne croyais pas que, pour elles, la France eut cette réalité. Or, durant quelques jours, quelques semaines, elles eurent l'air de porter le deuil. Elles étaient atteintes.¹⁴³

The author Claude Jasmin, who was only ten years old in 1940, remembers that on the day when Germany invaded France,

¹⁴¹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 263.

¹⁴²France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 240.

¹⁴³Laurendeau, La Crise de la conscription: 1942, p. 54.

"ici, ce fut un grand deuil. Mon père en parlait en s'excitant, je ne savais pas qu'il était tant français!"¹⁴⁴

In an analysis of the Francophile sentiments that touched the hearts of most Quebeckers when it was confirmed that France was indeed occupied by Hitler's forces, Laurendeau writes in La Crise de la conscription: 1942,

[Les foules] éprouvaient de la peine, de la déception, peut-être un peu de honte: car le nom français, dont elles se sentaient solidaires, était ébranlé. Plus tard, elles entendraient parler des faiblesses et des fautes de la France; ce qui domina en juin, ce fut la conscience de sa détresse.¹⁴⁵

In the French-Canadian worker's eyes, France experienced a tragic fall indeed, for throughout the centuries it had remained an ideal that resembled more the invincible France of Louis XIV than the modern European Republic it was. Also, Francophile sentiment was a significant factor in French-Canadian nationalism. It was feared by many that the patriotic movement in Quebec would be adversely affected by the war in Europe.

As a result of the possibilities that the Second World War inadvertently opened up in favour of the heretofore neglected worker, the world conflict was not opposed by all of the members of the proletariat. Gabrielle Roy states in Bonheur d'occasion that "dans ce quartier populaire [Saint-Henri], on s'était fait à diverses sortes d'émotions au sujet de la guerre; on s'était fait à

¹⁴⁴ Claude Jasmin, Rimbaud, mon beau salaud! (Ottawa: Les Editions du Jour, 1969), p. 48.

¹⁴⁵ Laurendeau, La Crise de la conscription: 1942, pp. 54-55.

l'indignation, à l'intérêt, à une opposition violente, à la révolte, ou à la peur."¹⁴⁶ For Azarius Lacasse, "[qui] maintient que cette guerre est pour la justice et le châtement,"¹⁴⁷ the conflict in Europe symbolized mankind's endeavors to achieve high social ideals. Consequently, he did not feel like a traitor to the French-Canadian cause when he asked groups of unemployed youth: "Ne trouvez-vous pas que c'est le devoir de la jeunesse d'aller se battre?"¹⁴⁸ Most workers, however, base their opinions of the war and related subjects upon sheer self-interest, like Ovide in Les Plouffe. After he abandoned the seminary, Ovide's principal concern in life was to marry Rita Toulouse. He had been rejected by the military, so his enthusiasm was bound up in the hope that someone with a good-paying job would soon be conscripted into the military service. He remarks to Rita: "Le type du magasin de disques est en parfaite santé. La place sera libre et je l'aurai. [...] Vendeur de disques, j'aurai un salaire pour me marier. [...] Et dire que c'est la guerre qui fait notre bonheur!"¹⁴⁹ Displaying rare insight for his decade, Jean Lévesque attributed North America's involvement in the conflict

¹⁴⁶ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 41.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴⁹ Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 423.

that culminated in the Second World War to the profit motive:

"Moi, je vois que des profiteurs. Regardez, depuis six mois seulement que la guerre dure, combien de gens déjà en profitent? A commencer par ceux qui se font une job dans l'armée. Une piasse et trente cennes par jour, c'est pas gros, mais assez pour en faire marcher en masse... Puis les gars des usines de munitions à c'et heure, vous pensez pas que ça fait pas leur affaire, la guerre? D'un bout à l'autre de l'échelle, c'est le profit qui mène. On est tous des profiteurs, ou si vous aimez mieux, pour ne pas nuire à notre effort de guerre, disons que nous sommes tous de bons patriotes."¹⁵⁰

Except for Lévesque who exclaims that: "'moi, j'ai pas envie d'aller tuer un gars qui m'a jamais fait de mal et qui peut pas faire autrement que de se laisser mener par ses dirigeants,"¹⁵¹ the Quebec proletarian of the 1940's who views war from a humanitarian point of view is rare indeed.

Like many other working-class mothers in Quebec, Rose-Anna Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion experienced what it was like to fear for the safety of a loved one who had gone overseas to do battle. Rose-Anna, who had never detested anyone in her life, found herself hating the Germans because of the anxiety they caused the mothers of soldiers who were fighting and dying to repel Hitler's forces:

[Rose-Anna] les connaissait bien soudain, toutes ces femmes des pays lointains, qu'elles fussent polonaises, norvégiennes ou tchèques ou slovaques. C'étaient des femmes comme elle. Des femmes du peuple. Des besogneuses. De celles qui, depuis des siècles, voyaient partir leurs maris et leurs enfants. Une époque passait, une autre venait; et

¹⁵⁰ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 42.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 41.

c'était toujours la même chose: les femmes de tous les temps agitaient la main ou pleuraient dans leur fichu, et les hommes défilaient. Il lui sembla qu'elle marchait par cette claire fin d'après-midi, non pas seule, mais dans les rangs, parmi des milliers de femmes, et que leurs soupirs frappaient son oreille, que les soupirs las des besogneuses, des femmes du peuple, du fond des siècles montaient jusqu'à elle. Elle était de celles qui n'ont rien d'autre à défendre que leurs hommes et leurs fils. De celles qui n'ont jamais chanté aux départs. De celles qui ont regardé les défilés avec des yeux secs et, dans leur coeur, ont maudit la guerre.¹⁵²

It was extremely difficult for the Quebec proletariat to consider the war in any light but a personal one. The reality of their dismal condition would not permit it. Actually, it was precisely because of their wretchedness that the Canadian Army succeeded in recruiting so many French-Canadian young men, for they saw starving in the streets as the only alternative to joining the military service.

During the decades under review, unionism was thought of by the worker as a panacea that could greatly enhance his lot. Many employees strove for the formation of a union, even when it aroused the antagonism of the employer. For others, involvement in the union movement meant forcing the "Syndicats Catholiques" to be more responsive to their legitimate demands. The ideal for the proletariat was to be so effectively organized as a class, that large scale exploitation by those in society who control industry and commerce would be minimized as much as possible.

¹⁵²Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 204-205.

It is significant that characters like Jules Lebeuf in La Bagarre should examine themselves and their fellow workers, and pose questions such as the following: "Pourquoi ces mines de chieñs battus? Pourquoi ne s'organisaient-ils pas? n'exigeaient-ils pas des salaires plus élevés?"¹⁵³ Just as fear is one of the motivating forces behind the traditional proletarian value of work, it is also the prime reason for the acquiescence of the worker.

In his reply to the above question, Bill Lafrenière states: "Voulez-vous que je vous dise, moué, les boys, quoi ce que c'est not'e trouble, baptême? Not'e trouble, c'est que, dzu premier jusqu'au dargnier, à commencer par moué, on chie dans nos culottes parce qu'on a peur de perdre nos petites jobs!"¹⁵⁴

However, even when workers of a particular enterprise were organized, they wielded very little power. This fact is demonstrated in the case of Théophile Plouffe who had been unjustly fired from his job as type-setter at "L'Action Chrétienne" because of his anti-monarchist views. Even the general strike that took place in sympathy with the handful of workers who had been dismissed subsequent to the support they gave M. Plouffe, had very little effect indeed, as indicated by Jos Bonefon at a worker's rally:

¹⁵³Bessette, La Bagarre, p. 124.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 126.

"La grève dure depuis soixante jours. Nous ne sommes guère plus avancés. "L'Action Chrétienne" refuse obstinément de se soumettre à l'arbitrage auquel nous avons droit. Et que fait le Ministre du Travail qui se doit d'imposer cet arbitrage? Il ne bouge pas. Il a peur. De qui? De qui? Pourquoi les lois ouvrières, les unions ne font-elles pas ce qu'elles doivent faire pour nous? Il est temps que nous redressions la tête, que nous fassions valoir nos droits." 155

Even though they belonged to a "syndicat" which was guided by laws, rules and procedures designed to protect their rights, the workers remained dependent upon a powerful social system that was not amenable to the proletarian cause. As was the case in the 1949 Asbestos Strike, the system refused to abide by the rules. It is described in Le Feu dans l'amiante how the mining companies only began to bargain in good faith when they were intimidated by the overwhelming public support won by the miners.

Because he feared that the large international unions might reorganize the miners, James Donahue, the chief executive of the Johnsonville Mining Company made several concessions in favour of his employees, claiming that, "on ne peut pas contrôler les Unions internationales comme les Syndicats Catholiques. Nous n'aurions pas le clergé de notre côté pour défendre nos intérêts." 156 It is further remarked in Le Feu dans l'amiante that the worker had attained so little despite his right to organize because all of the important segments of society were opposed

155 Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 271.

156 Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 93.

to granting him the right to self-determination:

Y a trois choses contre l'ouvrier dans la province de Québec. Il y a les compagnies avec leur grosse argent. Il y a le gouvernement. Il y a les curés. Pourquoi est-ce qu'y nous force à rester dans les Syndicats Catholiques quand on pourrait être dans les grandes unions et être protégés, si c'est pas pour garder le contrôle. Les curés nous amollissent, le gouvernement nous tient à la gorge et les compagnies nous saignent.¹⁵⁷

Realizing that he was more fortunate than the unorganized worker, the member of the "Syndicat Catholique" nevertheless criticized his organization for being anything but a perfect model of his ideal. All that the worker insisted upon was to be treated in a humane fashion; with just wages, civilized working conditions, and equitable treatment by the employer. All he received was that which the all-powerful system condescended to grant him: as little as possible.

The traditional worker is an idealist in the sense that his conduct is often based upon a conception of society as he would wish it to be. French-Canadian nationalism, especially when it is manifest in either Anglophobia or in Francophile sentiments is indicative of this trend.. The worker's outlook on the Second World War is idealistic as well, even when it is restricted to the opportunities that it offers the individual who is severely limited by his background. However, it is in the union movement where the traditional proletarian demonstrates a real striving to achieve his ideals. Most people need models that are

¹⁵⁷Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 52.

larger, than themselves to feel complete as human beings. The nationalist trend in Quebec, the Second World War, and the union movement furnished the workers of the 1940's and 1950's with the opportunities to experience that sense of vision that motivates one to strive towards self-determination.

The peasants who migrated to the urban centres and became the original Quebec proletariat were compelled by circumstance to modify the rural system of values they had adopted. For example, certain conditions dictated that the woman's role be appreciated more; hence, parental authority evolved out of the traditional peasant value of paternalism. The value of the family changed as well. Whereas it functioned as an agricultural unit in rural Quebec, in the city the family resembled an economic unit where the individual members could pursue personal goals without abdicating their responsibility to the weaker members of the group. The emphasis placed upon pride is an outcome of the worker's personal compulsion to maintain his self-respect, or regain the self-esteem he might have lost. As well as providing for the means by which he could physically survive, work was highly prized, not only in the sense that some jobs are more prestigious than others, but also because of the scarcity of any kind of rewarding employment during the bleak Depression era. Traditional Roman Catholicism, with its emphasis upon a Just God, combined with a profound belief in puritan ethics and the virtues of human suffering, found particular

application in the working-class ghettos where the misery suffered by the poor was everywhere in evidence. In close association with his religion is the traditional proletarian value of resignation, the most important aspect of which is the acceptance of what cannot be changed. The idealism that plays a major role in nationalism, in war and in the union movement also found a place in the traditional proletarian's system of values. However, even with these modifications, the traditional worker was ill equipped to deal with the complex urban situation, for he found himself burdened by a system of values which had come into being to enhance a peasant way of life that no longer existed for him. Indeed, one could view the traditional proletarian values in the same way that the worker looked upon the souvenirs he had brought with him from rural Quebec: "Ce qu'il reste de vivant dans une chose morte."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 125.

M. Hautecroix était fier de ses ancêtres, modestes hommes de loi venus au pays en 1663 et entrés dans l'histoire avec leur nom un peu bizarre et les traditions qu'il représentait. Un Hautecroix avait été élu au Parlement au lendemain de la Confédération, un autre avait été ministre. M. Hautecroix portait ce passé dans son regard, dans sa démarche, dans les coups de canne dont il faisait résonner le pavé.⁷

We have also included more recent arrivals in the category of the old bourgeoisie. One example is Théodore Miville, the late father of Laure and Thérèse Bouchard, because of his highly successful political career. His pompous likeness was captured in oils, and hung in the Bouchard study with La Brière. "Retiré de l'arène politique, l'ex-ministre, l'ex-lieutenant-gouverneur a terminé ses jours chez [Thérèse Bouchard]. [...] La distinction, la hauteur de Théodore Miville recouvrait une bassesse foncière [...]."⁸

It may at first seem absurd to talk of the old bourgeoisie when referring to families such as the Mivilles because their social prestige dates back only one or two generations. However, the term "old" is only relative, especially when one considers that Confederation itself is merely a little over one hundred years old. Furthermore, we are primarily interested in the standards that the Quebec bourgeoisie itself applies to the different elements that constitute the middle class, rather than in those distinctions that might receive universal acceptance.

⁷Robert Charbonneau, Aucune créature (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1961), p. 39.

⁸Savary, Le Député, p. 59.

sans ressources. Le petit peuple s'était replié sur lui-même, refusant de mourir. L'élite ayant fui, seul le curé possédait un peu d'instruction. On s'était tourné vers lui pour former des hommes. Priest ridden! Sans ces conseillers des heures noires, le petit peuple aurait sombré dans l'ignorance la plus complète.¹

During the years immediately following the Conquest, the clergy's traditional role as religious leader was broadened to encompass the social and political guidance of the vanquished French-Canadian peasant as well. It filled the void that had been created when the natural leaders abandoned their countrymen and returned to France. Until very recent times, the clergy formed the most important sector of the Quebec middle class. For convenience in this chapter, we shall distinguish this sector from the other middle-class elements by referring to it as the "bourgeoisie de robe".

The "bourgeoisie de robe" was instrumental in guarding the French-Canadian peasant against the conqueror's ambitious policy of assimilation. Employing the British strategy of isolationism, Quebec's clerical leaders of the nineteenth century sought to isolate the peasant from all foreign influence by vigorously promoting the policy of agriculturalism.

Cet isolement fut forcé dans la mesure où il fut imposé par un envahisseur étranger et il devint volontaire lorsque les Canadiens français décidèrent de se protéger de toute influence étrangère considérée comme étant corruptrice.²

¹Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 243.

²Tuchmaier, "Evolution de la technique du roman canadien-français," p. 58.

Although they were interested in nationalism, the primary concern of the clergy remained to direct their parishioners towards a spiritual salvation. By keeping the peasant isolated from worldly corrupting influences, he was also rendered more subservient to his spiritual leaders.

Due to the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, the parish priest is obliged to follow the policies laid down by the bishops. Often, especially when the policies dealt with nationalistic questions, the apparent interests of the higher and lower clergy did not coincide. Directives were received from the episcopacy which contradicted the philosophy of the parish priest and his parishioners. When he attempted to explain the bishop's orders, the curé's credibility was often challenged, as is the case in Les Plouffe, when Théophile defies curé Folbèche.

"Vous autres, nos bons curés, vous nous avez conservés et vous n'avez jamais changé de moyens. C'est simple: on a été, on est contre pis on sera toujours contre les Anglais. Avec les évêques, c'est toujours plus compliqué. Vous savez l'histoire du Canada par coeur. Rappelez-vous 1837. Les troubles. Vous autres les curés, vous étiez avec le peuple, vous nous cachiez dans les églises, vous vous battiez pour l'indépendance du Canada. Pis, tout d'un coup, bang! les évêques décident qu'on était mieux de rester fidèle à l'Empire britannique. Ça été la même chose contre les Américains. J'me demande pourquoi."³

The parish priest forms an extremely important segment of the "bourgeoisie de robe", for even though he is powerless

³Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 164-165.

on the one hand, he does exercise tremendous influence upon his congregation. As a result, he is often duped into becoming an instrument of power that is used by both the upper clergy and the politicians to maintain the control they have over society.

A further point of significance about the "bourgeoisie de robe" is the kind of men who make up this powerful segment of the Quebec middle class. Most of the parish priests come from peasant backgrounds. Though they were all aware of the material security that their vocation had to offer, their reasons for choosing the priesthood over the other professions were generally entirely honorable. Consequently, many found themselves in undreamed-of positions of power that often rendered them helpless because they had not been trained to cope with complex political and financial questions. A typical example exists in Les Vendeurs du temple, when the politically naive Alphonse Bossé finds himself a hapless tool in the hands of the episcopate and the local political leaders. Both of these elements aspire to make financial gains at the expense of his parish after oil deposits are discovered under large areas of the village. Yet, the same system also allows for ambitious men like Henri Simonin to attain a position of power with relative ease. Known as Father Hildebrand de la Croix, this son of a peasant from Saint-Michel had renounced his modest background in exchange for political power.

Au cours de ses études, Henri s'était rapidement rendu compte qu'il n'avait pas la vocation. Mais il savait qu'on s'attendait autour de lui à ce qu'il devînt prêtre. Le goût de l'instruction l'avait emporté chez lui sur l'honnêteté. Plutôt que d'avouer son peu d'attrait pour le sacerdoce, il avait joué la piété, il parlait sans cesse de son amour pour les âmes. Son premier mensonge, le premier maillon d'une longue chaîne. [...] A l'époque de sa théologie, il avait choisi d'entrer chez les récollets, décevant de tenaces espérances. Il avait compris qu'il trouverait plus facilement dans une communauté à assouvir son ambition. Cet irrésistible goût de la politique qui petit à petit l'a conduit à vendre ses frères. Un instant, pourtant, il avait voulu quitter le Séminaire, rentrer dans le monde qui l'attirait comme une inaccessible terre promise. Mais il n'avait pas les moyens d'aller à l'université; s'il ne persévérait pas dans la vie religieuse, il ne serait qu'un raté.⁴

Because the system that functions to recruit young men into the priesthood is socially all-inclusive, it allows the ambitious, dishonest, Rastignacs to infiltrate into the ranks of the ruling class. Just as the "noblesse de robe" during the Ancien Régime was formed of the bourgeoisie who were ennobled because of the functions they performed in society, the "bourgeoisie de robe" in Quebec was formed of peasant and proletarian men who were elevated to the bourgeoisie as a result of the social and political responsibilities they assumed as part of their clerical duties.

There are members of the bourgeoisie who can trace their peerage as far back as the Conquest. These we have termed the old bourgeoisie. However, many of them

⁴Charlotte Savary, Le Député (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1961), p. 177.

have long since lost their positions of prestige because, as previously noted, the élite of any importance had departed for France immediately after the Conquest. Madame Louise Bouchard in Le Député is one such person, as her niece, Lucille, remarks while examining the family portraits hanging in the Bouchard study:

Tout a commencé avec ce chevalier qui redresse fièrement la tête sous son heaume, Henri-Marie de la Brière, chambellan du roi Charles VII, pour finir à tante Louise. Si les La Brière sont restés au Canada après "la conquête", c'est qu'ils s'estimaient trop pauvres pour retourner en France. Leurs descendants ont achevé de se corrompre dans un monde qui n'était plus à leur mesure. Certains d'entre eux ont pactisé, se sont laissé assimiler par le vainqueur. C'est la branche "anglaise" de la famille dont tante Louise ne parle jamais. Les autres se sont retranchés dans un splendide isolement qui, peu à peu, les a réduits à l'état de cadavres. Le refus n'est pas un choix. Mais ceux-là sont la famille de madame Victor Bouchard [tante Louise].⁵

Although the name of La Brière had been reduced to "un souvenir historique"⁶, Louise had regained a position of respectability in the bourgeoisie as a result of her marriage to the powerful and wealthy Victor Bouchard. Unlike the humble Louise Bouchard, those who make a claim to the old bourgeoisie are often magniloquent in the crude flaunting of their pedigree. One such person is George's father in Aucune créature.

⁵Savary, Le Député, p. 98.

⁶Ibid.

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⁷Robert Charbonneau, Aucune créature (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1961), p. 39.

⁸Savary, Le Député, p. 59.

The third and final element of the Quebec middle class is the new bourgeoisie. Like the clergy, a majority of those in this category do not come from middle-class backgrounds. Lucien, one of the characters in Les Demi-civilisés observes that: "notre petite bourgeoisie est toute formée de déracinés. Il suffit de remonter à une ou deux générations pour y rencontrer le paysan. Tout le fond de la race est là."⁹ The members of the "new bourgeoisie" arrived socially because they chose to abandon the agrarian way of life of their ancestors, and either join a noble profession, or become clever businessmen. The one further criterion is the acquisition of prestige. This is generally accomplished either by amassing wealth or winning political power. Often, the degree of praise granted a member of the élite is commensurate with the amount of power and money he has acquired. Specific representatives of this group are too numerous to enumerate here. The majority of the people discussed in this chapter belong to this category. Indeed, we have used the terms old bourgeoisie and new bourgeoisie rather than the more frequently employed terms: "haute bourgeoisie" and "petite bourgeoisie", because it is common for the ambitious Quebecker to work his way up to the top of the social ladder in a short period of time. Consequently, it is more significant to separate from the new arrivals those elements which have belonged to the bourgeoisie for

⁹Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés, p. 152.

more than one generation instead of attempting to find any qualitative distinctions between them.

Many novelists view the neoteric nature of the Quebec bourgeoisie as a drawback to the cultural development of the province as a whole.

"Tu ne t'es jamais demandé pourquoi tant de misères intellectuelles et morales nous environnent, pourquoi l'éclosion d'une vraie culture est si lente chez nous, pourquoi notre bourgeoisie, qui nous tient lieu d'aristocratie, a acquis si vite la décrépitude et les vices des vieilles civilisations, sans en assimiler la science, l'art, la pensée et la tolérance?"¹⁰

Because a large proportion of the bourgeoisie can trace their heritage directly to the land, they are only little more than uprooted peasants, like the first-generation industrial worker. It is maintained that as long as the habitant lived close to the soil, he remained true to his personality and history.

"Prenez-les et essayez de leur faire une vie cérébrale, après leurs trois siècles d'atavisme terrien ou forestier. Vous faites d'eux surtout des égarés. [...] Instruisez maintenant ces hommes si près de la nature. Si vous n'êtes pas en état de les élever jusqu'à la plus haute culture et jusqu'à la plus forte discipline de l'esprit, vous faites d'eux une génération de ratés. Vous créez en leur âme un état artificiel qui, chez les vieilles races, serait considéré comme un acheminement, et qui, chez nous, n'est que trop souvent le terme de la formation."¹¹

Their education did not prepare them for the position of responsibility they occupy. This shortcoming does not emanate from the educational system alone.

¹⁰Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés, pp. 151-152.

¹¹Ibid., p. 152.

More particularly, it is the fault of the individual bourgeois who, having arrived socially, reaps the advantages of the position without accepting the responsibility for continuing the process of self-cultivation that is essential if the individual is to become more than a mere errant habitant.

"Plus de quatre-vingt-dix-neuf pour cent des Canadiens-[français] instruits sont des primaires. Après leur vingtième année, ils n'apprennent plus rien que la routine de l'expérience et ils ne pensent plus à rien qu'à ce qu'on leur a dit de penser. Ils s'atrophient. Vois-tu la gravité d'une telle solution? Notre élite, ce qu'on appelle sans ironie notre élite, porte fièrement sa petite provision de connaissances sur l'histoire, les moeurs, la philosophie et les arts du monde. On dirait un éléphant attelé à une brouette d'enfant. Comme toute nourriture spirituelle porte en soi des ferments de dissolution morale, c'est cette dissolution seulement qui agit sur nos pseudo-intellectuels. De là, chez eux, tant de signes de dégénérescence précoce."¹²

The contemporary novelists severely criticize the bourgeoisie for their lack of leadership in cultural and moral matters. Hence, before proceeding with a study of the traditional bourgeois values, it is essential that one survey the sort of treatment that the middle class has received in the novel. It is significant that the novelists who remain impartial regarding the bourgeoisie are rare.

There are authors who, when writing about the middle class, resemble closely the propagandists of the "roman de la fidélité",¹³ for their aim is obvious. Simply stated, it is to guard against the Anglo-Protestant influence of

¹²Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés, p. 153.

¹³See Chapter I above, page 11, footnote 10.

"Georges l'avait trompée, Serge lui serait fidèle. Georges l'avait quittée, Serge lui resterait. Georges l'avait bafouée, Serge la respecterait et lui serait soumis."²¹ Although Eugénie was capable of any act "pour conserver [Serge] son bien,"²² she was just selfless enough to be aware of what made her son happy, and she encouraged him to attain his goals. "Elle ne souhaitait que son bonheur, son bonheur en toute chose, rien de plus... pourvu qu'il le trouvât auprès d'elle bien entendu."²³ Until he met Véronique, Serge had obviously not been unhappy with all of the maternal affection lavished upon him. However, his relationship with Véronique made him realize that Eugénie's passion made a slave out of him.

Car il s'agissait bien pour lui d'esclavage et celle qui le tenait en servitude était à ses côtés, cruelle, à cause de tout l'amour, de toutes les attentions dont elle comblait sa victime.²⁴

This sudden realization came too late. Eugénie already had a firm hold over him, so much so that he was incapable of tolerating Véronique's rather mild recrimination of Mme. Dugré-Mathieu's bizarre conduct.

"Tout de même, Véronique, tu exagères. Ce n'est pas un geôlier, je ne suis pas son prisonnier. Elle m'aime beaucoup et moi aussi je l'aime, et je ne veux rien faire pour la contrarier."²⁵

²¹Filiatrault, Chânes, p. 14.

²²Ibid., p. 59.

²³Ibid., p. 113.

²⁴Ibid., p. 12.

²⁵Ibid., p. 56.

"Qui a empêché ces braves gens d'agir? Ce sont leurs chefs naturels qui leur ont lié les mains. Ces chefs n'ont pas trahi, non, mais je pense que les uns étaient comblés de faveurs, les autres, de craintes, les autres, de sottise. C'est ainsi qu'on nous a empêchés d'être les arbitres du monde. Aujourd'hui, nous sommes les parents pauvres de l'Amérique, et nous avons l'une des civilisations les moins vivantes de toutes les races blanches du globe. Nous payons cher notre loyauté. On nous console au nom de fidélité à la parole donnée; on oublie que cette parole nous fut arrachée de force."¹⁶

Jean-Charles Harvey feels that the élite uses Quebec's history as an excuse for not acting upon the prominent issues of the day:

"Nous en parlons trop, de notre histoire. Nous imitons les Hindous, qui arriérés, crasseux, miteux et ignorants, s'efforcent, par la lecture de vieux textes, de se persuader qu'ils valent les Européens qui les dominent et les bottent au derrière. Devant les Anglais et les Américains, qui nous dépassent par l'action, la fortune, les arts et la science, sans compter le bien-être et la force physique, nous allons nous cacher sous notre histoire comme des marmots humiliés sous la jupe de leur mère."¹⁷

In the final analysis, most authors would like to be proud of their middle class. Julien Pollender, the narrator of Robert Charbonneau's novel Fontile, expresses his feelings thus:

"Je souffre de ne pouvoir être fier d'une ville où la société est plus compartimentée que dans les romans les plus snobs, où l'esprit et l'éducation sont l'apanage exclusif de quelques familles, en un mot d'une ville qui jouit à l'extérieur d'une réputation méritée de vulgarité."¹⁸

¹⁶Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés, pp. 122-123.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁸Robert Charbonneau, Fontile (Montréal: Editions de l'Arbre, 1945), p. 13.

The generation of authors who wrote between 1940 and 1960, in a desperate search for intellectual guidance, looked up at their élite only to find a class of smug materialists, most of whom revealed themselves to be little more than wealthy, urban peasants.

In conducting a study of the traditional bourgeois values it is necessary to first consider the elements which constitute the Quebec middle class. These we have called the "bourgeoisie de robe", the old bourgeoisie, and the new bourgeoisie. It is also imperative to recognize that, even though the authors relate factual information about their middle class, few remain emotionally detached from the subject. As a result, it is to be expected that some negative tendencies will mark portions of the research data. Bearing this in mind, we have divided the traditional middle-class values into two broad categories. The first, which embraces two all-encompassing values is entitled: "The Exercise of Power." Power is the most important value because it gives the élite the ability to control others. Artfulness is exalted to the point of respectability when it is put to the task of consolidating power. We have given the title of "Conservative Tendencies" to the other classification because the predominant attitudes that are analyzed tend towards the preservation of traditions and institutions. They are also characterized by a resistance to innovation and change. In this category, security is the most cherished value. Although religion continues to play a

vital role in the daily life of the middle-class faithful, significant questions arise that are unique to this particular socio-economic group. Indeed, the exercise of power and the conservative tendencies which embrace the values of power, artfulness, security and religion have set the traditional bourgeoisie on the highest social plateau, apart from the other segments of French-Canadian society.

a) The Exercise of Power

Power ranks as the most significant of the traditional middle-class values because those in society who hold positions of authority, including the ruling élite, come from the bourgeoisie. In the context of the family, it is parental power, and how it is successfully exercised, that is considered important, especially by the men and women who are charged with familial responsibilities. The power of the clergy deserves special notice; not only because it dates back to the origins of French Canada, but particularly because of the exceptional nature of the authority that this influential segment of the bourgeoisie enjoys. Political power is a capital issue in Quebec, especially during the despotic Duplessis years. Although the power of money has not been exploited by the French Canadian to the ostentatious degree often displayed by Wall Street in New York, and Bay Street in Toronto, it is nevertheless a significant feature of this prominent traditional bourgeois value.

Because the parents do not have to labour to keep body and soul together, the parental authority which prevails in the working class does not exist in the traditional bourgeois situation. With the élite, the emphasis is again placed upon a single authority in family matters. However, unlike the peasant situation where the male is all powerful, in the middle-class milieu, the government of the family could fall upon either the male or the female head, but rarely upon both. If the woman is the dominant figure in a particular family, the control she exercises is generally an outcome of the sentiment of love that her dependants experience towards her. When the man is the authority figure, the influence that he possesses results from the respect that the members of the family show towards him. Instances do occur, however, where the above does not apply. Occasionally, either parent derives his power solely from the monetary hold he has over the family.

Examples of female domination in the middle-class family are much more frequent than in the proletarian situation. For example, Eugénie Dugré-Mathieu in Chânes, Huguette Letellier in Pierre le magnifique, and Lucienne Normand in Mathieu, are all either widows, or were abandoned by their husbands. Hermine Latour in Elise Velder and Pauline Lafleur in Le Calvaire de Monique dominate the family activities, the husband being

relegated to a position of insignificance in social matters due to his professional preoccupations. Monique Orr in Le Calvaire de Monique, plays the dominant role in raising her son because her husband, an Anglo-Protestant, abandoned his rights regarding Pierre's upbringing in a signed document which was a condition placed upon him by the Church before he was permitted to marry Monique. What little influence he might have had vanished after the accident which confined him to a wheelchair for the remainder of his life.

The woman acquires the power to influence the individual members of the family as a result of the bond of affection that she has created between herself and her loved ones. More often than not, the love which characterizes such relationships is considered by the authors to be defective in some way. Sometimes, the heroine is not even aware of the intense feelings that bind her to her beloved. In Mathieu for example, after many long years and the squandering of a considerable fortune, Lucienne Normand finally found the husband who had deserted her and Mathieu. Although he was dying of syphilis, she refused to commit him to a hospital. Despite the claims that she loathed him, Lucienne did not want strangers looking after her dying husband.

"Dire qu'elle croit le détester. Je serais curieux de peser la part d'amour qui entre dans sa haine. Une mauvaise sorte d'amour, si l'on veut, mais n'est-ce pas la plus fréquente? Cette sorte d'amour qui se résume par une phrase: Je t'aime, donc tu m'appartiens. Comme si un être humain pouvait appartenir à un autre... ." ¹⁹

The possessive relationship that exists between Lucienne Normand and her syphilitic husband is a typical manifestation of many mother-son relationships, such as the one that exists between Eugénie Dugré-Mathieu and her twenty year old son, Serge, in Chaines.

Eugénie is aware of the personal sacrifices she has made for the sake of her son.

"Je t'ai veillé des nuits. Pendant des nuits, je n'ai vécu que suspendue à ton souffle. Tu me prenais tout! Je t'ai tout donné, mon sang, ma chair... Plus tard, je t'ai consacré mon temps, ma vie, mes pensées, toutes ces inquiétudes que j'ai connues... tant d'inquiétudes... ." ²⁰

Eugénie's actions are not of an abnormal nature. What is irregular in her behavior is the intensity of her affection for Serge. Like Lucienne Normand who subconsciously feels that her husband belongs to her because she loves him, Eugénie looks upon her son as her possession. For her, Serge has replaced Georges, the unfaithful husband who had abandoned them both.

¹⁹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 314.

²⁰Jean Filiatrault, Chaines (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1955), p. 70.

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²⁴Ibid., p. 12.

²⁵Ibid., p. 56.

and values to the next generation. For characters like Judge Giraud, who conforms to a type that recurs in the novel, this desire is limited to a neurotic insistence upon high moral standards in the daily conduct of his sole descendant, Micheline. It is revealed in Evadé de la nuit that Giraud prohibited his daughter from displaying any affection in his presence. He demanded only her respect. The predictable outcome of such behavior was Micheline's complete estrangement from her father. An artificial situation is always created when the demand to be respected takes the place of parental affection, and oftentimes the results are disastrous. Jacques Langlet in Au delà des visages had never had a warm relationship with his father, although he always looked up to him with respect. "Pour commencer, il aurait dû me tutoyer," claims M. Langlet during the examination of conscience he conducted after he learned that his son had brutally murdered a prostitute without any apparent motive. 'Ce grand 'vous' nous a toujours séparés. Du moins, il ne nous a pas unis. Je ne savais pas lui parler. Je ne savais pas me mettre à sa portée [...]'³⁴

M. Langlet was not a tyrant. He easily obtained his son's respect because he had brought him up correctly. The question that is posed by André Giroux in an attempt to explain Jacques' savage crime, is the extent to which the young man's upbringing influenced his act:

³⁴ André Giroux; Au delà des visages (Montréal: Variétés, 1948; Editions Fides, 1966), p. 135.

[...] Marcel était l'aîné. De plus, au point de vue de la culture, de la distinction, c'était lui, l'as de la famille. Tout le long de son cours classique, chez les Jésuites [...] il leur avait fait honneur.²⁷

Hermine's chagrin is acute when her son falls in love with Elise Velder, a working-class girl without means. Even when every one of her ruses fail, Hermine does not concede defeat, because "Huguette et Olivier seraient sa revanche. Ils corrigeraient la sottise de l'aîné. Ils sauveraient la barque."²⁸

Some possessive mothers consider it a spiritual mission to guard their offspring against mistakes that are similar to the ones they had committed in their youth. In Le Calvaire de Monique, Monique Orr is such a character. She had come from an enterprising, strict, Catholic family which had moved to Westmount in the 1940's because of the social advantages that could be derived from living among the professional élite. Against her parents' wishes, she married Raynald Orr, an Anglo-Protestant. They were very happily married until their son Peter was born. Watching her son grow up, Monique became anxious, reliving her own childhood and adolescence through him. She realized the tremendous responsibility that had been placed upon her to protect him against the influences, present everywhere in their social milieu, that threatened to undermine the traditional values of French Canada. Her object in life

²⁷Robert Choquette, Elise Velder (Montréal: Fides, 1958), p. 116.

²⁸Ibid., p. 324.

was to guard her son against the error she had committed when she entered into a mixed marriage. When Peter revealed that he would marry Doris Flynn in a mixed ceremony, Monique was forced to concede defeat:

"Mais vois-tu, Peter, je désire de toute mon âme écarter de ta route les pièges qui ont fait mon malheur. Depuis que tu es né, je me suis accrochée à l'espoir de racheter ma vie par la tienne. Comprends-tu mon désespoir, si tu m'échappes?"²⁹

Monique had thought that her profound love for her son, despite her possessiveness, would give her the necessary power to influence him in his decision. But Peter's reaction is similar to her own conduct towards her parents years before. He married the girl of his choice.

La santé de Monique s'altérait à vue d'oeil. Elle n'arrivait qu'à grand'peine à prendre quelque nourriture solide. Accablée de migraines et d'étourdissements, elle ne fut plus en mesure de sortir dès les jours suivants et le médecin avertit Monsieur Orr que son épouse n'en avait que pour quelques semaines à vivre.³⁰

The deep depression that overcame Monique resulted from the failure she experienced in her life-long mission to save Peter. Rather than continue to exist as a powerless witness to his eventual suffering, she allowed herself to die.

There is always the temptation to interpret the mother's capacity to control as a mere symbol for the power that traditional society has upon those in quest

²⁹Geneviève de Francheville, Le Calvaire de Monique (Montréal: Fides, 1953), p. 117.

³⁰Ibid., p. 138.

of personal values. Such notions are particularly alluring in light of Sister Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère's study of the French-Canadian mother:

Les romans publiés depuis 1950 sont, pour la plupart, les œuvres d'auteurs encore jeunes. Par l'éducation reçue, par les valeurs spirituelles et intellectuelles en cours, par le style de vie déjà acquis, ils appartiennent au passé le plus conservateur. Ils ont subi, en même temps, le choc d'une civilisation technique qui envahit tous les domaines de la vie. L'adaptation est pénible et les limites d'une préparation inadéquate sont éprouvées douloureusement. Le besoin le plus immédiat semble être celui de la libération à l'égard du passé, libération qui ne signifie pas reniement. Dans ce contexte, les symboles de la mère prennent un sens collectif éclairant. L'image maternelle englobe, sans distinction, tout ce dont nous avons hérité avec la race: la foi, la langue, les traditions, et aussi les préjugés, le conformisme, certaines étroitesse d'esprit.³¹

Besides being symbolic, the power that the mother acquired as a result of possessive love is a social reality.

Because the phenomenon is so prevalent in French-Canadian society, contemporary authors apply it so that it can represent the traditional values that strongly influence the young generation of Quebeckers who, in their quest for personal values, find themselves chained to their traditions, like Prometheus to his rock.

Although the mother is frequently the dominant figure in domestic matters, there are important instances where the father commands in the family situation. However, his power is not an outcome of the strong affection that

³¹ Sainte-Marie-Eleuthère, "Mythes et symboles de la mère dans le roman canadien-français," Le Roman canadien-français, p. 204.

characterizes the woman's relationship with her offspring. The paternal ability to control is derived from the respect he receives in consideration of the position of authority he holds. Whereas the dominant mother reveals herself to be too possessive in her love, the father never displays enough affection towards the members of his family.

The deference that is shown to the male authority figure is generally devoid of the sentiment of love. Such a relationship exists between Micheline and her widower, father, Judge Giraud, in Evadé de la nuit. The ties that bind them together are sterile, because love does not exist in the monastic home. "Micheline le respectait, comme un de ses professeurs presque, mais elle ne l'aimait pas."³² In Aucune créature as well, the stern traditionalist, M. Hautecroix, ruled the entire family with an iron hand. "M. Hautecroix dominait tout. Et il était typique de leurs relations [familiales], pensait Georges, que sa femme eût profité de son absence pour mourir."³³ The obvious lack of familial affection that is evident in both of the above examples finds its roots in the patron's authoritarian desire to terrorize those under his charge into submitting to his wishes.

One of the most trenchant paternal ambitions involves the transmittance of one's customs, traditions

³² André Langevin, Evadé de la nuit (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1951), p. 142.

³³ Charbonneau, Aucune créature, p. 40.

and values to the next generation. For characters like Judge Giraud, who conforms to a type that recurs in the novel, this desire is limited to a neurotic insistence upon high moral standards in the daily conduct of his sole descendant, Micheline. It is revealed in Evadé de la nuit that Giraud prohibited his daughter from displaying any affection in his presence. He demanded only her respect. The predictable outcome of such behavior was Micheline's complete estrangement from her father. An artificial situation is always created when the demand to be respected takes the place of parental affection, and oftentimes the results are disastrous. Jacques Langlet in Au delà des visages had never had a warm relationship with his father, although he always looked up to him with respect. "'Pour commencer, il aurait dû me tutoyer,' claims M. Langlet during the examination of conscience he conducted after he learned that his son had brutally murdered a prostitute without any apparent motive. 'Ce grand 'vous' nous a toujours séparés. Du moins, il ne nous a pas unis. Je ne savais pas lui parler. Je ne savais pas me mettre à sa portée [...]'"³⁴

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³⁴André Giroux; Au delà des visages (Montréal: Variétés, 1948; Editions Fides, 1966), p. 135.

"Oh! je l'ai bien élevé [claims M. Langlet], je lui ai toujours donné le bon exemple [...], je lui ai procuré tout ce qu'exigeaient sa croissance physique, son enrichissement intellectuel, sa formation morale. Mais, je le vois aujourd'hui, je n'ai pas su créer cette atmosphère de cordialité, ce climat propice aux confidences, dont il avait sûrement besoin. J'ai souffert de cette sécheresse lorsque j'étais adolescent, et j'ai été trop bête ou trop timide pour en préserver mon fils." 35

* The deference that characterizes the middle-class father's relationship with those under his control gave him the ability to control their attitudes and behavior. However, at the same time, it impeded the growth of a desirable atmosphere of mutual trust that should be present if one expects internal and interpersonal conflicts to be resolved without placing an undue strain upon any individual member of the family.

When the mother dominates the domestic scene, the only persons who appear to be directly affected are the children who are engulfed in the sea of possessive love. When the father rules the family, the mother is severely hampered in her role. As we have already seen, the narrator of Aucune créature jocosely remarks that Mme. Hautecroix had profited by her husband's absence to die.³⁶ In family situations where the father actively pursues his role as the authority figure, the woman is always relegated to a place in the background. In a sense, she is symbolically dead. Because limitations are placed

³⁵Giroux, Au delà des visages, pp. 135-136.

³⁶Charbonneau, Aucune créature, p. 40.

upon her, the mother is often forced to vacillate between meekly defending her children from an overly zealous despot, to supporting her husband's decisions in the face of a familial confrontation. This situation often placed the children, as well as the mother, in an insecure position. Such a relationship exists in the Létourneau family:

Depuis longtemps les rapports d'Emmanuel et de son père se montraient corrects, polis, sans amitié. Quand à Mme. Létourneau, sa pauvre âme timide, aimante et faible avait si longtemps cherché à mettre ces deux êtres d'accord qu'elle était devenue comme un miroir qui reflétait avec excès la vivacité de son fils et la grave dignité de son mari. Elle allait des épanchements les plus enfantins à une soudaine raideur qui semblait vouloir exprimer la dévotion respectueuse dans laquelle elle tenait M. Létourneau et prendre parti pour lui contre toute opposition.³⁷

Madame Létourneau exemplifies the typical middle-class mother, who, because of her husband's uncompromising attitudes regarding his son's deportment, has been relegated to a position of insignificance in the family hierarchy.

A respected individual is one who is considered with some degree of reverence. The reasons for the esteem that the authority figure receives are many and varied. The middle-class father often owes whatever influence he might have upon his family to the respect that they offer him in recognition of the powerful hold he has over them. Marie-Claire Blais' sarcastic remark regarding respect in David Sterne is particularly applicable to

³⁷ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 114.

the present discussion: "Rappelez-vous [...], Dieu n'aime pas la douceur. La terreur ne se dompte que par la force. Il faut punir, châtier, humilier. C'est ainsi que le respect s'impose."³⁸

There is not any evidence of brute, physical force existing in the bourgeois family situation, at least not to the extent that we have witnessed it in both the peasant and proletariat classes. The power which the middle-class mother acquires is a natural outcome of the possessive love that she experiences for the beloved. In the case of paternal authority, respect is the device which affords one the ability to control others. The middle-class parents, because of their material affluence, do have another tool at their disposal. Like the traditional peasant who exercised complete control over the son who was to inherit the farm, the traditional bourgeoisie also had recourse to similar forms of coercion. In Evadé de la nuit, Judge Giraud's fanatical opposition to Micheline's affection for anyone, but especially for Jean Cherteffe, was built upon the erroneous assumption that she valued the family possessions more than Jean's love. When Cherteffe requested his permission to marry his daughter, the judge blurted out: "'Vous ne l'aurez pas, ma fille. Ou vous la prendrez galeuse, nue sur du fumier. Je la déshérite. Vous comprenez? Je la déshérite.'"³⁹ Judge Giraud

³⁸ Marie-Claire Blais, David Sterne (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1967), p. 103.

³⁹ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 200.

was aware that his daughter was expecting a child. He thought that by offering her rightful inheritance to "La Ligue de Décence", he was punishing Micheline for what he considered to be the gravest of sins. The League willingly accepted, leaving Micheline and Jean Cherteffe penniless. Ruth Villemure, the matriarch of La Hêtraie in Le Mauvais pain had devoted all of her energies to the management of the family estate after the death of her husband. In the process, she lost the affection of her children, Alain and Marthe. "Le patrimoine qu'elle avait sauvé aux dépens de son repos et de sa santé, elle saurait bien encore le défendre contre eux. Elle vivante, personne ne toucherait à l'héritage."⁴⁰ When Marthe fell in love with Patrice Beauche, who was from "une famille enrichie dans le commerce des bestiaux,"⁴¹ Ruth's suspicion was aroused. She imagined that Patrice was only interested in her daughter because she would share in the inheritance of La Hêtraie.

Un dernier souci hantait pourtant la veuve et la tenait agrippé à l'héritage familial: celui de soustraire, avant sa mort, une part de bien des Villemure aux visées ambitieuses d'une famille de parvenus.⁴²

⁴⁰Jean-Paul Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain - (Montréal: Fides, 1958), p. 18.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 17.

⁴²Ibid., p. 63.

After her heart-attack, she summoned Alain to her death-bed:

"J'ai donc décidé de faire de toi seul l'héritier du domaine. Quant à ta sœur, je lui constituerai une espèce de rente viagère, assez maigre, payable à même le revenu des terres. C'est encore plus qu'elle ne mérite."⁴³

Like the traditional peasant who had the upper hand as a result of the material possessions he could bequeath to whomever he wished, the traditional bourgeoisie could use threats of disinheritance to control the behavior of those under their control. Unlike the peasant situation, however, with the bourgeoisie the device is not always effective.

Not only is parental power a fundamental aspect of the traditional bourgeois value under discussion, it also bears some resemblance to both the paternalism one finds in the peasantry, and the parental authority that exists in proletarian families. There is generally only one authority figure in the middle-class family, a characteristic reminiscent of the peasant situation. However, as a result of the love that she stimulates in her descendants, the mother generally dominates the domestic scene, a phenomenon that is highly suggestive of the circumstances present in the working-class family. Although brute force does not appear to be a significant factor, other forms of coercion involving threats of disinheritance, play a role whenever the parent experiences serious difficulties in disciplining the offspring. The most astute parents

⁴³Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 85.

disregard the authoritarian notion prevalent in the middle class that strictness is a virtue, and have recourse to parental power only when the family situation is too grave to tolerate.

Until the early 1960's, the "bourgeoisie de robe" was the single most powerful element in the Quebec middle class. The clergy exercised complete control over the spiritual and moral aspects of the Quebecker's daily life. Before the recommendations of "The Parent Report on Education" were carried out, they also reigned supreme in the schools. The influence of this segment of the bourgeoisie is all-pervasive, affecting the private as well as the public conduct of most Quebeckers. In many instances, the "bourgeoisie de robe" can be applauded for the efforts that were made to lessen social injustice.-

There is a striking similarity between the domineering possessive mothers, and the parish priest who regards his parishioners as members of his family. Father Folbèche in Les Plouffe, demonstrated this side of his personality whenever he ventured out into the parish:

Enfin M. le curé [Folbèche] mit le pied dans la cour, sur laquelle il jeta le regard machinal et distrait du grand seigneur terrien qui fait semblant d'inventorier par habitude jusqu'aux coins les plus reculés de son domaine. Puis il atteignit le trottoir.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 67.

Because the upper clergy "laissaient aux curés les soins de la cuisine,"⁴⁵ as Father Folbèche puts it, there was a strong tendency among priests to become overly possessive and view the parish and everyone in it from a quasi-maternal point of view.

Sa paroisse: C'était une famille de plusieurs milliers d'enfants, à mesure de son rêve de prêtre, et dont il avait pris charge vingt-cinq ans auparavant. Il lui semblait les avoir adoptés et tenus tous au berceau, même les vieillards.⁴⁶

However, this trait did not undermine the strong leadership qualities that transformed the meekest curé into an absolute ruler whenever the occasion warranted it:

[Folbèche] dirigeait donc son petit troupeau à coup de dénonciations de lieux maudits et de moyens de rachat monnayés. En chef habile, il choisissait ses marguilliers comme un souverain ses ministres. C'étaient des hommes aimant assez les honneurs pour se plier au moindre désir de celui qui les leur avait donnés. La fabrique, c'était M. le curé. Comme il voulait, en maître absolu, montrer un caractère qui fût différent de tous, il avait fait siennes certaines petites étrangetés que les meilleurs organisateurs, avides de remerciements et de courbettes, nommaient d'atroces impolitesse. Quelles que fussent les sommes que ces organisateurs paroissiaux lui donnaient, il ne leur disait même pas merci. Et si parfois, quelque audacieux, affligé, le lui faisait remarquer, il répondait, les yeux au ciel: --Ce n'est pas moi, le bon Dieu. Là sera votre récompense. Et il montrait le commencement de l'église.⁴⁷

Along with his spiritual function, the administration of the parish and fabrique, the priest often claims guardianship over the moral conduct of his parishioners as well. The

⁴⁵Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 252.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 68.

⁴⁷Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 93.

parish priest whom André Langevin has left nameless in Poussière sur la ville, finds a true challenge in Madeleine Dubois. According to the moral standards of Macklin, a doctor's wife is ranked among the élite and is therefore denied the right to be unfaithful to her husband. The priest, determined to put an end to the scandal, confronts Dr. Dubois in the following terms:

"Je ne sais si vous le comprenez mieux maintenant, mais mon devoir est de mettre fin au scandale causé par votre femme. Je vous avertis loyalement que j'emploierai tous les moyens honnêtes, même si je dois vous forcer à quitter la ville. Tout le monde est au courant des agissements de madame Dubois et en parle. Et personne ne comprend votre attitude. Notre conversation ne m'a pas éclairé là-dessus."⁴⁸

As demonstrated by Dubois, one is inclined to accept such dogmatic behavior from a priest. Though he is incensed by the interference of a perfect stranger in what is essentially a family matter, the doctor cannot refrain from marvelling at the curé's zeal. "'Je l'admire un peu parce qu'il est humble, loyal. Il n'a pas pitié et ne comprend pas la pitié parce qu'il est de leur race à eux, dur, courageux et cruel pour les faibles."⁴⁹

The power bestowed upon the parish priest by the faithful is almost boundless. Father Folbèche in Les Plouffe, typifies the priest who does not hesitate to order his parishioners about, like a colonel would his regiment, even in matters that really should not concern him. To illustrate

⁴⁸André Langevin, Poussière sur la ville (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1953), p. 164.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 165.

this point, one need only consider Folbèche's behavior when he discovers that a protestant clergyman is living in their midst for the summer. Tom Brown is considered a threat because he fraternizes with some of the parishioners.

"Madame Plouffe a des ordres de ne plus laisser entrer cet homme dans sa maison. [...] Révérend Tom Brown! Et un Anglais, encore! Ça se faufile avec un petit air innocent dans de bonnes familles catholiques et ça leur met le doute au coeur. Ensuite c'est le désordre. [...] Je me demande à quoi pense le Cardinal pour laisser entrer ceux qui ne sont pas catholiques à l'Université [Laval]?"⁵⁰

What is sometimes alarming is that the parish priest has all of the tools necessary to enforce obedience at his disposal. In the Tom Brown affair, Folbèche accuses Denis Boucher of being the rascal who introduced the American clergyman to the Plouffe family. Consequently, when Denis asks him for a letter of recommendation, the sly priest, recognizing that he has retained significant power over the independent Denis, browbeats him into submission.

"Et c'est toi, un gars qui veut être reporter à 'L'Action Chrétienne', qui te fais ami avec un pasteur protestant et qui l'emmènes dans ma paroisse organiser un club de baseball! Et tu viens me demander une lettre de recommandation! Ou bien t'es un hypocrite qui m'as trompé ou bien t'es un imbécile!"⁵¹

Because it was the habit of employers to request a character reference of a prospective employee from his parish priest, the practice became a custom which enhanced the power of the curé over the congregation.

⁵⁰Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 72-73.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 72.

Until 1962, the clergy also had absolute control over education in the province of Quebec. The clergy in the educational ranks who had a reputation for being more interested in the art of teaching than in the traditional practice of preparing students for a religious vocation were unceremoniously compelled to follow orders. Brother Bernard, in Les Elus que vous êtes, was even refused the first time that he presented himself for his perpetual vows: "En bref, on m'accusait d'être plus enclin à la littérature qu'à la vie spirituelle, plus disposé à la critique qu'à l'obéissance."⁵² On the other hand, teachers could exercise excessive control over the lives of their students. In Lockquell's novel, Brother Bernard champions the students' cause, struggling to unleash them from the powerful hold that the warped traditionalists of the Collège Champlain have over them. Some of his colleagues were vehemently opposed, even to the suggestion that resident students be permitted one free afternoon per week in town. "Il faut qu'il y en ait parmi nous qui soient d'inguérissables refoulés pour imaginer que les rêves des jeunes n'ont pour objet que le sexe. On est plus freudien que Freud lui-même."⁵³ The clergy who were involved in education were, for the most part, traditionalists with a compelling Messianic drive to guard the youth of Quebec against the influences of a corrupt world. In so doing,

⁵²Clément Lockquell, Les Elus que vous êtes (Montréal: Les Editions Variétés, 1949), p. 82.

⁵³Ibid., p. 132.

they were also preparing them for a religious vocation.

The possibilities that exist in the teaching profession are almost limitless, especially when the instructor is energetic, forceful, and enthusiastic. As Father Hildebrand de la Croix realized early in his career, personal power is a natural outcome of the influence that a strong individual exercises over another. At one point in Le Député, he looks back upon the route that had led to his success in becoming one of the "gray eminences" of the Federal Liberal party.

Le père Hildebrand, le fils de paysans des Cantons de l'Est, qui a voulu oublier jusqu'à son nom pour n'être plus que le premier parmi ses frères, songe à la route qu'il a dû parcourir pour atteindre le but. La première étape: une salle de classe où il a su exercer son empire sur les élèves. Reconnu le meilleur professeur le supérieur lui a confié les grands; là, il a pu donner toute sa mesure. Il se souvient de ses adolescents avides de vivre, de trouver une cause à défendre, un chef à aimer. Lui, Hildebrand de la Croix, il a été ce chef. Il s'est fait aimer, il a soulevé l'enthousiasme. Alors, il a jeté en pâture à cette jeunesse, le nationalisme dont il avait été nourri.⁵⁴

When the power exercised by teachers like Hildebrand de la Croix is considered from a quantitative point of view, and when the high proportion of clerical teaching personnel is taken into account, then the indomitable control that the Quebec clergy exerts upon society becomes ascertainable.

⁵⁴Savary, Le Député, p. 20. In this context, Hildebrand de la Croix resembles the late Chanoine, Lionel Groulx, who became a rallying point for the Separatist cause during his own lifetime, especially at the University of Montreal where he held an enviable position in the Department of History.

Due to the large measure of personal power that they enjoyed within their own parishes, many priests lost all natural inclination towards humility and developed what could be described as Messianic tendencies, thinly disguised in the form of concern for their parishioners. Their illusions were unwittingly kindled by all segments of society. Remarkably enough, Maurice Duplessis had a hand in fanning the flames, especially with the celebrated slogan that was meant only for the ears of the Union Nationale candidates: "GAGNEZ LES CURES ET SACREZ-VOUS DU RESTE DE LA POPULATION."⁵⁵ Even the discerning curé Folbèche, in an amusing episode in Les Plouffe, deludes himself into thinking that he alone is responsible for saving Guillaume Plouffe from the clutches of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who had arrested him for pitching a baseball across the path of the limousine that carried the royal family. In fact, Folbèche was unable to make himself understood by the federal police because of his poor English:

A ce moment, un des détectives de la Police provinciale, assis à l'intérieur de l'auto, décida de sortir après avoir longtemps hésité devant l'intervention du curé Folbèche. Ce détective avait obtenu son emploi du gouvernement Duplessis, dont la sympathie pour le clergé et les nationalistes est bien connue. Le policier québécois eut un court colloque avec les membres de la Gendarmerie Royale, et M. le curé sourit en croyant comprendre que le brave Québécois expliquait aux colosses rouges qu'il serait imprudent, dans les circonstances, d'arrêter un Canadien français sans la permission de son curé.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Yves Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple (Québec: Institut Littéraire du Québec, 1951; Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1964), p. 33.

⁵⁶ Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 186.

Father Folbèche is deceived even to the point of imagining himself in the role of mediator in the struggle that exists in Les Plouffe between the strikers of "L'Action Chrétienne" and their employer, the Church. He fantasized that the bishops, who at that moment were fraternizing with the British heads of state, would come begging to him for help in putting down the revolt that was imminent.

Monsieur Folbèche les attendrait calmement dans son presbytère, les gradés, les chamarrés, les importants de la soutane et il les accueillerait avec un petit sourire supérieur quand ils viendraient le supplier de réparer leurs bévues, de calmer le peuple et de le ramener tout soumis dans le giron de la Sainte Eglise. 57

Like Alphonse Bossé, the curé in Les Vendeurs du temple, M. Folbèche perceives his role as the guardian of his flock, even when the menacing force is the upper clergy. In the case of Alphonse Bossé, he alone in the Church hierarchy was concerned with the welfare of the inhabitants of Saint-Léonide-le-Confesseur. The bishop had ordered him to move the parish cemetery so that the land upon which it was located could be expropriated to make way for a proposed highway. Naturally, the episcopacy would reap the financial benefits of the transaction. The soil samples taken at the site of the new cemetery revealed that there was an oil deposit extending beneath a large portion of the village. Contrary to the bishop's wishes, Bossé made no attempt to influence his parishioners into believing that the oil royalties rightfully belonged to the Church. He remembered

⁵⁷Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 252-253.

the cunning of the episcopacy concerning the relocation of the cemetery, and the words uttered by Pascal Lachance on that occasion reverberated in his head: "Mais contre les évêques, quoi c'est qu'on peut faire...? Même vous, monsieur le curé, ça m'a l'air que vous vous êtes laissé arranger dans l'affaire. Vous pendez au bout d'une corde, puis Monseigneur vous fait danser..."⁵⁸ In the end, Bossé proved worthy of the Messianic role of savior, for his parishioners retained majority control over the oil that was discovered.

Despite their powerful positions in the parish, the curés were very weak in the overall scheme of things as a result of their lowly place on the clerical ladder. For example, when Father Folbèche approached "L'Action Chrétienne" in an attempt to have Théophile Plouffe reinstated, "on lui avait presque dit de se mêler de ses affaires."⁵⁹ Time and the pressures of office had changed the once energetic, powerful priest.

Monsieur Folbèche était devenu un vieillard usé, au dos courbé et aux cheveux blancs. Même ses semelles de bottines n'avaient plus l'épaisseur du temps de 1935 quand son autorité sur la paroisse était absolue.⁶⁰

[Sa paroisse] le traitait de vieux démodé et prétendait user de la formation et de l'esprit catholiques pour se conduire elle-même. Elle avait lu les journaux, interprétait à sa façon la guerre d'Espagne et discutait les sermons, critiquait les prélevés sur les revenus que le père exigeait d'elle. Jusqu'aux marguilliers qui voulaient prendre des décisions!⁶¹

⁵⁸Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 72.

⁵⁹Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 252.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 459.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 69.

Like Thomas-Etienne Folbèche, Alphonse Bossé had learned a great deal from his term as parish priest at Saint-Léonide-le-Confesseur, a post that had been bestowed upon him when he was in his sixties "pour le récompenser."⁶²

De prêtre calme, il était devenu savant ès mystères de la vie moderne. Mais la leçon avait été plutôt négative. Toute candeur, toute illusion s'étaient enfuies de son âme. Illusion que la profonde honnêteté tant décrite et tant chantée du villageois et du paysan canadien-français! Disparue de son coeur la grande candeur envers la prétendue soumission aux Evangiles pratiquées dans son entourage! Diminuée la foi en l'autorité! Et s'il avait eu un respect quelconque pour la politique, le curé Bossé n'entretenait maintenant qu'un profond dégoût pour des administrateurs qui se servaient des permis d'hôtel comme d'une arme, des privilèges divers comme d'un appât. [...] Le curé se réveillait du cauchemar, moulu, le coeur troublé par ces visions qu'il avait entrevues de la vie telle que vécue. Lui qui s'était mis à l'abri de ces atteintes devait maintenant les garder en mémoire: vénalité, hypocrisie, cupidité, ruse, astuce, irrespect, audace, acharnement à triompher.⁶³

Alphonse Bossé had to make amends for supporting the rights of his parishioners in the oil deal. Because he had gone contrary to the interests of the episcopacy, he was removed as pastor of Saint-Léonide-le-Confessuer and named confessor in a cloister where there would be little temptation to take up similar social causes.

The parallel that can be drawn between the victimized member of the lower clergy, Alphonse Bossé, and the fall in 1950 of the powerful Archbishop of Montreal, Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau, is indeed remarkable.

⁶²Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 15.

⁶³Ibid., p. 210.

Although occurrences of the mighty toppling from their lofty positions of power are indeed rare in the literature of French Canada, one suspects that the reason for this scarcity is due more to a neglect on the part of fiction writers who have avoided the subject, rather than to the assumption that such events never occurred. The forced resignation of Joseph Charbonneau is a case in point. It was not a Quebecker but a Torontonionian, John Thomas McDonough who wrote the award-winning play: Charbonneau and Le Chef. It is vital that we take notice of this play, because the events surrounding Charbonneau's fall show that individual members of the French-Canadian upper clergy, regardless of how powerful they are, remain vulnerable to attack.

Contrary to all tradition, Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau, one of the most influential archbishops of Quebec, intervened in the stalemate that had existed for eleven weeks between the starving strikers and the Johns-Mansville Asbestos Company. In a dramatic sermon on Mother's Day, 1949, he appealed to all Christians to give material support to the strikers:

"We want the government and industry to respect the basic principles of justice and charity. We ask them to pay more attention to the human element, in work, and less importance to the interests of money."⁶⁴

⁶⁴John Thomas McDonough, Charbonneau and Le Chef (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 58.

His bid to win public sympathy for the strikers was overwhelmingly successful. Some of his colleagues in the episcopacy, typified in the play by Monseigneur Courtevue, were enraged by his dramatic appeal for social justice:

[Courtevue's] view of life is limited to the rural diocese of Rimouski, southeast of Quebec City, on the Saint Lawrence River. He thinks of the whole Church as simply one big farmer's community, to be governed completely by its absolute monarch the Pope, and its subservient feudal lords, the Archbishops. In principle he is opposed to all change and progress. He confronts Charbonneau by pounding his desk with his big farmer's fist, shouting at the top of his voice.⁶⁵

Courtevue prepares a one-hundred page memorandum for the Holy See denouncing Charbonneau for heresy, for being a dupe of the Communists, for causing a split in the Canadian Church, and for being hostile towards the "distinguished Catholic government"⁶⁶ of Maurice Duplessis. Courtevue is amply recompensed for his part in the conspiracy to depose the Archbishop of Montreal. The archdiocese of Rimouski is showered with government grants when news reaches Le Chef that Charbonneau has been ordered by Rome to resign.

On January 31, 1950, in the early dawn of a cold winter's day, [Charbonneau] departs from Montreal, carrying with him two well-worn valises and seventy dollars of pocket money. In Victoria he becomes a Confessor to the Sisters of Saint Anne, and Chaplain to the sick at Saint Joseph's hospital, where he takes up residence. Before long he is known by the people as Father Joe.⁶⁷

⁶⁵McDonough, Charbonneau and Le Chef, p. 62.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 119.

In any discussion of the power of the clergy in Quebec, it is not only essential that one portray the downfall of forceful parish priests such as Thomas-Etienne Polbèche and Alphonse Bossé. It is vital that one describe the disgrace suffered by members of the powerful upper clergy as well, for individuals like Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau demonstrate that even the mighty can fall.

Until recently, the politician in Quebec was respected because of his ability to affect the lives of those whom he represented. The novels studied demonstrate that middle-class individuals who become involved in politics do so because they aspire to a position of power. They include people who regard the ability to control others as demonstrative proof of personal greatness. They also include the "bourgeoisie de robe", which from the very beginning of French Canada was deeply involved in politics. Other groups and individuals with vested interests to protect, especially those who stand to profit financially from the economic growth of the province, become entrenched in the affairs of government.

The politicians who feel superior because of the function that they perform in society are often overbearing when they attempt to impress others. Jean-Hormidas

and his wife Marie-Elisabeth in Les Pédagogues are typical of this group. Whenever the Deschambaults entertained, they greeted their guests from the top of the staircase, thereby impressing upon the company that they were climbing up to the level of their hosts. When he was engaged in private conversation, Jean-Hormidas always remained standing, although he invariably insisted that his interlocutor be seated: "Il estimait que c'était de bonne politique de river ainsi ses visiteurs à un fauteuil pendant que lui, libre de ses mouvements, les dominait au physique comme au moral."⁶⁸ But the ability to dominate, along with satisfying a personal need for the many who wish to be great, was also regarded as a gift that one with strong leadership qualities was compelled to accept. The tyrannical M. Hautecroix in Aucune créature saw that his son Georges possessed the potential to influence others. Hence, he considered it his paternal responsibility to steer him towards a political career.

A cause de ces traditions, [M. Hautecroix] avait d'abord contrecarré le goût de Georges pour les lettres. Non que la littérature ne fût à ses yeux une grande profession, mais à l'étranger, disait-il. Ici, d'autres tâches s'imposaient: la politique, le journalisme.⁶⁹

The driving ambition to influence others is common to all the politicians we have examined, whether they entered politics for the prestige, or out of a sense of duty.

⁶⁸Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 164.

⁶⁹Charbonneau, Aucune créature, p. 39.

Officially, the Church in Quebec does not involve itself with politics. In practice, it is one of the most powerful forces influencing the provincial government.

Il y a deux puissances ici qui mènent tout: les politiciens et le clergé. Lesquels sont les plus forts? C'est assez difficile à dire. Parce que très souvent leurs intérêts coïncident. Et quand ils ont des différends, ça se règle presque toujours dans les coulisses. Le public n'en entend pas parler.⁷⁰

The close affiliation between the Church and the Duplessis regime is well documented. The ruthlessness of many of their combined efforts are vividly recounted in Les Vendeurs du temple, Charbonneau and Le Chef and several other works. Throughout the decades, the "bourgeoisie de robe" co-operated indefatigably with the politicians, effectively influencing every aspect of French-Canadian life. "Un évêque ça fait d'la politique au besoin. Puis ça aide au parti quand le parti a aidé le diocèse avec de bons octrois."⁷¹ In fact, many clergymen became politicians in their own right, and several can be criticized for allowing themselves to be ruled by personal ambition. One of the most guileful of these is the Recollet who plays a major role in Le Député:

[Hildebrand de la Croix] sait pourquoi il déteste Jean-Pierre Bouchard [le député de Carillon]; si on lui avait permis de choisir le monde, il aurait été député. La politique, même celle pratiquée dans les coulisses, est une drogue dont il ne saurait plus se passer. Elle lui permet aussi d'exercer sa vengeance sur ceux qui l'ont poussé à l'abîme. Durci dans son orgueil, Henri Simonin, devenu le père Hildebrand de la Croix, a insensiblement choisi la haine.⁷²

⁷⁰ Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 209.

⁷¹ Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 74.

⁷² Savary, Le Député, p. 178.

Because the "bourgeoisie de robe" is so actively involved in politics, individual clerics like Hildebrand de la Croix go about unnoticed in the practice of their insidious deeds.

Along with the clergy, there are others in the middle class who enter politics for the purpose of protecting their vested interests. Among the most reprehensible representatives of this group are those who enter politics for the single purpose of benefiting financially from their positions of trust. The idealistic Robert Bouchard in Le Député regrets that, for this reason, he cannot be proud of his family's involvement in government. "La politique pour les hommes de la génération de mon oncle n'est pas un art, encore moins une cause à défendre, 'c'est une industrie'."⁷³ Robert's father, Antoine, is a government lawyer. He has one uncle, Jean-Pierre, who is the member of parliament for Carillon. Victor, another one of his uncles, although he is not directly involved in government, is a lobbyist for several large British companies. Shady deals are often made between the three brothers. The government lawyer admits that "gouvernement et compagnies marchent la main dans la main."⁷⁴ Yet, he is anxious, constantly aware that any form of publicity would signal the demise of their convenient arrangement. Although their power is significant, the three Bouchard brothers realize just how unpredictable their ability to

⁷³Savary, Le Député, p. 164.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 37.

control really is.

Le Député is a significant work because virtually all of the characters are affected by politics in some way. The action revolves around a member of parliament who had originally entered politics to impress his wife. "[...]"⁷⁵ Jean-Pierre, profondément humilié par sa défaite conjugale, rêve de reconquérir sa femme. Il a cru l'éblouir par son siège de député, mais Laure ne pense qu'à ses fleurs."⁷⁵ Even though his wife remained implacable, he discovered personal satisfaction in his political career:

Le grand homme de Carillon ne saurait être le premier à Ottawa. En fait, il s'était vite aperçu qu'il n'avait gagné qu'une place au balcon, à l'exacte mesure de son siège de député. Mais, si modeste qu'elle fût, elle était son bien et sa fierté. La parcelle de pouvoir qu'il détenait, il la devait au scrutin, il n'en était redevable qu'à ses électeurs. Cela aurait pu durer longtemps si le père Hildebrand n'était venu enfoncer une porte solidement verrouillée. Sans ses frères qui voulaient passer dans le sillage du moine. Antoine, Victor, le récollet ont besoin de lui, ils vont le hisser sur le pavois pour mieux le dépasser. --Un instrument entre les mains d'habiles ouvriers...⁷⁶

Jean-Pierre's two brothers more than compensate for the ambition that he lacks. Antoine aspires towards a seat in the Senate. Victor, the powerful corporation lawyer, in a bid to comply with the wishes of the British companies who are impatient to see Canada become "une succursale de l'Angleterre: Son double en terre d'Amérique,"⁷⁷ drafts

⁷⁵Savary, Le Député, p. 31.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 26.

a bill amending the British North America Act. The amendment would transfer to the federal government the province's rights in the domain of public education. The Canadian Prime Minister (MacKenzie King) supports the move, and offers Jean-Pierre Bouchard a cabinet post to give more prestige to the bill that he would introduce in the Legislature. Because Jean-Pierre is reluctant to become involved in a betrayal of the French-Canadian national cause, Hildebrand de la Croix is called upon to convince him that he does not have a choice in the matter. Bouchard had accepted money in exchange for political favors. "'La politique et la guerre sont soeurs jumelles,'"⁷⁸ the Recollet warns, and Jean-Pierre has no recourse but to toe the party line.

"Ils vous chasseront de Saint-Etienne, vous ne trouverez pas de situation. Ils vous acculeront à la ruine en révélant vos malversations. Ils en inventeront au besoin. Vous ne les connaissez pas? Ils n'ont pitié de personne. Ils sont la machine, nous sommes les rouages. Ils peuvent nous briser tous!"⁷⁹

By 1939 the grave political situation in Europe preempted the presentation of the controversial education bill in the Legislature, but not before Jean-Pierre Bouchard had been publicly identified with it. The Prime Minister, realizing that the government would need "des gars de la province de Québec pour aller se faire tuer outre-mer,"⁸⁰ decided that the amendment to the B.N.A. Act would be dropped.

⁷⁸Savary, Le Député, p. 70.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 71.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 196.

Overnight, and through no fault of his own, Jean-Pierre Bouchard became an embarrassment to the government, as indicated by the Prime Minister in a conversation he had with Victor:

"Oui, le député de Carillon est pour nous un problème. Mais il comprendra que nous devons faire officiellement campagne contre lui. Un représentant du peuple dangereusement compromis est comme une branche morte, il faut la couper. [...] Nous savons récompenser discrètement ceux qui nous servent bien dans ... l'humiliation."⁸¹

As scapegoat, Jean-Pierre Bouchard was completely hors de combat. He had not only been dispossessed of his ability to control others. More importantly, he had lost the capacity to be master of his own destiny.

Il est le bouc émissaire de son parti après avoir été celui de sa race. On l'a leurré avec le mirage d'un portefeuille de ministre et celui plus cruel de la reconquête de Laure [sa femme]. Mais il n'a jamais possédé Laure, il n'a jamais rien tenu entre ses mains que la somme de ses illusions. Duperie du pouvoir, mensonge de l'amour.⁸²

The plight of the politician who is toppled from his position of power is often alarming. For example, as a result of the strain he had undergone, Jean-Pierre suffered a stroke that left him speechless and paralyzed. Nevertheless, the party still used him for their own selfish ends, especially at election time. His presence at political rallies enhanced the candidate's chances of success at the polls,

Car, maintenant, Jean-Pierre, le député tombé au champ d'honneur de la politique, fait figure de héros, selon les ordres des augures du parti. La gloire de Jean-Pierre Bouchard est mise à l'encan par ceux qui l'ont perdu.⁸³

⁸¹Savary, Le Député, p. 197.

⁸²Ibid., p. 206.

⁸³Ibid., p. 217.

The final portrait of the Deputy of Carillon demonstrates that politicians are highly insensitive towards those who suffer the misfortune of losing whatever political power they once possessed.

The power of parents over their offspring, the curés over their parishioners, and the politicians over their constituents is often subordinated to the power of money.

L'argent dans notre siècle ne domine-t-il pas toutes les valeurs, fussent-elles d'ordre intellectuel et même moral? Un petit monsieur quelconque a-t-il réussi, par des moyens honnêtes ou non, à acquérir quelque fortune; de ce fait, il devient un demi-dieu. Alors, on le comble, on l'écrase de déférences, d'égards de toutes sortes; on applaudit à tous ses gestes, on embrasse les causes qu'il défend, on voile ses indigences et ses torts d'un pudique vêtement. Puissance occulte de l'or!⁸⁴

Despite statements such as these, it is worthy to note that those professions, not recognized as particularly lucrative until very recently, continued to attract a majority of the career-minded in Quebec.

Si dans la culture anglo-canadienne le succès en affaires et dans les carrières techniques est considéré comme une valeur primordiale, il n'en est pas ainsi chez les Canadiens-français: d'après l'estimation commune traditionnelle encore largement dominante aujourd'hui (grâce au clergé), le sommet de l'échelle sociale au Canada français n'est pas occupé par l'homme d'affaires prospère ni par l'ingénieur, mais par le prêtre et celui qui exerce une profession libérale.⁸⁵

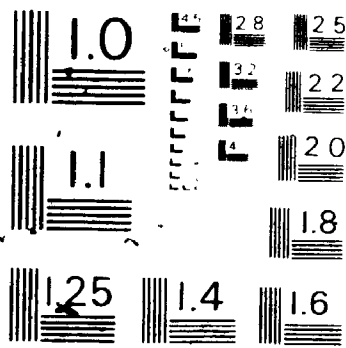
⁸⁴ Francheville, Le Calvaire de Monique, p. 14.

⁸⁵ Aileen Watts, Le Héros contre le milieu dans le roman canadien-français, de 1938-1950 Thèse de maîtrise ès arts inédit, Université McGill, 1954, pp. 155-156.

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Because the Quebec notables, until lately, retained their powerful influence over the masses, ambitious individuals interested in affecting the lives of others were presented with several avenues towards control, only one of which was the power of money.

Individuals often acquire a considerable amount of power over others when they are blest with a significant amount of money. Like Arthur Prévost in Poussière sur la ville, the assumptions made by those in the moneyed class regarding their own self-worth are often reinforced by those over whom they exercise control. For example, except for his wealth, Prévost does not possess extraordinary qualities. Yet, he is described as:

Un homme d'action qui ne souffre pas la détente et ne croit qu'en la rudesse. On le dit généreux. Outre son magasin, il possède une laiterie et une scierie. Après les propriétaires de mines, il est l'homme le plus important de la ville.⁸⁶

Because his behavior is reinforced by the milieu in which he functions, Prévost does not consider himself presumptuous in the least when he advises the Dubois of the social conventions according to which they are expected to abide while in Macklin.

"Tout ce que vous faites, vous et votre femme, est fait devant toute la ville. Il est impossible de faire une carrière à Macklin si l'on n'a pas une conduite irréprochable. Le moindre faux pas est commenté et grossi démesurément."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 129.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

Alain Dubois does not accept this kind of advice graciously. Nevertheless, as he discovers, Prévost can interfere in his private life if he wishes because of the money that gives him the power and authority over others. Prévost warns the doctor: "J'ai les moyens de vous briser! Je m'intéresse à vous, je vous aide, je vous mets en garde et vous le prenez sur ce ton. Nous nous reverrons, docteur. Et vous aurez peut-être la tête un peu moins haute."⁸⁸ Prévost remained true to his threat. He played an important role in the events which led to Madeleine's suicide. After her death, he lost interest in Alain Dubois and his private life. His only concern was to guarantee that he would be repaid the money which had given him the ability to control the lives of his victims.

The power of money, whether it be under the control of an individual or group, touches every aspect of French-Canadian life. Those who are opposed to the influence that accompanies wealth are particularly concerned with the destructive oppressor-victim relationships that seem to be a natural outcome of the adversary system propagated by a money-oriented society. As Victor Bouchard remarks in Le Député,⁸⁹ money means power and vice versa. In Poussière sur la ville,⁹⁰ it is shown how the power of

⁸⁸ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 172.

⁸⁹ "Il faut être puissamment riche pour lutter contre la banque d'Angleterre et les compagnies anglaises." Savary, Le Député, p. 29.

⁹⁰ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 180.

money ultimately destroyed the Dubois. Money also affects the actions of the worker in an employer-employee relationship. Mathieu Normand, for example, is prohibited from being intellectually honest in his film reviews. The dictum he received from the publishers of "Le Matin" is as follows:

"Faites le plus d'éloges possible de tout ce que vous voyez. Les annonces de cinéma sont une source de revenus qu'il serait regrettable de perdre pour le simple plaisir de dire la vérité. Le 'Matin' est un journal d'informations et non d'idées, tâchez de vous en souvenir." 91

Money is particularly important in an area of activity which preoccupies all French-Canadian authors: the arts. In Mathieu, Françoise Loranger gives an example of how persuasive a tool money can be, especially when it is manipulated by ambitious hands. Bruno Cinq-Mars, who had met with catastrophic failure in his first big drama production, was offered financial backing by Etienne Beaulieu to fund his next project. The condition that was attached to the offer, as he later discovered, was that Etienne's daughter, Nicole, be assured of a role in the radio serial.

La vérité lui sautait aux yeux [à Bruno]. Pressée d'exhiber ses talents, Nicole avait trouvé trop long d'attendre qu'il soit en mesure de monter une nouvelle pièce et se faisait offrir un programme radiophonique à seule fin de se faire décerner des rôles. 92

⁹¹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 160.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 76-77.

Of late, money has become one of the most powerful tools that an individual or group in society can possess, for it gives its owner the ability to control a wide spectrum of human activity which ranges from the personal to the professional behavior of those who fall under its spell.

The middle-class desire to control others constitutes the most significant traditional bourgeois value. In the family situation, power is present in the very special relationship that exists between the mother and her offspring. If the domestic scene is dominated by a male head, one generally discovers that inquietude over paternal authoritativeness accompanies the deference which the members of the family bestow upon the father. But power in the bourgeoisie is not restricted to the family situation. Important middle-class segments such as the "bourgeoisie de robe" and the politicians became almost omnipotent in the past, and, although many individuals from within these groups lost their positions of influence, the ability of the cliques to control Quebec society has remained intact. Money is an object which gives its owner significant control over the lives of others. Because, in this instance, the ability to apply pressure is dependent solely upon the possession of wealth, the danger of being toppled from positions of authority is less severe than is the case with the "bourgeoisie de robe" and the politician. Power is a necessary ingredient in a society that is based upon a system of control from above.

Because power is of paramount importance to the middle class, the tactics that are employed to safeguard it from incursions have attained respectability. The traditional bourgeois value of artfulness has received just such approbation. The prime characteristics of artfulness are duplicity and deceit, and the person who practices it is often cunning, shrewd, crafty, sly, and hypocritical. Some characters boast about their artful practices; however, their victims, both from within and outside the élite are generally critical. Ultimately, it is the author who is responsible for the condemnation of the value of artfulness, for as a member of society, he has often found himself in the humiliating role of one of its victims.

Most members of the middle class practice some form of artfulness in their daily lives. However, certain segments of society, such as the "bourgeoisie de robe", the politicians, the businessmen, and those in the professions deserve special attention for, in their bid to preserve the authority which they have acquired over others, they are more apt than the powerless citizen to practice duplicity and deceit.

Paradoxically, the spiritual leaders and moral guardians of society who are supposed to be honest and upright in all things, are most clever in the practice of artfulness. In Les Vendeurs du temple, the upper clergy manifests this

when they attempt to hoodwink the parish priest along with the parishioners of Saint-Léonide-le-Confesseur. Although Alphonse Bossé has been taught to place blind trust in the orders of his superiors, his innate common sense often calls into question the motives behind the bishop's dictums. However, his training does not permit the initial suspicions to take form, even when he is unexpectedly summoned before the bishop:

Insidieusement, un mot traversa la pensée du prêtre: politique. Mais il chassa cette coupable déduction. L'évêché ne se préoccupait aucunement des questions politiques! Son Excellence--et le curé se convainquit du fait--ne jouait pas le jeu des politiciens.⁹³

Bossé falls prey to the bishop's flattery. The scheme elaborated to swindle the parish of a large sum of money is presented in such a way that the priest cannot refuse to go along with it. "Votre paroisse deviendra un lieu de pèlerinage unique en son genre, car on y viendra observer la plus grande dévotion jamais encore surpassée dans nos rites religieux, celle du Chemin de la Croix."⁹⁴ Contrary to Bossé's naive notions, the bishop not only plays a politician's game. He is also deceitful, for he does not intend to finance the construction of a place of pilgrimage on the site of the cemetery at Saint-Léonide-le-Confesseur. He wants it relocated so that the land upon which it is situated can be expropriated to make way for the proposed provincial highway. Naturally, the profits would be

⁹³Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 16.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 45.

realized, almost in their entirety, by the episcopacy. As if it were not enough that he personally practice deceit, the unflinching bishop directs Bossé to conduct himself in a similar manner in front of his parishioners.

"Dimanche, à la messe, annoncez le transfert du cimetière. Donnez, si vous le voulez, une raison qui vous semblera acceptable par vos paroissiens et procédez à ce travail avant la gelée. [...] Au printemps, nous commencerons à ériger le Chemin de la Croix. A ce moment, et seulement là, serez-vous autorisé à annoncer la grande nouvelle."⁹⁵

Later, when oil is discovered on the proposed site of the new cemetery, "on demandait au curé Bossé la discrétion sur la trouvaille; on lui enjoignait surtout de conserver le secret vis-à-vis ses paroissiens."⁹⁶ Curé Bossé becomes a hapless party to the conspiracy. When the church wardens question him regarding the cemetery's relocation, he flatters them, and like his superior, he succeeds in evading all of their pertinent questions.

De plus, le succès obtenu cet avant-midi le réconfortait. [Bossé] s'étonnait lui-même d'avoir été si retors. Il lui en venait des remords confus cependant. Ce péché dont si facilement il accusait les autres, cette duplicité qu'il détestait, la pratiquerait-il?⁹⁷

It would be too easy for Thériault to absolve Bossé of all blame on the grounds that he was only following the bishop's orders. On the other hand, one cannot place all of the blame upon the episcopacy, for as Pascal Lachance reveals, the bishop was also under considerable pressure to initiate

⁹⁵Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 48.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 201.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 67-68.

the intrigue: "'L'évêque, même si ça lui chantait pas de jouer un pareil tour de salaud à nos bons supporteurs, bien le député Lanciault [...] y aurait forcé l'évêque à faire ça...'"⁹⁸ The kind of money-making project that is described in Les Vendeurs du temple cannot be pursued by honest means, for success depends almost entirely upon secrecy. In order to conceal the facts from the public, duplicity and deceit are practiced by all who are involved, including the clergy.

Because the "bourgeoisie de robe" are the spiritual leaders, they are trusted by the vast majority of the population. Consequently, it is relatively easy for them to succeed in artful schemes since they are expected to be above suspicion. In real life as well as in the novel, they invoked the Bible to support their arguments. Cardinal Villeneuve, during the conscription crisis of 1942, became an evangelist "pour la politique de guerre du gouvernement King,"⁹⁹ even though "il avait jadis épousé la cause du Canada français."¹⁰⁰ That he change his mind about Quebec's involvement in the war is tolerable, despite the suspicions one might harbour as to the reasons for his shift in position. However, the artful tactics that were employed to convince the Quebec population that their military participation was

⁹⁸Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 73.

⁹⁹Laurendeau, La Crise de la conscription: 1942, p. 64.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

in conformity with Divine intentions is deceitful. The Cardinal artfully infused the popular sentiment of Christian unity into the political propaganda of the day. In Les Plouffe, Roger Lemelin recreates the speech that the Cardinal delivered at the demonstration that was organized to protest MacKenzie King's policy of nation-wide conscription.

"Nous devons tous profiter de ces prières solennelles, proclamait le Cardinal, pour demander au Sacré-Coeur d'allumer en nous et de spiritualiser les sentiments du plus pur patriotisme, qui nous fassent ressentir les maux dont sont accablées les nations amies, et les dangers qui menacent toute la chrétienté. Le monde a besoin des richesses du Coeur de Jésus, surtout en ces jours où les idées les plus abstraites se font une lutte confuse. Il convient de condamner les esprits légers qui affaiblissent le sentiment chrétien du droit et d'une juste victoire, par leurs déclamations inconsidérées ou malveillantes à l'endroit des nations justes. [...] Potentat persécuteur et sacrilège, meurtrier des femmes et des enfants, Hitler représente la félonie et l'organisation du mal. Ses adversaires et ses victimes représentent le patriotisme et le droit. Le Pape, avec prudence, mais aussi avec une indomptable énergie, s'est prononcé publiquement contre l'audace barbare d'un homme qui ne respecte plus rien dans l'humanité. Il faut que l'on dise bien haut, à la face du monde et surtout de l'Adorable Sacrement du divin Coeur, que le drapeau des armées alliées est notre drapeau. L'Eglise ne bénit pas la guerre, mais elle bénit le glaive de ceux qui savent l'employer au bien. Nos alliés par les traités, par le sang et la langue, par la solidarité politique, ont le droit de compter sur nos vœux, sur nos prières, ET MEME SUR NOS SACRIFICES POUR ASSURER LEUR VICTOIRE." [...] Ensuite le Cardinal parla en anglais, mais la foule abasourdie ne comprenait plus.¹⁰¹

Many observers felt that Cardinal Villeneuve, like so many of the French-Canadian leaders who preceded him in history, unconscionably sold out to the Federal Government of Canada

¹⁰¹Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 442-443.

which, in the conscription debate, was little more than henchman for the British. One might ask why it is that such a significant number of the French-Canadian national leaders become turncoats at crucial moments in the province's history? Robert Bouchard in Le Député offers the following explanation:

"'Pour mieux nous asservir! Si nous étions libres, ils perdraient tout pouvoir sur nous. [...] Ce que je ne leur pardonne pas, c'est de nous vendre au nom de la morale et de la vertu. D'attraper les coeurs simples à leur glu. Travestir le visage de la vérité, est plus qu'un crime, c'est un acte immonde. Satan ne fait pas autre chose.'" 102

Artfulness is extremely important to the politician because in the normal course of government business many facts are concealed from the public. Duplicity and deceit are often employed by the people's representatives to evade reporters' questions. However, the same skills that are used to make governments run efficiently can also be employed for dishonest purposes. In Pierre de magnifique for example, we are presented with a situation whereby the Solicitor General, The Honorable Mr. Letellier, took it upon himself to cover up the subversive activities of his nephew Yvon, in an attempt to keep the family name intact, as well as to protect his own position in the government. Because Pierre Boisjoly obtained incriminating evidence against the youth, Letellier cunningly offered him an attractive position in his department, thereby facilitating the procedure whereby his movements could be continuously

¹⁰²Savary, Le Député, p. 183.

monitored without raising suspicion. Letellier even coerced his sister-in-law Huguette, who detests Pierre, to invite him to one of her receptions. The duplicity involved in the cover-up can be inferred from the Solicitor General's warning to his sister-in-law:

"Huguette, tu es trop nerveuse. Tu l'as promis, sois aimable. C'est très sérieux. Le Premier Ministre ne sait rien de cette affaire et je ne tiens pas à ce qu'il l'apprenne. Il y va de notre plus grand intérêt à tous. Ce Boisjoly est un garçon violent, mais très sensible, je te le répète. Il s'agit pour nous de l'endormir, de le flatter, jusqu'au moment où nous mettrons la main sur ce fameux négatif. Yvon s'est mis les pieds dans les plats, il s'agit maintenant de les lui en sortir sans que la famille en souffre. D'ailleurs, un intéressant téléphone a été intercepté hier après-midi. Nous sommes sur une bonne piste. Plus tard, je ferai de Boisjoly ce que tu voudras." 103

Lemelin has also written about the political jungles that frequently flourish in one's place of employment. For example, Théophile Plouffe was dismissed after twenty-five years of conscientious service at "L'Action Chrétienne", solely because he had refused to fly the Union Jack during a royal visit. The employers fabricated the lie that he had been relieved of his duties because of his age. Through the union spokesman, who was little more than a spokesman for the company, the opportunity was seized upon when Théophile collapsed at the microphone while addressing the assembly, to prove to the striking demonstrators that the man was indeed in ill health: "Vous voyez bien, mes amis, que 'L'Action' a renvoyé cet homme à cause de son âge. Et vous vous apercevez aussi comment

¹⁰³Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 199.

Artfulness is also esteemed by socialites of all ranks who like to blossom at social functions. The individual who can belittle and humiliate without displaying crudeness is considered to be polished and well-bred. On a less frivolous level, there are those like Emmanuel's father in Bonheur d'occasion who succeed in politely impressing upon anxious girls like Florentine Lacasse that he considers them to be socially inferior:

M. Létourneau la questionnait à son tour avec toutes les apparences d'un intérêt paternel; elle s'apercevait, et elle ne pouvait se défendre de s'en irriter, qu'il lui faisait avouer ce qu'elle n'aurait jamais voulu avouer. Et c'était comme s'il lui prouvait bien doucement, avec un sourire courtois et une grande amabilité, comme s'il lui prouvait au-delà de toute hésitation, qu'elle n'avait point de place dans cette maison. 124

Hypocrisy is often employed surreptitiously to obtain information that can later be spread as gossip. One of the most clever practitioners of this art is Madame Picard in Au delà des visages. She was the first member of the bridge club to visit Mme. Langlet after public disclosure that her son, Jacques, had murdered a prostitute. Under the pretext that she wanted to comfort the understandably anxious mother, Mme. Picard called upon the Langlets before going to meet her bridge club, where she intended to report what had transpired:

"Vous comprenez, comme vous toutes je brûlais d'en apprendre plus long, mais je n'osais pas attaquer le problème de front, ni questionner trop directement cette pauvre madame Langlet. Je préférais

124 Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 115.

Yet, blackmail is but one illegal method employed by some businessmen to achieve their goals. The double-dealing that goes on in high financial circles is examined in a revealing episode in Au milieu la montagne, when Léon Sergent, one of Montreal's most influential corporation lawyers, attempts to justify some shady business practices to his idealistic son, Gilbert. One of the companies that he represents changed its accounting procedures, the result being that: "[...] au lieu du déficit prévu, la compagnie des Produits Pinnacle va être en mesure d'annoncer un léger profit."¹⁰⁶ If the company were to announce a deficit, its stocks would drop drastically, and the directors of the company, who are among the largest shareholders, would suffer severe financial loss. When Gilbert points out that what the directors have approved of is generally called fraud, his father protests:

"Remarque bien que je pourrais te dire: admire le grand coeur du président qui pense aux petits actionnaires. Administrer en bon père de famille, dit le code... On cherche à sauver les marrons du feu, mais ce que je crains, c'est que plusieurs administrateurs sauveront leurs marrons d'abord, en liquidant leurs actions avant qu'il ne soit trop tard."¹⁰⁷

Because of the secrecy that shrouds many business transactions, it is natural that duplicity, deceit, blackmail, fraud as well as less dishonest forms of artfulness should flourish in the business community.

¹⁰⁶ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 177.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 179.

Artful financiers and powerful politicians came together to join forces with the influential "bourgeoisie de robe" and formed one of the most powerful political regimes that Canada has ever known, with Maurice Duplessis as "le chef".

"Vous vous êtes jamais arrêté à penser que pour gagner sur toute la ligne, notre chef, faut que les gros marchent avec lui? Quand il s'est agi pour lui de s'protéger contre les ouvriers, les bandits qui voulaient le mettre à terre par n'importe quel moyen,¹⁰⁸ jusqu'à s'infiltrer dans les affaires d'écoles, puis de professeurs pour aller corrompre l'idée des jeunes au sujet du parti, on peut-y dire que les affaires ont traîné en longueur? Non. Un voyage d'évêques et de ministres dans les Vieux Pays,¹⁰⁹ une p'tite exposition de piasses, deux ou trois menaces de couper les octrois... y'la tous les obstacles à terre, y compris un archevêque!"¹¹⁰

A political system came into being under the skillful leadership of Duplessis which permitted individuals like those characterized in Les Vendeurs du temple, Il suffit d'un jour, Pierre le magnifique, and Le Député, to engage freely in dishonest practices. Who is to blame for the corruption that is the inevitable outcome of such conduct?

"Oh, personne... Peut-être bien le système... Le système qui permet à un homme comme moi [Dr. Pigeon] de se mettre les doigts dans de pareilles combines. Et le système qui force d'autres, infiniment plus vulnérables, infiniment plus respectables, à des compromissions de ce genre..."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸Reference to the Asbestos Strike of 1949.

¹⁰⁹Reference to the denunciation of Charbonneau by politicians and clergymen to the Vatican.

¹¹⁰Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, pp. 73-74. The archbishop referred to is Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau, The Archbishop of Montreal.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 189.

Such a system thrives upon two distinct but related features. One is the secrecy which keeps many government and business transactions hidden from public scrutiny. The second is the granting of favors, for:

"On ne peut pressurer constamment pour obtenir des faveurs sans un jour s'exposer à payer de retour. Cela crée des tolérances qui s'expliquent mal, des supports incompréhensibles et des alliances qui font frémir..."¹¹²

The Church, the business community, and the politicians have created a system of government which promotes the interests of a few in the upper echelons at the expense of progress for the whole of society.

Artfulness also prevails in professional situations, such as the teaching discipline, as Gérard Bessette discloses in Les Pédagogues. Favoritism and political influence are often the rule. For example, Arsène Morin who speaks a very poor "sous joual" received an appointment in the French department of l'Ecole Pédagogique, "uniquement parce que son frère connaît le ministre."¹¹³ Politics often enters into important discussions such as the termination of a teacher's contract, often with long-lasting adverse consequences for the individual involved. To take the example of Paul Marcotte, the Selection Committee at l'Ecole Pédagogique refused

¹¹²Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 189.

¹¹³Bessette, Les Pédagogues, pp. 9-10.

to consider his appointment because, a year earlier, he had been dismissed from l'Ecole Supérieure Ste-Anasthasie. Although the Selection Committee believes Sarto Pellerin who insists that "'ça n'a rien à voir avec la compétence. Il s'agit de sales considérations politiques,"¹¹⁴ they remained implacable regarding teachers like Marcotte who concern themselves with social issues, because they pose a threat to the status quo. As well, the criteria used to award faculty promotions are as unjust as those that exist for hiring and firing. "Les avancements s'accomplissaient selon des normes capricieuses, imprévisibles. [...] Les bonnes relations avec le principal, l'appui d'un politicien, les bonnes grâces d'un commissaire comptait infiniment plus [que la compétence]."¹¹⁵ In other areas of a teacher's professional life as well, subtle tactics are used by those in positions of authority to make the ostensibly democratic process function in favor of despotism. Cyril Arbour, who was director of the school, often used trickery to get what he wanted at faculty meetings: "Telle était bien la tactique de Cyril Arbour: pérorer ad infinitum afin d'épuiser la résistance des conseillers, qui votaient ensuite n'importe quoi."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 19.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 52.

It should not be assumed that artfulness is a value which applies exclusively to the "bourgeoisie de robe", the powerful politicians, the financiers, and the members of the liberal professions. It is also practiced with great finesse in the family, as well as in a great variety of social situations.

In the family, the predicament of an illegitimate birth has historically been considered just cause for misleading the public, as well as the child, about his real origins. The emphasis placed upon the evils of the flesh in Quebec makes this a frequently practiced kind of deception, especially among the more influential members of the bourgeoisie. In Il suffit d'un jour, Dr. Edouard Boudeux and his sister Jeanne fabricated a story to conceal the identity of Elisabeth's natural mother, who had been a prostitute with whom the doctor had had an affair in his youth. Everyone, including Elisabeth, thought that:

[Jeanne] avait un frère qui était mort dans un accident de la route quelques mois avant la naissance d'Elisabeth. Il suffisait de dire qu'il s'était marié secrètement aux Etats-Unis, où il avait émigré, et que sa femme était morte à la naissance de l'enfant. Le reste allait de soi: Jeanne et Edouard faisaient ce qu'on pouvait attendre de bons chrétiens: ils adoptaient Elisabeth après l'accident.¹¹⁷

It is imperative that the respectable middle-class family project an image that reflects its position in society. Consequently, in Poussière sur la ville, when Alain and Madeleine Dubois reveal themselves to be individualists, Arthur Prévost, the curé, and other leading citizens band

¹¹⁷Elie, Il suffit d'un jour, pp. 80-81.

together in an attempt to force the new arrivals to abide by established social decorum. Arthur Prévost lends Dubois money to get established in a medical practice, stating that: "[...] Je suis un vieil ami du docteur Lafleur. Il vous estime beaucoup. Alors, j'aimerais que vous réussissiez. Le docteur Lafleur se fait moins vigoureux. Macklin a besoin d'un jeune médecin."¹¹⁸ However, Prévost is only interested in Dubois' success if it means that he can influence and control the doctor's behavior. He feels that since Dubois owes him money that he has earned the right to offer advice on almost any topic that strikes his fancy.¹¹⁹ When Madeleine's liaison with Richard Hétu threatens to get out of hand, Prévost and the curé intimidate Richard until he submits to their will, since all attempts to make Madeleine see reason had failed. However, their object was also to teach the young doctor a lesson:

Mais c'est Madeleine qu'ils ont atteinte le plus cruellement. Le curé, Arthur Prévost et d'autres personnalités. Si on a demandé au docteur Lafleur d'intervenir, je sais qu'il s'est refusé. Le curé a fiancé hier Richard Hétu à une jeune fille qu'il a déniché je ne sais où. Un homme énergique le curé. Il ne perd pas son temps. C'est Thérèse qui m'a appris la nouvelle. Il semble que Richard ait longtemps vu cette jeune fille avant de connaître Madeleine. Mieux encore, elle est nièce d'Arthur Prévost.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 51.

¹¹⁹ For example, Prévost tells Dubois that "des hommes comme vous et moi ne boivent jamais à l'hôtel." Ibid., p. 133.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 180.

Frequently, artfulness is employed by one member of the family against another. In Elise Velder for example, Hermine Latour slyly organizes a dinner party "[pour] mettre en relief Suzanne Paré,"¹²¹ in an attempt to make her son Marcel realize that Elise Velder was not meant for a man of his elevated social status. "Tout avait été prévu et fonctionnait avec une régularité d'horloge. [...] Rien ne manquait, sauf le naturel, chez sa mère; sauf la sincérité."¹²² Yet, not all of the trickery that goes on in the family situation is as well-intentioned as Hermine Latour's. In Mathieu, for example, Nicole, who has a burning desire to become an actress, is unexpectedly applauded by her husband Albert, who had not shown any interest in her artistic aspirations until it suddenly struck him that there were advantages that he could reap as a result of his wife's association with a group of actors. "Les artistes ne représentaient à ses yeux qu'une classe de gens reconnus pour la légèreté de leurs moeurs, parmi lesquels un homme habile devait pouvoir recruter des proies intéressantes."¹²³ Regardless how well-intentioned it might be, the artfulness practiced in many households has contributed to the breakdown of the traditional nuclear family, because the cohesive bond that links one individual of the group to the others, honesty, is lacking.

¹²¹Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 80

¹²²Ibid., p. 177.

¹²³Loranger, Mathieu, p. 71.

Artfulness is also esteemed by socialites of all ranks who like to blossom at social functions. The individual who can belittle and humiliate without displaying crudeness is considered to be polished and well-bred. On a less frivolous level, there are those like Emmanuel's father in Bonheur d'occasion who succeed in politely impressing upon anxious girls like Florentine Lacasse that he considers them to be socially inferior:

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¹²⁴ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 115.

lui témoigner ma grande sympathie, confiante qu'elle finirait par s'ouvrir à moi. Rien à faire. Elle est comme folle et ne cesse de répéter: 'Non! Non! Ce n'est pas vrai!'"¹²⁵

Mme. Picard's hypocrisy is surpassed only by her lack of loyalty to the woman who had been her friend. By way of an apology to her bridge club, she discloses that it was only out of kindness that she remained with Mme. Langlet as long as she did: "'Vous pouvez être certaines, chères amies, que seule la charité chrétienne m'a fait rester là une heure. Autrement, je serais partie tout de suite. Surtout qu'il n'y avait pas un mot à lui sortir de la gorge!'"¹²⁶ Mme. Langlet, fully aware of the artful purpose of Mme. Picard's visit, retained her instinct for social survival despite her emotional state.

For some, social survival means more than a position in society. In Au milieu la montagne, we are introduced to Valérie, "la Wagnérienne"¹²⁷ who in her youth had carved out a career in New York as a singer and courtesan. Millionaires had bought her expensive gifts, roles in operas, and trips to Europe. However, as Gilbert Sergent reveals, Valérie's social position declined as each succeeding year chipped away at her courtesan beauty:

¹²⁵Giroux, Au delà des visages, p. 75.

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 76-77.

¹²⁷Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 272.

"Son temps avec les hommes étant fini, elle s'est tournée vers les femmes en quête de vedettes. Quelques-unes, dont ma mère, l'ont aidée à monter une école de chant qui a vite périclité. [...] Aujourd'hui, elle en est à ses dernières ressources. Elle compte sur des dîners comme ce soir pour manger à sa faim. Et même ça sera fini, si son histoire, telle qu'on me l'a contée, se découvre. Quelle fin de vie lamentable, la fin qui attend toutes les vieilles courtisanes!" 128

"Artfulness is also utilized by certain ambitious members of the other two classes to gain entrance into the bourgeoisie. Ly Laroudan in Ils posséderont la terre is representative of many proletarian and peasant girls who scheme to win the affection of influential young men, as well as their hand in marriage. In Ly's case, it is the Wilding family which is opposed to her liaison with Edward.

Madame Wilding ne permettra jamais à son fils d'épouser Ly Laroudan. Pourtant celle-ci ne doute pas des sentiments du jeune homme à son égard. Elle songe à la possibilité de partir avec lui, mais le scandale tombé, la famille aurait beau jeu de se débarrasser d'elle. Sauf, s'il était trop tard... Elle se rappelle comment une petite paysanne connue d'elle avait mis l'étudiant qu'elle aimait dans la nécessité de la prendre en mariage. 129

Artful ruses are frequently employed in social situations: to humiliate people who are considered socially inferior, to obtain defamatory information that can later be put to malicious use, to secure one's position on the social ladder, and finally, to gain entrance into the bourgeoisie.

¹²⁸Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 273.

¹²⁹Robert Charbonneau, Ils posséderont la terre (Montréal: L'Arbre, 1941; Fides, 1970), pp. 159-160.

The traditional bourgeois value of artfulness generates distrust in society. Suspicion is particularly evident between members of the different classes, especially when the question of marriage arises. In Au milieu la montagne for example, Mme. Sergent infuriated Florian and Aurélie Malo when she accused their favorite daughter of being, "[...] seulement une enjôleuse qui couche avec mon fils pour l'accrocher."¹³⁰ Mme. Latour in Elise Velder displays a lack of trust in her own son when she exclaims, in an hysterical outburst, that Marcel would never think of marrying Elise were she not pregnant. Because the remark threatens to alienate her from the rest of the family, Hermine attempts to retract it: "J'ai parlé avant même que l'idée ait pris consistance. J'ai dit ça parce que c'est courant, cette sorte de chantage, de la part de jeunes filles ambitieuses."¹³¹ Hermine's inadvertent unveiling of a deep subconscious thought is particularly significant, especially since it reveals that a high degree of suspicion is unavoidable between the bourgeoisie and the rest of society as a result of the traditional bourgeois value of artfulness.

Marriage is not the only means of entry into the bourgeoisie. An ambitious farmer or worker can become accepted with the aid of someone who already

¹³⁰Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 305.

¹³¹Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 183.

belongs to the middle class. For this reason, outsiders with influential friends are often suspect. In accordance with this observation, Huguette Letellier in Pierre le magnifique heaps scorn upon Pierre Boisjoly, her son's rival:

[...] Et quand l'abbé Lippé salua Pierre, [Huguette Letellier] pinça les lèvres. Elle se décida enfin à lui dire: "Vous vous ménagez des amitiés en haut lieu, Pierre Boisjoly? C'est fort habile. Continuez. Vous irez loin, dans le clergé, s'entend. Tout à l'heure je dirai à votre mère de ne pas s'inquiéter de votre avenir." 132

The distrust that characterizes bourgeois attitudes towards individuals of the other social classes is also present in many middle-class relationships. This is evidenced by the rapport that Alphonse Bossé maintains with Dr. Pigeon in Les Vendeurs du temple:

Il avait toujours existé un état de malaise entre le docteur Pigeon et le Curé Bossé. [...] Depuis que le docteur Pigeon, par quelque déséquilibre subit de sa conscience était devenu organisateur pour le parti politique occupant la dictature à Québec, le curé Bossé était doublement craintif. 133

Bossé's nervousness regarding the doctor is founded upon an awareness that duplicity and deceit are commonly practiced by politicians in an effort to influence the voters. Oftentimes, suspicion adversely affects the behavior of individuals like the sceptical M. Hautecroix, Julien's father in Fontile, "[qui] était impitoyable pour les maladresses." 134 Mistrustful of everyone, as they .

132 Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 17.

133 Thériault, Les Vendeurs du temple, p. 33.

134 Charbonneau, Fontile, p. 25.

were of him, "il ne voulait être obligé de personne. Il accablait ses amis par le faste de ses réceptions, mais ne savait pas accepter un cadeau."¹³⁵ M. Hautecroix's lack of trust is reflected in his cynicism about others, even to the degree that he could not believe that a person would offer him a gift without wanting something in return. Because he often practiced duplicity and deceit in his daily conduct, Hautecroix felt that everyone else must be motivated by like considerations.

Artfulness as a mode of conduct has taken great strides towards respectability because the powerful élite feels that it needs it to preserve the control that it has acquired over society. Because the "bourgeoisie de robe", the politicians, the financiers, and the professional people have more to lose than the less significant members of the community, they figure among the most habile in artful practices. However, artfulness also exists in the family, and it is practiced in many social situations.

b) Conservative Tendencies

Along with power and the artful practices employed to preserve it for themselves, the bourgeoisie is also very concerned about the internal and external

¹³⁵Charbonneau, Fontile, p. 24.

forces that threaten to disrupt the status quo. Hence, like the traditional peasantry and the proletariat, individual members of the middle class strive for that elusive state of being free from care and danger which we have termed personal security. As a group, they are more conscious of class security than either of the other two socio-economic designations. Also, their sense of national security is more highly developed than the peasant's notion that the province is secure as long as the land remains under the control of the French-Canadian peasant. How is the state of being free from danger realized for the individual, the bourgeoisie as a class, and for French-Canadian society as a whole? Security is attained by the wise application of power, by augmenting one's material possessions, by acquiring social status, and by maintaining one's traditions and the status quo.

A kind of personal security is experienced by those middle-class individuals who find themselves in control of the fate of others. However, a high proportion of the bourgeois rank and file possesses very little influence to effect change, even in their own lives. Yet, they feel secure because, unlike their counterparts in the other social groupings, they know that the élite takes decisions which promote and enhance the privileges enjoyed

by their class. The bourgeoisie is also confident that Quebec's security is safeguarded as long as the well-educated and powerful social leaders watch over the relationships that unfold between Ottawa, foreign countries, and their own province. As outlined in our examination of power, there are striking examples of some seemingly invulnerable leaders who are toppled from their supposed secure perches. Nevertheless, it is generally recognized that the wise application of power and security frequently complement each other by generating a sense of freedom from doubt about the future.

It is frequently suggested that the Great Depression is partially responsible for the compulsion which many people experience to accumulate material wealth. Indeed, most members of the traditional bourgeoisie view personal security in terms of their tangible possessions. In Le Député, Robert Bouchard expresses his contempt for this compulsion in the following terms:

La fausse sécurité des "vieux", ce besoin vital de ne pas voir l'évolution du monde, de s'enfermer dans un camp retranché pour sauvegarder ces "valeurs". Les valeurs! le vocable hypocrite qui recouvre le mot "argent", le dissimule mieux que le plus solide des coffres-forts. Le grand vice du capitalisme c'est sa secrète connivence avec l'argent: dieu, roi et pourrisoir.¹³⁶

Like Robert, the young idealists must stand alone, and silently gather enough courage to reject the emphasis that those who care about future prosperity place upon

¹³⁶Savary, Le Député, p. 51.

material security. All too often, whenever long-range decisions affecting the future are made, those who are caught up in a desperate search for personal security place materialistic incentives above all other equally important considerations.

Material security is often of prime concern when the question of marriage is discussed. In Maryse, the heroine's aunt "[qui] vivait avec l'argent que lui avaient laissé ses deux maris, et comptait probablement sur le troisième pour augmenter ses rentes,"¹³⁷ had already found the perfect husband for her fifteen year old niece: "Gérard était un homme intègre, dévoué, consciencieux, en un mot le mari parfait pour une jeune fille sérieuse."¹³⁸ The romantic young Maryse dreamed of love, whereas "la tante n'avait jamais aspiré à plus que ça: un mari, une maison, des enfants."¹³⁹ Like Maryse's aunt, Julien Dollender's step-mother in the novel Fontile "[...] favorisait secrètement [son] inclination pour Armande. [Son] mariage avec sa nièce eût réalisé son rêve de fortune pour les siens."¹⁴⁰ The traditional bourgeoisie approves of the marriage of convenience as an honourable means of attaining material security.

Idealistic young people of affluence generally do not think in terms of security during their formative years.

¹³⁷ Dielle Doran, Maryse (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960), p. 52.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁴⁰ Charbonneau, Fontile, p. 132.

However, as they mature, materialism becomes a significant factor in the decisions they are forced to make. For example, in Ils posséderont la terre, André Pollender abandoned his visionary ambition to become a revolutionary in Ethiopia after finishing his formal education:

"Je m'aperçus bientôt que j'étais sorti de l'adolescence à un rajustement de mon idéal à mes moyens immédiats. Je n'aspirais plus à dominer, mais seulement à me faire une situation enviable dans un monde que j'acceptais tel qu'il était. Ma grande ambition se portait vers une augmentation de salaire, un congé."¹⁴¹

Pollender soon lost sight of his ideal because he became preoccupied with the routine activities of life which in themselves contributed to a feeling of personal security. The ensuing moral decline is exemplified by John Sloper in Les Pédagogues. For Sloper, everything in life, including the position of Chairman of the English Department that he holds at l'Ecole Pédagogique, means only, "'[que] nous touchons cinq cents dollars de plus que les autres professeurs."¹⁴² What frequently occurs in the process of guarding oneself against material uncertainty is that security ceases to be the objective that one consciously strives to attain. Personal security is replaced by the very activity that was initiated to realize it. That is what happened to Ruth Villemure in Le Mauvais pain:

¹⁴¹ Charbonneau, Ils posséderont la terre, p. 62.

¹⁴² Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 18.

Jamais madame Villemure n'avait boudé la vie et, cependant, elle avait dû s'arrêter en deça du bonheur. Faute de joie, elle avait recherché la sécurité, s'était enracinée chaque jour davantage dans une terre qui maintenant adhérait à elle.¹⁴³

Because she had become activity-oriented, Ruth pursued her quest for material security long after her objective had been attained.

An obstinate preoccupation with personal security can also severely restrict one's freedom of action, as Sarto Pellerin demonstrates in Les Pédagogues. Ignoring his horrified wife's pleas,¹⁴⁴ refusing at all cost to withdraw his support of Paul Marcotte who had become an unpopular candidate for a vacancy at L'Ecole Pédagogique, Sarto Pellerin is dismissed by the disgruntled administration for the vigorous stand he had taken. When he attempts to explain that it was his Christian duty to try to have Paul reinstated as a teacher, his wife Georgiana exclaims: "Etait-ce catholique, ça, d'enlever le pain de la bouche de ses propres enfants?"¹⁴⁵ Initially, Sarto's dismissal caused great consternation among his colleagues. As a result, they all backed his efforts to organize a much-needed teacher's union, for along with the possibilities of getting a raise in pay, the teachers realized that if they bargained collectively they could also obtain the individual security

¹⁴³Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, pp. 76-77.

¹⁴⁴"[...] il y avait les enfants. Que deviendraient-ils si Sarto perdait sa situation." Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 81

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 84.

that was essential if they were to realize some semblance of academic freedom. However, when it was learned that the administration had modified its original decision to dismiss Pellerin, and only suspended him for one academic year, most of Sarto's colleagues, including Lambert, withdrew their support. They were afraid of receiving a similar reprimand.

"Mais dans le cas présent [Lambert explains], vu qu'il s'agit d'une suspension en somme temporaire, je ne puis souscrire à son projet."¹⁴⁶ The desire for individual security is not limited to mere material considerations. M. Giguère in Au delà des visages exemplifies a man who lives in a constant state of fear. He had been alarmed by Jacques Langlet's unexpected moralistic reaction on the occasion when he had bragged about his mistress. From that time forward Giguère considered his colleague a threat. Not only was his job now in jeopardy, but Jacques, because of his attitude, was liable to reveal Giguère's secret to his wife. Consequently, he became ecstatic when he learned of Jacques' arrest:

"Non, mais y a-t-il de la perfidie dans le monde! Car enfin, ce jeune homme est issu d'une bonne famille: elle compte même un sénateur. Qui eût jamais prévu cette déchéance de Langlet? Enfin! je suis tranquille, bien tranquille: voilà une bouche fermée pour des années. Peut-être même pour l'éternité!"¹⁴⁷

As Giguère demonstrates, along with Sarto Pellerin's colleagues, the unrestrained search for individual security

¹⁴⁶Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 246.

¹⁴⁷Giroux, Au delà des visages, p. 44.

often results in a total disregard not only for the human values, but, more importantly, for the human being.

Material affluence is regarded as an essential ingredient of personal security by many of the traditional bourgeoisie. Hence, all honorable means of acquiring wealth are sanctioned, including the marriage of convenience. The quest for personal security among middle-class individuals is indeed widespread. Even the most idealistic visionaries quickly abandon their lofty ideals when they are banished into the materialistic world. They too become activity-oriented, losing sight of their objective as well as of the human values they had once espoused.

All too often, the accumulation of wealth is not automatically accompanied by a sense of personal security. Thinking that a place in society will guarantee them the security they are seeking, the "nouveaux riches" become extremely concerned with social advancement. There are three principal means of realizing this objective. Perhaps the most expedient is to marry into the coveted social milieu. Or, the ambitious bourgeois of means can immigrate to a prominent neighbourhood. Whatever method is chosen, it is imperative for success that one become educated as to the correct social attitudes to assume in public.

Hermine Latour in Elise Velder stopped at nothing in her efforts to acquire social status. She was often

accused of practicing "l'alpinisme social",¹⁴⁸ and her family jocosely referred to her as "l'alpiniste d'Outremont".¹⁴⁹ She considered marriage the most expedient way to enter the French-Canadian social register for herself and the Latour family. However, in order to realize her ambition, she was forced to depend upon others. "Pour hisser les Latour dans la meilleure sphère canadienne-française, c'est sur Marcel qu'il fallait d'abord compter."¹⁵⁰ Marcel was Hermine's oldest son. He was handsome, intelligent and already had acquired a good professional reputation among the leading lawyers of the province.

Son Marcel, il ne fallait pas qu'il se marie dans une famille simplement égale aux Latour. Cela n'eût pas été progresser, mais, au contraire, stabiliser leur état de nouveaux riches. Elle le reconnaissait volontiers, cet état. Elle le reconnaissait, mais ne l'acceptait point comme permanent. Elle se consolait et s'encourageait en songeant que bien des familles reçues partout y avaient déjà séjourné, sur ce palier aujourd'hui atteint par les Latour. Mais pour les Latour elle le voulait transitoire le plus brièvement possible; et il lui semblait qu'avec trois enfants dignes d'un brillant mariage, il serait possible de brûler les étapes.¹⁵¹

Although Hermine became reconciled to the fact that Marcel would marry Elise Velder, she could not help considering him a traitor to the whole family: "Les trahir, oui! J'appelle ça une trahison envers leur avenir, cette dégringolade jusqu'aux Velder."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 121.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 115-116.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 185.

Marcel understood his mother's zeal "d'affermir en vitesse [leur] position sociale,"¹⁵³ and in principle, he did not disapprove of her actions.

Sur ce point il ne la critiquait jamais ouvertement comme son père et comme Olivier, car il la savait sincère. A sa manière, elle avait la flamme. Il se contentait de sourire tous bas, affectueusement.¹⁵⁴

Ironically, it had been his mother who had introduced him to Elise. Employed as a fashion model at Mme. Régina's, Elise had been presented to Mme. Latour as a distinguished Belgian model of noble birth. Although Marcel later became aware of her true identity,

[il] n'avait jamais pu chasser complètement de son esprit sa toute première impression d'Elise, --Elise Van Velder. Tant qu'il la recontrait dans des restaurants, des cafés, des salles de cinéma, l'idée que Mme. Velder tenait une pension dans l'est de la ville demeurait trouble.¹⁵⁵

Marcel's misgivings concerning Elise's modest background came too late. He was too much in love with her to submit to his mother's supplications.

Although social prominence is often acquired by marrying above one's status, another effective method of advancing in society involves immigration to a prominent neighbourhood. Westmount is perhaps the most exclusive area of Montreal, and even though it is inhabited by Anglophones, the Lafleurs in Le Calvaire de Monique decided in the mid 1940's that that was where they were

¹⁵³Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 233.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 126.

going to live. Monique makes it known that it was her father who possessed a compelling desire to live in Westmount. "Papa était bien snob, il me semble. Tout ce qui se dit et se fait chez ces gens-là lui semblait chic et bien. Sa situation sociale, du fait de ces contacts répétés, s'améliorait, croyait-il."¹⁵⁶ Like Hermine Latour in Elise Velder, the Lafleurs were so preoccupied with the climb up the social ladder that they did not consider the dangers that lay hidden along the way until it was too late.

Education has become a widely accepted means of gaining entrance into all levels of the bourgeoisie as well. Furthermore, this particular avenue is not restricted to the "nouveaux riches". Any ambitious person, like Charles Brunet in Délivrez-nous du mal, "[qui] est issu d'un sordide milieu, d'un quartier prolétarien, et des mains de misérables parents inconscients, bornés et ignares,"¹⁵⁷ is able to offer his children the opportunities that he never had as a child because he worked hard and acquired enough money to do so. Charles is determined that his descendants are going to take advantage of the unclosed door that he has struggled indefatigably to keep ajar for them. "Ils seront forts en maths, ça je vous le garantis... Il y aura des cours d'anglais l'été, je les enverrai dans l'Ontario... des principes de base, une échelle de valeurs... voilà ce qui nous a tant manqué..."¹⁵⁸ But education as a tool for social advancement

¹⁵⁶De Francheville, Le Calvaire de Monique, p. 48.

¹⁵⁷Claude Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal (Montréal: Les Editions à la Page, 1961), p. 77.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 78.

is not limited to the young. It is also used by middle-class social climbers to impress the distinguished people they wish to emulate. For example, Hermine Latour in Elise Velder was not content merely to have mastered the technique of pronouncing her words "à la française", "[avec] sa voix de femme du monde."¹⁵⁹ She also became a serious student of social decorum. Although her family teased her, "parce qu'elle collectionnait les manuels d'étiquette,"¹⁶⁰ Hermine did not flinch from her self-imposed assignment, for she was convinced that:

"[...] la pratique de ces ouvrages était non moins instructive que la pratique des mots croisés. L'une enrichit votre vocabulaire, l'autre vous dit le pourquoi de tel usage, la raison profonde de telle clause du code mondain. Vous vous trouvez à faire en quelque sorte un cours de psychologie, hautement révélateur."¹⁶¹

Education provides one with a convenient access into almost any social circle, especially in Quebec where the essential criterion for acceptance is not family background, but rather the public manifestation of the correct social attitudes. Hence, education, even if it involves only self-instruction, provides the debutant with the savoir faire that is essential if he wishes to be regarded on an equal level with the more traditional members of the bourgeoisie.

¹⁵⁹Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 110.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

There are several pitfalls lying in wait for the ambitious individuals who seek security through social advancement. Those who enter into a marriage merely to have their names inscribed in the social register rarely experience security because they have not found happiness. Those who immigrate to the most prominent sector of the city exclusively for the immediate social advantages that can be realized are often disappointed. As the Lafleurs discovered too late in life, some children are extremely vulnerable to a change of environment.¹⁶² Neither is there any assurance that the education one receives will favor the social advancement of the family.

The kind of security that is sought by maintaining the status quo stems from the notion that the existing state of affairs represents stability and certainty, whereas change signifies uncertainty and insecurity. Those in the middle class who are intent upon safeguarding their privileged position in society interpret the strict adherence to class traditions as the most expeditious way of achieving this goal. Among the most significant of these traditions are family unity, loyalty to one's parish or neighbourhood, class solidarity and finally a zealous patriotism to the French-Canadian cause. It is by living in strict accordance with

¹⁶²De Francheville, Le Calvaire de Monique, p. 38.

these practices that the bourgeoisie expects to maintain the status quo and thereby assure its security.

It is often the young generation which threatens the unity in the family by revolting against the traditions which prevail in the middle-class milieu. In Au milieu la montagne for example, Gilbert Sergent who has become emotionally attached to a girl from the proletariat postulates that his generation is disgusted by many of the actions and prejudices of the preceding generation. He gives notice that he will not be concerned with the traditional bourgeois values and morality when he becomes independent from his family. His father replies that he had not appreciated the merit of tradition in his youth either. Léon Sergent too had espoused ideals that went contrary to the official family position.

"Rompre avec les traditions... A bas le conformisme... J'ai alors appris des choses, en réalité bien inoffensives, qui m'ont pourtant révolté. Plus tard j'ai compris qu'on ne juge pas les hommes, encore moins son père... Toi aussi tu comprendras..."¹⁶³

Indeed, Gilbert demonstrated "qu'il était lié par les traditions,"¹⁶⁴ when he terminated his relationship with Jacqueline Malo so that he might marry a girl from his own social milieu.

Loyalty to the group, whether it be a social clique, a circle of business associates or an entire parish is a natural outcome of the solidarity that is advocated in

¹⁶³viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 182.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

the nuclear family. One aspect of this social attitude is demonstrated by curé Folbèche in Les Plouffe. He tells Denis Boucher that he wants to see a copy of his manuscript before it is submitted to a publisher. "Et puis, si parfois tu disais, sans t'en apercevoir, des choses désagréables pour la paroisse, nous pourrions les enlever. Il vaut toujours mieux laver son linge sale en famille."¹⁶⁵

Another manifestation of this form of loyalty involves a blind devotion to one's colleagues, especially when they are suspected of being less than honest in their professional conduct. Although he quickly learned of his associates' fraudulent actions with regard to the Produits Pinnacle shares, Léon Sergent did nothing. When questioned by his son about his lack of action, Léon excuses himself thus:

"Faire un scandale en démissionnant? ... Qu'est-ce que ça donnerait à part de faire dégringoler la valeur en Bourse? Zéro. [...] Je n'y peux rien. Je ne suis tout de même pas pour faire une révolution..."¹⁶⁶ Whenever a genuine form of deference to one's close friends or colleagues converges upon what has often been termed team spirit--an unconditional, blind loyalty to the group--then the individual quickly loses any inclination to act virtuously if it is not expedient for him to do so. As a member of the group, the individual is obliged only to go along with whatever the group decides, not assume any responsibility for his own actions.

¹⁶⁵Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 256.

¹⁶⁶Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 181.

Class solidarity is a further manifestation of mankind's apparent need to band together in groups. Often, individuals feel secure only when they become identified with a particular association of like-minded people. Also, a group can readily become identified with one of its members, especially if the individual attracts public notice. That is why in Poussière sur la ville, Arthur Prévost, along with other leading citizens of Macklin, are so insistent upon protecting Dr. Dubois from the scandal that his working-class wife, Madeleine, has created by her liaison with Richard Hétu.

"Vous ne pouvez absolument vous laisser toucher par le scandale. En vous compromettant vous nous compromettez tous et nous serons obligés de vous abandonner. Il me semble que vous devriez avoir le sens de la solidarité. Que diable! Vous n'êtes pas un enfant!"¹⁶⁷

Because of his wife's scandalous behavior, Macklin's bourgeoisie is afraid that the public could find Dr. Dubois guilty by association of similar acts. In turn, the entire Macklin middle class with whom he is identified would be compromised.

There are some situations which arise in Quebec when individuals from all three major socio-economic groups band together to support the existing state of affairs. The conscription crisis of 1942 was one occasion when patriots from all of the classes expressed their feelings in unison regarding compulsory overseas service. Father Folbèche in Les Plouffe eloquently expresses the fears that all

¹⁶⁷Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 171.

Quebeckers harboured during the 1940's regarding their national security:

"Est-il juste que cette population de la province de Québec, cette population qui est, grâce à nous, la plus catholique du monde, aille se gâter au contact de ces Anglais et de ces Français, dont les péchés sont trop connus, sous prétexte qu'il faut sauver la démocratie? En 1918, nos soldats sont revenus avec des méchantes maladies et surtout anticléricaux. Faut-il combattre pour une victoire dont le salut de nos jeunes est le prix? Problème angoissant auquel le Christ a intelligemment répondu: 'Que sert à l'homme de gagner l'univers, s'il vient à perdre son âme.' [...] Depuis trois cents ans les Anglais voudraient nous voir disparaître et ils ont toujours manqué leur coup, parce que nous étions là, nous le clergé, à la tête de la Résistance. Les Etats-Unis, des démocrates tout purs, n'y vont pas à la guerre!"¹⁶⁸

Despite their different attitudes on many questions, the three social classes agreed that each individual French Canadian must be protected from the threat of annihilation if Quebec was to be safe from the menace of assimilation. Whereas some individuals might not have been swayed by Folbèche's arguments, there was not a French-Canadian nationalist present at the rally who disagreed with Father Lelièvre:

"Bien entendu, l'Europe est à feu et à sang. Nous la plaignons et nous prions le Sacré-Coeur de mettre fin à son supplice. Mais là doit se borner notre participation. Notre jeune race ne peut se permettre de s'exposer à mourir sur les champs de bataille. N'oublions pas que les forces politiques qui encouragent la conscription pour outre-mer sont celles mêmes qui veulent nous voir disparaître. Dieu leur pardonne!"¹⁶⁹

Even those groups for whom the status quo represented a stabilization of their inferior social position were

¹⁶⁸Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 310.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 435.

comforted in the knowledge that by supporting the existing condition with regard to the conscription question, they were fighting for their national security as their forefathers had done in the past.

The novelists we have examined share the notion that despite the advancements made in some areas of human relations, modern man has retained the inbred contempt he has historically experienced, not only for those who are different, but also for those who are considered to be socially inferior. Society's contemptibility in this area is manifest in two basic ways. One scheme excludes all undesirable elements from one's social milieu. The other is intended to appease those who are excluded by presenting them with a philosophy of life which is favorable to the maintenance of the status quo.

Exclusion from a sought-after social milieu is a particularly sensitive question when the subject of marriage arises. Those in the traditional bourgeoisie who are not adamantly opposed to interclass marriages are few indeed. In Mathieu for example, Bruno and Danielle Cinq-Mars were forewarned early of their mother's rigid views regarding marriage:

"Quoi que vous fassiez, mes enfants, n'oubliez jamais à quel milieu vous appartenez, disait [Marie Cinq-Mars]. Je veux bien que vous viviez parmi des artistes, mais mariez-vous dans votre milieu. Evitez, avant tout, d'être des déclassés!"¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 170-171.

Ruth Villemure in Le Mauvais pain typifies those who are fanatically opposed to alliances that their offspring might enter into with middle-class young people who come from outside their narrow social circle. Ruth does not consider Patrice Beauche worthy of Marthe's affection because his family-issues from the nouveaux riches sector of the bourgeoisie.

"Quelle sorte de fille es-tu donc? Ma foi, tu n'as aucun sens des réalités. Les Beauche ne sont pas de notre monde. Une famille enrichie dans le commerce des bestiaux, tu te représentes ce que c'est?... Pour de braves gens, ce sont peut-être de braves gens; mais il n'y a pas que cela qui compte. A ton âge, tu devrais le savoir depuis longtemps." 171

Interdenominational marriages are also vigorously condemned. They are viewed as a source of conflict leading ultimately to those serious human problems that generally result when two individuals of different faiths attempt to raise a family in a society that is hostile to their basic situation. Monique Orr in Le Calvaire de Monique is very familiar with these problems, having married a Protestant herself. She had the following advice for her son Peter, when he decided to make a similar mistake:

"Un catholique ne se lie pas pour la vie à un protestant-- et vice versa peut-être--sans que surgissent les problèmes les plus insolites, les situations les plus enchevêtrées qui soient. Crois-en mon expérience, Peter, et sois assuré que ce que je veux avant tout, c'est ton bonheur." 172

171 Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, pp. 16-17.

172 De Francheville, Le Calvaire de Monique, p. 102.

For religious as well as social reasons, marriage outside one's social circle is vehemently opposed by the established bourgeoisie. Their opposition is grounded in the fear that undesirable individuals will infiltrate their segment of society, thereby disrupting the status quo.

There is considerable corroborating evidence supporting the fears of the middle class in this regard. Marrying into the bourgeoisie is only one possible means of entry into the élite. One can cite as a further example the large number of peasant and working-class young men who gain entry into the influential "bourgeoisie de robe". Along with the personal jealousy she harbours for Pierre Boisjoly, it was the fear that he would undoubtedly be influential one day that motivated Huguette Letellier in Pierre le magnifique to obstruct the hero from his drive to become a priest. In light of her daughter's obstructionist conduct, Mme. Boisseau becomes very apprehensive. Because his expectations were shattered, Pierre could easily turn into a dangerous working-class rebel. "Huguette. Es-tu sûre que ton attitude envers [Pierre] n'a pas faussé sa vocation, que du bon prêtre qu'il aurait pu devenir, il ne tournera pas, par ta faute, en garçon haïeux et méchant?"¹⁷³ Like Huguette Letellier who does not wish to see Pierre become a bona fide member of the bourgeoisie because she considers him to be socially inferior, Madame Sergent in Au milieu la montagne refuses to accept the realities of French-Canadian

¹⁷³Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 32.

life with regard to the "nouveaux riches". She obstinately hangs on to the notion, "que l'argent seul ne fait pas d'eux nécessairement des êtres d'élite."¹⁷⁴ She does not relish the idea of being identified with the moneyed sector of the bourgeoisie which puts gold on public display rather than the noble manifestation of savoir-vivre. Yet, it is not only the social élite who fear being identified with their social inferiors. It is noted in Les Pédagogues that middle-class wage earners, even the lowly white-collar workers who are unionized for protection, persist in rejecting strike action as a legitimate bargaining weapon because of its close affiliation with the proletariat:

"La grève, chez les bourgeois, a mauvaise réputation. Les collets blancs ne se le disent pas clairement, remarquez, mais au fond, pour eux, faire la grève, c'est se 'ravaler' au niveau des ouvriers. Et j'ai pas besoin de vous dire que nos dirigeants font tout leur possible pour maintenir ce préjugé. Ca fait trop bien leur affaire."¹⁷⁵

Ultimately, what the established bourgeoisie is attempting to bring about by excluding outsiders from their social circle and by resisting any form of identification with their social inferiors is a sure stronghold against threats to their privileged position in society and to the status quo. As Madame Sergent puts it:

"Il nous faut défendre notre art du savoir-vivre. Nous avons eu assez de mal à nous dégrossir, sans aller abdiquer en acceptant dans nos rangs des gens bien intentionnés quelquefois, mais qui manquent de

¹⁷⁴Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 310.

¹⁷⁵Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 214.

finesse. Les gens comme nous ont un devoir à remplir qui exige force sacrifices. Aucune erreur, aucune faiblesse ne nous sont permises. Nous sommes esclaves de notre classe. Les petites gens, eux, sont libres, libres du jugement des autres, libres d'être des ignorants, des imbéciles, libres de s'amuser avec qui leur plaît. Nous étouffons à côté d'eux. Parce que nous sommes des privilégiés, nous ne sommes même pas libres d'être malheureux." 176

Not all of the members of the bourgeoisie are in a position to share Madame Sergent's élitist ideals. Nevertheless, no member of any socio-economic designation in French-Canadian society is intentionally encouraged to abandon his traditional conservatism. Like M. Létourneau in Bonheur d'occasion, who is typical of the lower middle class, when the realities of the situation call for radical change, one is discouraged from any form of overt action. Instead, one is encouraged to withdraw into oneself and support what could be termed the status quo ante.

En dehors de son commerce, [M. Létourneau] s'intéressait presque uniquement à des mouvements d'ordre traditionaliste et occupait une place d'honneur dans plusieurs sociétés religieuses et nationales. Sa vénération du passé lui faisait rejeter d'emblée tout ce qui se présentait à lui entaché de modernisme ou d'éléments étrangers. Il tolérait cependant les fêtes chez lui, y recevait une jeunesse dont il désapprouvait le langage, les habitudes et la légèreté, par curiosité et sous l'effet d'une certaine aménité mondaine qu'il lui plaisait d'ailleurs d'entretenir et même d'étaler. 177

In their support of tradition and the previous condition in Quebec, the less affluent members of the middle class ally themselves with the élite who are the most vocal proponents of the status quo.

176Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 311.

177Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 114.

Indeed, it is not fortuitous coincidence that the élite and the least privileged groups in society should share a common conservative philosophy which stresses family unity, loyalty to one's immediate neighbours and class as well as the zealous support of the French-Canadian nationalist cause. These traditions are maintained in the upper middle-class families because this group realizes that it has a great deal to lose if a change takes place in society. The underprivileged elements are led to believe, usually by way of the religious doctrines put forth by the "bourgeoisie de robe", that change would not bring them any benefits of real value and that their spiritual well-being could be in jeopardy if traditions were abandoned. Using every means at its disposal, the bourgeoisie struggles to preserve the status quo, for the knowledge that the privileges one enjoys will be safeguarded despite the howling winds of change is a comforting source of security for all involved.

Security is a very important middle-class value, for it provides the individual, the class, and ultimately the whole of society with the high degree of confidence that is a necessary ingredient if an acceptable form of social evolution is to be realized. The ruling élite feel secure only when the power is in their hands. Others find security in the act of augmenting their material possessions or by acquiring social status. On the whole, the bourgeoisie feel safe from danger when they witness

an entire society implanted in its traditions, actively working, often contrary to its own best interests, to maintain the status quo. Until very recently, the bourgeoisie in Quebec experienced these forms of security. It is this achievement which distinguishes them unequivocally from the rest of society.

The traditional middle-class religious values are bound up in Roman Catholicism, the dominant religion in Quebec. However, the religious allegiance of the bourgeoisie is more complex, thus less natural than the "down-to-earth" beliefs of the peasant, and the solace-granting force that it represents for the proletariat. This is due to the sophistication of the more educated élite who are often prone to intellectualize about doctrine, rather than accept all truths on the basis of blind faith as their counterparts in the other classes are apt to do. The middle-class concept of religion includes the traditional notion of a Just God, an emphasis upon strict moral conduct, and a considerable stress upon the individual's Christian duty. For a majority of the bourgeoisie excluding the clergy, religion is clearly the least important of the four middle-class values studied in this chapter.

In any given parish the middle class is presented with religious doctrine in exactly the same terms as the less educated parishioners. From the pulpit, most of the priests follow a similar trend. "[Ils] vous ligotent de péchés mortels, vous écrasent de morts subites, vous descendent la colère du ciel sur le crâne comme des pans

de rochers, avant de vous précipiter dans cet enfer où vous attend l'horloge de l'éternité, au tic-tac terrible: 'TOUJOURS,' 'JAMAIS'!"¹⁷⁸ The God of Justice aspect of the Roman Catholic faith is never far from the minds of the Quebec clergy because it induces their parishioners into submission.

Si souvent, déjà [Alexandre Chenevert] avait été offensé par ces prêtres qui, plutôt qu'en alliés des hommes, se posent comme la police de Dieu; qui paraissent moins être du côté de Dieu qu'avoir Dieu de leur côté.¹⁷⁹

Even the most well informed members of the bourgeoisie are swayed by such tactics. Judge Giraud, a widower in Evadé de la nuit, fervently believes that one of God's prime activities is to punish wrongdoers. Also, he believes that there was a divine reason for his unfaithful wife's death. "'[...] Je veux vous dire que Dieu l'a châtiée. Elle est morte en couches..."¹⁸⁰ However, the same God who dispenses punishments to those who offend Him, also rewards the faithful followers who abide by His laws. Towards the end of Alexandre Chenevert's agony, l'abbé Marchand "ne lui parlait plus que de la douceur de Dieu,"¹⁸¹ a topic which he had recently substituted for his more frequent vociferations about the God of Justice: "Et il entreprit de décrire les joies qui attendaient Alexandre. 'Au ciel, les anges divisés en catégories distinctes:

¹⁷⁸ Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, pp. 92-93.

¹⁷⁹ Gabrielle Roy, Alexandre Chenevert (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1954; Beauchemin, 1964), p. 313.

¹⁸⁰ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 201.

¹⁸¹ Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 339.

chérubins, séraphins, archanges, chanteraient les louanges du Seigneur. Les élus le contempleraient, tel un astre éblouissant."¹⁸² However, the priest does not succeed in persuading Alexandre Chenevert who considers it an insult to be treated in such a childlike manner:

[L'abbé Marchand] lui parlait de demeures plus splendides les unes que les autres, de préséances, de droite et de gauche. Comment se fait-il que l'homme ayant conçu des supplices si précis pour se représenter l'enfer soit incapable, pour son bonheur, d'imaginer autre chose qu'une espèce de pompeux ennui!¹⁸³

Offending Alexandre was the furthest thing from Marchand's mind. The priest believes in this fundamentalist concept of heaven. He also has a very simple notion of prayer, as he demonstrates upon recognizing that Alexandre's pain is excruciating. He goes to the chapel to pray for the patient's quick death. "Tant il était naïf, malgré tout, l'aumônier revint auprès de M. Chenevert, voir si sa prière n'avait pas été exaucée. Alexandre vivait encore [...]."¹⁸⁴

Although Gabrielle Roy is responsible for portraying Marchand's simplicity so unequivocally, one cannot overlook the fact that, in part, the priest's naïveté is meant to contrast with Alexandre's keen logical mind. For example, the priest claims that if one is a true believer, one must love God. Alexandre does not accept this kind of statement without an argument, even though it is voiced by a priest:

¹⁸²Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 340.

¹⁸³Ibid., pp. 341-342.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 371.

Alexandre considéra ce non-sens, cette effroyable situation: aimer Dieu ou le perdre; ou plutôt l'aimer parce qu'il était à craindre. Même un homme ne serait point contenté d'un pareil amour. Même Alexandre avait eu sur terre le désir d'un amour gratuit, totalement libre. Est-ce que Dieu, avec son ciel, pensait donc acheter l'affection des hommes? Et il entrevit que Dieu devait être très peu aimé pour lui-même, en effet, mais presque toujours par intérêt, puisqu'il disposait de l'éternité. Ainsi donc, l'au-delà faisait des hommes des esclaves de Dieu. Y renoncer semblait être la seule preuve de l'amour désintéressé. Alexandre fut tenté par un désespoir éternel.¹⁸⁵

Chenevert's logical approach to religion is in direct contrast to the blind faith that characterizes the religion of the peasants and workers.

Another sensitive question that is often posed by thoughtful middle-class individualists is: "Is God just?" Alain Dubois asks the question of his older and more experienced colleague. Dr. Lafleur does not like to grapple with such topics and asks Alain why he wants to know. Dubois replies: "'Parce que je n'y crois pas. Je ne crois pas à une justice qui assène elle-même les coups, quitte à se reprendre ailleurs, plus tard. Une justice qui brise l'innocent avant de le reconnaître.'"¹⁸⁶

Because he is a doctor and a believer, Lafleur has been obliged to reconcile the problem of God's justice with his experiences for his own peace of mind. "'Au chevet du malade, je n'accepte jamais. Je lutte. Je lutte aussi dans la vie chaque fois qu'il m'est possible. Je suis toujours battu. [...] Ma foi ne m'empêche pas d'aimer assez les

¹⁸⁵Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, pp. 319-320.

¹⁸⁶Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 127.

hommes pour les soustraire quand je peux à ce que vous considérez comme l'injustice de Dieu. Vous voyez, nous sommes deux à lutter contre Lui. Il n'y a pas d'autres solutions que de faire notre métier d'homme."¹⁸⁷ Although the bourgeoisie has retained the traditional concept of a Just God, some are inclined to intellectualize about sensitive questions of faith, either out of interest like Alexandre, or out of dire necessity, like Dr. Lafleur.

The concept of a God of Justice is important to the religion of the middle class because of the emphasis placed upon moral conduct, especially in sexual matters. The traditional bourgeoisie considers the sins of the flesh as the most extreme form of immoral conduct. L'abbé Marchand in Alexandre Chenevert exemplifies this attitude when he hears the dying man's confession:

Ce n'était pas le manque de charité en ce monde qui indignait le plus l'abbé Marchand. Aux fautes contre la charité, il trouvait des justifications dans la nature de l'homme et aussi dans l'organisation de la société. Comment être doux, totalement juste et honnête! C'était surtout les péchés imputables à la chair qu'il guettait.¹⁸⁸

But it is not only the "bourgeoisie de robe" who are pre-occupied with ridding society of what they consider to be immoral behavior. Judge Giraud's obsession in Evadé de la nuit is to get rid of the evil that exists in the mind and heart of all humans.

¹⁸⁷Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, pp. 127-128.

¹⁸⁸Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, pp. 314-315.

Plus aucune ambition, mais le désir rageur, halluciné de chasser le mal, de poursuivre jusqu'à son ombre. Combien de fois n'avait-il pas souffert de ne pouvoir pas sévir contre les victimes de viol? Pendant vingt ans, la hantise de torturer tout ce qui de près ou loin touchait au péché de la chair.¹⁸⁹

Langevin has cast Giraud in a most suitable profession, for he is meant to represent the traditional middle-class moralist who judges and condemns all behavior that does not conform with the stated moral code. It is even implied in Au delà des visages that Jacques Langlet was justified in committing the brutal murder of the prostitute because in so doing he rid society of one more occasion of sin:

"Victime de l'éternelle soif du bien et du mal, Jacques a voulu savoir. Mais tandis que les autres ne retenaient que la saveur du fruit défendu, lui, a violemment vomi cette nourriture empoisonnée. Il a su le mal, mais il n'a pas renié le bien. Plus encore, j'affirme qu'à cette minute précise où l'illusion fuyait honteusement devant l'horrible réalité, Jacques découvrit, dans une illumination soudaine, ce qu'est la pureté. Il la connut dans sa plus grande splendeur, alors qu'il l'obscurcissait dans sa chair. Et dans un déchirement affreux, il ressentit l'atroce désespoir de l'absence. L'espace d'un éclair, il entrevit un Visage qui se détournait de lui. La divine présence l'abandonnait. Il trembla dans le froid et l'obscurité du vide. Celui qui était plus lui-même que lui, n'habitait plus avec lui. Tout ce qu'il avait pu donner à un autre, le seul partage qu'il eût réussi avec une créature, c'était donc cette dérisoire imitation de la charité divine? Ce furent à la fois cette connaissance et ce désespoir qui assaillirent l'âme de votre fils en cette minute crucifiante de sa vie. Il vit rouge, et il tua pour ôter de son regard, pour supprimer, pour anéantir à tout jamais l'instrument de cette connaissance et de ce désespoir. Le drame est là!"¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, pp. 144-145.

¹⁹⁰ Giroux, Au delà des visages, pp. 148-149.

Because the middle class looks upon socially unacceptable moral conduct as a threat to its traditional values and to the integrity of its youth: "aucune mesure n'est trop rigoureuse quand il s'agit de protéger la pureté, l'intégrité de notre jeunesse."¹⁹¹ One method that gained public acceptance over the centuries was the censure of books that the Church considered unsuitable for the general public. As Bessette points out in Le Libraire, the books which were "not for every eye"¹⁹² included a long list of well-known French authors like Voltaire, Rimbaud, Proust, and Gide. Generally it was the bookseller who was charged with the responsibility of keeping these titles from the public.

En tout cas, jusqu'à ce que la maison de la Bonne Presse se soit prononcée sur la valeur de ces écrivains, je ne tolérerai pas qu'ils mettent les pieds ici. Non, monsieur. Pas tant que je serai le gardien de ce sanctuaire de la pensée. La culture, j'en suis! Mais d'abord, la morale! Ce qui vaut beaucoup mieux!¹⁹³

But the censure of books is only one method employed to assure the preservation of the strict moral principles that dominate traditional French-Canadian life. The moral integrity of those who are charged with the responsibility of teaching the youth of Quebec is also important if the values are to be transmitted intact to the succeeding

¹⁹¹Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 186.

¹⁹²Title of the English translation of Le Libraire, trans. Glen Shortliffe (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1962).

¹⁹³Giroux, Au delà des visages, pp. 70-71.

generations. That is why l'abbé Béchard in Les Pédagogues supports those who wish to dismiss Sarto Pellerin:

"Nous n'avons que trop toléré dans notre enseignement des types du genre de ce Pellerin. [...] Ce qu'ils cherchent tous, c'est à saper les fondements mêmes de nos coutumes, de la mentalité de nos gens..."¹⁹⁴ Traditional French-Canadian society was very suspicious of individuals who refused to conform to established practice. This not only applies to those who occupy positions where they could influence young people, such as booksellers, librarians, and teachers. It applies to all those who belong to the bourgeoisie. Middle-class morality expects that one will conduct oneself in a manner that reflects those high moral principles which constitute an important aspect of the traditional bourgeois value of religion.

Many middle-class individuals are consoled by the moral teachings of their religion. Georges Hautecroix in Aucune créature felt guilty about the intense love that developed between himself and his half-sister, Sylvie. Although he was married, he could not resist the temptation of going off to England with her. However, Sylvie never arrived in England. She was murdered by Myron, her previous lover, on her way to the airport. "Son amour [à Georges] se nourrit quelque temps du remords d'avoir été, dans une certaine mesure, responsable de sa mort et plus encore du regret de n'avoir pas su l'aimer sans arrière-

¹⁹⁴Bessette, Les Pédagogues, p. 185.

pensée quand elle était là... Mais comme il était catholique, il se désengagea bientôt de cet amour posthume, qui avait peut-être été son seul, vraiment profond, engagement d'adulte."¹⁹⁵ Whereas some middle-class individuals like Georges found solace in their faith, there are a great many who are adversely affected by the moral principles of their class.

The undue stress which is placed upon sexual restraint causes many individuals to suppress the physical side of love relationships. At the age of thirty, Julien Pollender in Fontile had not yet experienced physical love. However, he often fantasied about his acquaintances in the act of making love. He admits to the reader: "'Si j'étais capable de les plaindre au lieu de les envier.'"¹⁹⁶ Julien's inhibitions play such a vital role in his private life that he projects them upon his childhood friends. Initially, he could not believe that the journalist, François Bonneville could have been responsible for the pregnancy of Oscar Chamel's daughter.

"La vie sentimentale de Bonneville n'avait pas jusqu'à-là retenu mon attention. Je supposais que son éducation catholique, à peu près identique à la mienne, l'avait tenu, comme moi, à l'écart de toute aventure sexuelle."¹⁹⁷

But the projection of one's inhibitions upon others is not the worst outcome of the stress that is placed upon

¹⁹⁵Charbonneau, Aucune créature, p. 177.

¹⁹⁶Charbonneau, Fontile, p. 126.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 118.

middle-class morality. Infinitely more harmful is the guilt that is generated in some individuals when they ignore the censures placed upon sexual relationships outside of marriage. The poet Dumont in Les Demi-civilisés felt blameworthy during the entire time he had a mistress. He feels even more guilty after she committed suicide.

"Une idée infernale se fixa dans mon cerveau, grandit, fit tache d'huile. Une véritable hallucination. Si je la poussais à mourir, me disais-je? Le matin, le soir, durant la journée, même en plein sommeil, une voix me disait: 'Elle doit mourir pour toi, pour racheter tes fautes.' J'ai toujours cru qu'il y avait une justice immanente et que quelqu'un devait souffrir et mourir pour effacer le mal." 198

It is not infrequent that one will encounter characters like Dumont who allow their inhibitions to get the best of them. The final outcome of their complexes is often tragic for all concerned.

As well as emphasizing the moral aspect of Roman Catholicism, the traditional bourgeoisie also stresses that each individual has the obligation to abide by his Christian duty. Essentially, one's Christian obligation consists of living in a way which reflects the human condition. Pleasure should not be sought after because it can only be attained in the afterlife.

Françoise Loranger in Mathieu grapples with the human problem of the quest for happiness by contrasting it with the compulsion to do one's duty. Mme. Normand and her husband represent these two extremes, as their son

¹⁹⁸Harvey, Les Demi-civilisées, p. 115.

Mathieu observes:

[Mathieu] n'arrive pas à comprendre qu'ayant tenu en mains tous les éléments du bonheur le beau Julés n'ait abouti qu'à la déchéance. La vie austère de Lucienne s'impose à lui, par antithèse. Vie de femme pauvre, mais digne, avec tout ce que le rapprochement de ces attributs comporte de privations et d'ennui, d'économie et de travail, de courage et d'énergie. Entre le plaisir et le devoir, sa mère a choisi le devoir. Aussi n'est-elle pas aujourd'hui paralysée, alcoolique et syphilitique; mais est-elle plus heureuse? A-t-elle jamais été heureuse? 199

There are many middle-class people who question whether happiness even exists at all. There are many, like Ruth Villemure, who have nothing but contempt for it. "Le bonheur de Marthe: le bonheur de Marthe!... Mais comprends donc que je m'en moque. Ce qui importe pour moi, c'est d'empêcher ta soeur de faire une bêtise." 200 Ruth is typical of those narrow-minded people who concentrate upon one aspect of life to the exclusion of everything else.

Une seule chose avait compté pour elle: la ligne d'horizon de ce domaine hérité des morts, ces terres qui, durant des années, lui avaient mesuré, comme un aliment indispensable, l'angoisse et le labeur. 201

Nevertheless, Ruth's attitudes are entirely consistent with Catholic doctrine, for it is taught that happiness can be attained only in the afterlife, as the parish priest in Poussière sur la ville affirms when Dubois asks:

"Et si le premier devoir était d'être heureux?"
[Le curé] n'a plus aucune hésitation.
"Je n'ai jamais cru et je ne croirai jamais au bonheur sur terre. Et je doute que vous-même y puissiez y croire en étant médecin." 202

¹⁹⁹ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 214.

²⁰⁰ Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, pp. 28-29.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰² Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 164.

With few exceptions, the traditional bourgeoisie is emphatic in its attitudes concerning Christian duty.

One's principal obligation in life is to assure one's own spiritual salvation:

"Pour le prêtre comme pour les autres hommes, le premier devoir est d'assurer son propre salut. [Dubois], vous parlez de pitié. Ce serait nous perdre nous-même que d'avoir pitié au sens où vous l'entendez. [Dieu] ne nous demande pas le prix de notre propre damnation." 203

The demands which are placed upon various individuals differ, depending upon one's particular calling in life. For example, a nun is required to live a totally different kind of life once she enters the convent, as Dorothee in Les Demi-civilisés will soon realize:

Il lui faudra extirper de sa poitrine son coeur de femme et le jeter dans les ornières du chemin; si, dans cette misérable boue, elle le voit battre encore, elle marchera dessus à deux pieds. La chasteté déséchera son corps; l'obéissance lui prendra son âme et sa personnalité. Tu sais le mot jésuitique: obéir comme un cadavre, comme un bâton dans la main d'un vieillard... 204

After choosing one's vocation, one must abide by all of the restrictions that it imposes upon individual freedom.

The second most important duty of a Christian is to work for the spiritual, moral and physical salvation of one's fellow man. For the "bourgeoisie de robe", the second duty is inseparable from the first. Hence, the priests' personal salvation is "dépendant du salut des autres." 205

203 Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 164.

204 Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés, p. 128.

205 Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 163.

As the curé in Poussière sur la ville states: "J'ai charge d'âmes et lorsque je me présenterai devant Dieu j'en devrai rendre compte."²⁰⁶ The second duty of nuns might be to teach, nurse the sick or to take care of orphans. In the family situation, parents have the duty to shelter, clothe, feed and educate their children. But along with these specific obligations, every Christian also has the duty to live an exemplary life.

"L'homme ne vit pas seul: directement ou indirectement, il influence un grand nombre de vies, il les modèle à son exemple. Il existe une responsabilité de l'homme. Oui! Et il existe aussi une responsabilité du Chrétien."²⁰⁷

In the Roman Catholic society of Quebec, a great deal of stress is placed upon performing one's duty. This applies especially to the bourgeoisie, for as leaders of the society they are in a better position to help those who are lacking in the amenities of life.

Many of the misguided characters who appear in the French-Canadian novels we have studied devote themselves to charitable work as a result of the emphasis that their milieu places upon christian duty. However, the benefits that accrue for those in need of assistance are often minimal because the individuals who become actively involved in voluntary work lack the necessary compassion to be really effective. For example, in

²⁰⁶Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 162.

²⁰⁷Giroux, Au delà des visages, p. 103.

Alexandre Chenevert, Gabrielle Roy describes l'abbé Marchand as an ineffective hospital chaplain because he did not like people:

Au fond, c'était un homme solitaire qui, tel un assez grand nombre de prêtres, n'éprouvait pas pour l'homme de véritable inclination. Il est des prêtres qui sont venus à Dieu par une ardente compassion pour l'homme; il en est d'autres pour qui les hommes ne seront jamais supportables qu'à cause de Dieu. Aux âmes sensibles, cette nuance est toujours perceptible. 208

The motives which control one's actions are very important for they reflect upon the services that are rendered. According to Harvey, there are many nuns who perform their tasks admirably; they are patient and meticulous, yet they lack the necessary sensitivity to perform their jobs really well:

Dans la garde des orphelins, le soin des malades, le soulagement des pauvres, l'hospitalité aux infirmes et aux déments, leur patience et leur dévouement tiennent du prodige. Elles se penchent sur une misère, non pas avec une sollicitude maternelle et chaude, mais avec cette bonté commandée, où l'on sent une volonté d'agir par devoir sans céder aux mouvements de l'instinct. Elles abhorrent la nature, qu'elles pensent viciée, et elles la contredisent en tout ce qu'elle inspire. Elles commencent par réprimer en elles-mêmes toutes les impulsions qui ne tendraient pas vers l'au-delà. 209

Authors like Gabrielle Roy and Jean-Charles Harvey argue that a sense of duty is a poor substitute for the sentiment of love which should accompany compassionate acts.

It is not only the "bourgeoisie de robe" who help their fellow man out of a vague sense of performing their duty to God. In Il suffit d'un jour, Jeanne Boudeux,

²⁰⁸Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, pp. 312-313.

²⁰⁹Harvey, Les Demi-civilisés, pp. 128-129.

Elisabeth's aunt, had sacrificed her own happiness because she felt that it was her duty to bring up her brother's illegitimate daughter. Because she was not acting out of love for the child, she often regretted the sacrifices she had made. Accordingly, it was out of vengeance that she revealed Elisabeth's true identity when she discovered that her niece was pregnant. "Penses-tu que je suis née pour accueillir des bâtards? Ah! j'aurais dû le prévoir et te laisser avec ceux de ton espèce."²¹⁰ Jeanne's malicious comment refers to Elisabeth's real mother who had been a prostitute. "Et pourtant, [les] mains [de Jeanne] se souvenaient d'avoir baigné cette enfant, de l'avoir emmaillotée, mais, au même instant, elles se souvenaient de s'être souvent retenues de la gifler."²¹¹

Etymologically, the word charity is derived from the latin caritas, meaning high regard, dearness, and affection. Words like "love", "benevolence", "affection" and "good will" appear in most dictionary definitions of the word. Webster's Dictionary includes the notion that charity is "that disposition of heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good." In modern times, the concept that benevolent acts should be performed out of love may have lost much of its original meaning. Nevertheless, the authors we have examined agree that charity becomes a burden when

²¹⁰ Elie, Il suffit d'un jour, p. 160.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 190.

love is absent. Roger Lemelin examines the work performed by Oscar Charton, one of the priests in Au pied de la pente douce. He no longer administers to the sick out of a sense of duty to God, let alone out of love for his fellow man. As a form of gratification for the self-sacrifices he makes, Charton has allowed himself to feel superior to the poor people he is helping:

Il se sentait lentement devenir un médecin des pauvres en soutane, une sorte de Curé d'Ars avec la distinction en plus, il faut bien s'entendre. Chaque soir, à cette heure où tout bon chrétien fait sa recollection, Oscar Charton se dorlotait le coeur d'héroïsme et faisait de grandioses réflexions sur le courage qu'il déployait, lui, un homme de sa condition, pour remplir son ministère. Alors, il se sentait bercé par une symphonie de charité alanguie d'aristocrates soupirs.²¹²

Also, many Catholics go to Mass on Sundays solely out of a sense of duty. Like Lucienne Normand in Mathieu, many traditional middle-class Catholics find a socially acceptable reason to justify their action:

[Lucienne] a depuis longtemps cessé de prier dans son coeur, et si elle va encore à la messe tous les dimanches, c'est que cet acte de dévotion fait partie de la vie d'une Canadienne française de bonne souche.²¹³

A sense of Christian duty is perhaps desirable because without it many benevolent acts would never be accomplished. Nevertheless, the authors we have examined feel that something is lacking when, in order for charitable work to be done, one must appeal to Christian duty rather than to a sense of fraternity which naturally follows from love.


²¹²Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, pp. 27-28.

²¹³Loranger, Mathieu, p. 94.

chaos and the unknown, the three traditional groups in French-Canadian society willingly support the severe restrictions that limit self-expression, especially those which are directed against the individual's natural instincts and desires.

The desire for order presumes a sense of participation in a particular group. The community is very important in French Canada, perhaps because the principle of banding together initially saved the Quebecker from assimilation by the British conquerors. The idea of security and prosperity in numbers has prevailed to the present day. In the peasant family situation, a contribution was expected of each member of the group, even the very young, so that the farm and everyone dependent upon it might prosper. Furthermore, each farmer was expected to remain on the farm, and hence support his class by rejecting the temptations offered by urban life. In the proletarian milieu, loyalty to the family did not preclude a freedom to undertake any endeavor, as long as one contributed both financially and in know-how to the family's well-being. For this class, the greater community includes the parish to which one belongs. When regarded in this context, loyalty to one's community cannot be separated from one's religion. Along with family solidarity, middle-class parents stress the community, which for them is limited to those segments of the bourgeoisie they admire. They promote marriages only within desirable social circles, which precludes all interclass and interdenominational unions. Class

the mother often acquires control because of the possessive love that characterizes her relationship with the individual members of her family. Power is held in high esteem by the bourgeoisie de robe, the politician and the financiers because it allows them to control society's behavior in their particular area of interest. Some objects have the inherent faculty to endow the possessor with authority. Money ranks as the most important of these. Because power is so highly regarded, by the bourgeoisie, the methods that are employed to safeguard it have attained a high degree of respectability, and the result is the traditional bourgeois value of artfulness. Although most of the people in positions of authority practice artfulness in their daily lives, the "bourgeoisie de robe", the politicians and the financiers are especially adept at its use. Security, especially as it applies to the individual, is a value which is very important to all segments of Quebec society. Because their personal safety is dependent upon the status quo, the bourgeoisie, unlike the other classes, is keenly aware of both class security and national security. Religion is the fourth value that distinguishes the middle class from the remainder of society. Although the traditional God of Justice concept is retained, and the emphasis upon moral conduct remains, the élite experience the added compulsion to do their Christian duty. This sense of duty applies to the practice of their religion as well as to the obligation they are made to feel regarding works of charity. Although the Quebec middle class is not a homogeneous group,



the exercise of power and conservative tendencies are common to all three elements of it. The traditional values that manifest themselves as a result of these leanings have set this class apart from the rest of society.

* * *

The traditional society and culture of French Canada are too often perceived exclusively from the perspective of the agricultural origins from which they evolved. Romantic accounts of the habitant in literature and popular folklore have served to symbolize the bygone frontier days. At the same time, such representations have had a detrimental impact upon Quebec culture, for they have obscured the significant contributions made by other segments of society to the traditional values. French Canada continues to be a vibrant culture because, throughout the decades, it has been forced to adapt to new methods of expression in response to the changing political, economic and social conditions. The first-generation proletarians responded to industry's demands for workers, abandoning the land and the agricultural way of life. By banding together in the industrial ghettos of the major cities, they created a distinct socio-economic group that was formerly unknown in the province of Quebec. The trend from rural to urban life called for a greater participation of French Canadians in the merchant, professional and ruling sectors of society. Hence, the evolution of a Quebec bourgeoisie to fulfill this need. It is highly significant that neither the proletariat nor bourgeoisie

in Quebec came into being as a result of an inspiration that differs in any way from that which guided the peasantry. Although the three socio-economic designations demonstrate that there are different methods of coping with society's demands, the fundamental inspiration which motivates each class remains unaltered.

The underlying philosophy which has had the most profound influence upon the traditional values is derived from the Roman Catholic Faith, "Catholicism considers Man as called to an eternal destiny of which the present life is but a prelude and a preparation. All its philosophy springs from this, including its social philosophy."²¹⁴

The traditionalists who viewed life as a mere transitory stage subordinated their fleeting earthly existence for the spiritual bliss they would experience after death. The most important outcome of this approach towards life is the self-effacement of the individual. Hence, a complete disregard for personal individuality is prevalent throughout the system of traditional values. Regardless of the particular social class, the traditionalists emphasize order and authority rather than personal initiative and responsibility, the community at large instead of the individual, and the messianic drive to teach others to conform to society's ideals and conventions at the expense of personal experimentation.

The emphasis upon authority is perhaps the most prevalent characteristic of the traditional values. The

²¹⁴The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick, p. 68.

society itself is based upon a system of government from above. For the peasant, this feature of the traditional values translates itself in the form of paternalism. In each family there is a strong male head who administers the farm and everyone who is dependent upon it. The attitude of the first-generation industrial worker towards absolute power is identical to the peasant's, although the realities of his situation are drastically different. Hence, parental authority prevails in the proletarian system of values, for both parents were forced to shoulder the burdens of raising a large family in very difficult circumstances during the war-ravaged decades of the last half century. In the middle-class system of values, one finds that the power to direct is again assigned to a single authority. However, this situation differs from the paternalism of the peasant in that the female head of the family is the likely parent to be in control of domestic affairs. Power is a force that one must contend with outside the family as well. For example, several segments of the middle class exercise a great deal of control over the masses. The "bourgeoisie de robe", from the ~~lowest~~ parish priest to the most influential archbishop form the most influential group in the traditional society of French Canada. The second most powerful force lies with the politicians who have almost complete control over whatever professional and community activities exist, both on the local as well as the provincial level. Of course, the financiers who control the flow of money exercise considerable

power, albeit in a less direct way than the groups previously mentioned. Working together, these three segments of Quebec society have become so powerful that they effectively control most of what transpires in society, even to the present day.

The emphasis upon authority prevails whenever a society regards social order as being above individual freedom. The fear of chaos, both in the spiritual as well as in the temporal sense, has led to attitudes which are directed towards the suppression of the individual for the greater good of society. In the peasant environment, the hierarchical order of things dictates that each farmer suppress his desires and natural instincts in favour of the harsh demands placed upon him by nature and the land from which he must extract his existence. Although the industrial worker also practiced self-restraint in expressing his feelings and sentiments, resignation is his characteristic response to the dismal conditions in which he is forced to work and live. Because he is resigned to his condition, dissatisfaction will rarely lead to worker revolts which disrupt the existing social order. Naturally, the bourgeoisie in charge of maintaining order feels justified in utilizing any means including all forms of artfulness to prevent social unrest that could lead to chaos. Towards this end, society's leaders elicit the support of all Quebecers in their call for public maintenance of the status quo. Because their fondness for order is combined with a fear of

chaos and the unknown, the three traditional groups in French-Canadian society willingly support the severe restrictions that limit self-expression, especially those which are directed against the individual's natural instincts and desires.

The desire for order presumes a sense of participation in a particular group. The community is very important in French Canada, perhaps because the principle of banding together initially saved the Quebecker from assimilation by the British conquerors. The idea of security and prosperity in numbers has prevailed to the present day. In the peasant family situation, a contribution was expected of each member of the group, even the very young, so that the farm and everyone dependent upon it might prosper. Furthermore, each farmer was expected to remain on the farm, and hence support his class by rejecting the temptations offered by urban life. In the proletarian milieu, loyalty to the family did not preclude a freedom to undertake any endeavor, as long as one contributed both financially and in know-how to the family's well-being. For this class, the greater community includes the parish to which one belongs. When regarded in this context, loyalty to one's community cannot be separated from one's religion. Along with family solidarity, middle-class parents stress the community, which for them is limited to those segments of the bourgeoisie they admire. They promote marriages only within desirable social circles, which precludes all interclass and interdenominational unions. Class

solidarity begins with the nuclear family, extending to one's close associates, one's social circle, and ultimately the entire class.

Through their system of values, the traditionalists also display the same kind of messianic fervor that motivated the first missionaries who exchanged seventeenth-century France for the harsh Canadian environment and hostile natives who were being taught to accept the ways of Western civilization. We have seen that the peasant is compelled to adhere to a strict moral and ethical code which even dictates how he should perform his duties on the farm. Parents in the working-class situation do all in their power to inculcate their values into their offspring, especially those principles which deal with moral behavior. The desire for self-determination is demonstrated in a collective sense by the idealism of industrial workers, especially in their determination to create unions that are truly representative of their socio-economic circumstances. The middle-class messianic drive is evidenced principally in the efforts of this privileged group to exclude all undesirable elements from its social milieu. By promoting such action, this group remains apart from the masses and retains control over society. As well, certain middle-class segments such as the "bourgeoisie de robe" who act as spiritual guides, and the politicians who often see themselves as the saviors of French Canada, are very frequently looked upon as messiahs by the

general population. As is true for the other socio-economic designations, the middle-class religion emphasizes the Messianic aspects of Roman Catholicism. In addition, significant stress is placed upon doing one's Christian duty. Considerable importance is placed upon saving the vanquished French Canadian from the evil designs of Lucifer and all his legions. As well, there exists the desire to be delivered from the questionable policies of the Canadian and British leaders who in the past displayed a desire to see a change in the French-Canadian way of life.

A close study of the traditional values espoused by the three distinct social classes in Quebec reveals that there is no difference in the underlying thought that led each group to create their own set of values. If a dramatic change in inspiration had occurred in the traditional society of French Canada, there would have been a substitution of one culture for another. Instead, what occurred with the development of the proletariat and bourgeoisie was a unique application of the same traditional philosophy that is identified with the peasant class. A substitution did take place, however, when the idealists in quest of personal values came upon the scene during the 1940's. From then until the mid-sixties, those in society who rejected traditionalism in favor of personal values were viewed as outsiders who formed part of a sub-culture. Their philosophy of life did not spring from the time-honored inspiration that was responsible for the traditional values. Rather, it evolved

out of a form of humanism which stressed individual fulfillment and the personal values instead of a trust in authority and a desire for order. The community was important but not at the expense of the individual. All messianic tendencies are inconsistent with this form of humanism since each individual has his own s... priorities. It is not difficult to see how such contrar... ophies came into conflict. In the words of David K..., the editor of The Tremblay Report:

The traditional values gave rise to a society headed by an elite of professional men (doctors, lawyers, notaries) and clergy who paid lip service to the traditional ideals, attempted whenever possible to regulate the affairs of their society in accordance with those ideals and expended a great deal of time and energy convincing themselves that they were succeeding. But they were not succeeding.

The small elite was able to achieve a certain degree of detachment from the modern world. Insulated behind the walls of their professions they were able to ignore, to a greater or lesser extent, the world created by modern industry and commerce. [...] The traditional French-Canadian leadership taught the masses one set of values while their daily experience taught them another. The ultimate triumph of the latter was inevitable. By refusing to adapt to changed circumstances, the leaders of French Canada forfeited their right to lead.²¹⁵

Although the right to lead was irretrievably lost, the influential groups in society retained the power to oppress those who dared challenge their claims. It is this aspect of the quest for personal values which we shall now examine.

²¹⁵The Tremblay Report, ed. David Kwavnick, pp. xvi-xvii.

PART II
PROMETHEUS CHAINED

Society is the most formidable obstacle placed in the path of individuals who seek to acquire personal values. In the three social classes, well-established traditional attitudes, like paternalism, are a menace to aspirants who attempt to gain more control over their destiny by refusing to submit to arbitrary external forces. Social institutions such as the church, the government, the educational system and the professions promote the myth that individualism leads to chaos, making it hazardous to society. The three social classes function within an established structure which encourages one to become dispassionately opposed to individualistic behavior and actively committed to maintaining the status quo. The corporations reject social change because their power and influence over consumers are dependent upon social stability. Special interest groups, like Church-controlled syndicates and trade unions, function for the greater good of the group rather than that of the individual. Society has many advantages over the individual whenever a lack of harmony between them results in open conflict. It is brutally opposed to anyone who disagrees with established social attitudes, including those idealists who seek after their own personal values.

Psychological factors also impede the easy acquisition of personal values. These are attitudinal postures that emanate from the human psyche rather than from the environment. The incapacity to achieve poses a serious problem for some individuals. Others find themselves heavily burdened.

by their personal history. For some, the feeling of solitude acts as an insurmountable obstacle which not only brings about an end to the quest for personal values but, in a number of cases, contributes significantly to the individual's complete downfall.

Personal incapacity, personal history, and the state of solitude, each factor acting independently or in conjunction with others, can act as shackles for the person who seeks to acquire a set of personal values. In an attempt to explain better the inner conflicts of some of the principal characters in the novel, a number of French-Canadian authors have drawn parallels between their plight and that of the mythological heroes in the Promethean myth.¹ For this reason, as well as in an endeavor to explain complicated psychological phenomena in literary terms, the myth of Prometheus is frequently referred to here.

¹ Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit, is described as a "Prométhée, non par orgueil, ni par défi, mais par besoin, comme d'un remède." Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 43. The principal protagonist in Mathieu, identifies closely with the plight of the mythical hero, claiming: "'Je suis lié, enchaîné à moi-même, plus sûrement que Prométhée à son roc.'" Loranger, Mathieu, p. 140. In Cul-de-sac, Victor Debreux is accidentally pinned to a granite slab deep in a crevice in the wilds of the Ungava. A hawk which spotted the injured and defenseless man began to consume him alive: "'Étais-je pour [l'épervier] un symbole, ou une survie? Perché sur quelque haute branche, il était à dévorer ma chair. Il en déchiquetait la viande, mâchait les fibres des muscles. Combien lui en faudrait-il avant que d'être repu?'" Yves Thériault, Cul-de-sac (Québec: L'Institut Littéraire du Québec, 1961; Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1968), p. 81.

CHAPTER IV

CHAINED BY PERSONAL INCAPACITY

Personal incapacity is widely used in the novels of the 1950's to demonstrate that individual Quebecers with aspirations were often unable to realize their goals due to their own failings. Individuals who suffer from it demonstrate that they are lacking in the required abilities, competence, and fortitude to see their project through to its conclusion. In part, these personal failings reflect the state of apathy that existed in the province in response to the power wielded by "le chef". Personal incapacity includes spiritual and emotional as well as physical disabilities. It symbolizes the serious inability to effect social change on the part of the individual or group that lacks Promethean qualities.

Physical incapacity is the vehicle most often employed by French-Canadian novelists to depict the powerlessness of the population during this period in Quebec's history. Physical deformities as well as various ailments came to represent the individual's inability to achieve what he wanted in life. Yves Thériault's work, which lends itself particularly well to symbolic interpretation, is brimming with physically deformed or mutilated characters. In La Fille laide,

for example, the infant son of Edith ("la fille laide") and Fabien: "n'entendrait et ne verrait jamais."¹ There is no apparent genealogical reason for the infant's deformity.

"Au début, c'était ce que ça devait être, un petit qui vagit et qui ne voit rien, puisque ses yeux sont encore mal habitués aux grandes lumières de notre monde. Mais avec le temps, cela se constatait, il n'avait pas des yeux pour voir les choses. Il n'avait que ça, des boules inutiles. Et puis j'ai senti que je parlais sans être entendu. Toujours là, couché dans ce ber, ne bougeant presque pas, une masse de chair..."²

The absence of two of the five basic senses symbolizes the child's present and future inability to see and experience reality as a normal human being should. Similarly, Geneviève's infant in Le Refuge impossible was a severe disappointment to her: "L'enfant qu'elle avait souhaité, désiré de toute son âme, cet enfant était beau. Mais Pierre: [...] Non, comment être beau avec une tête aussi grosse!"³ Pierre's physical appearance reflected his mental state. After the infant died Jacques tells his wife: "Notre enfant était un anormal, un pauvre petit être sans défense qui n'aurait jamais été un homme... ni même une bête..."⁴ The infant was also suffering from a "malformation du coeur."⁵ According to

¹ Yves Thériault, La Fille laide (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1950; Les Editions de L'Homme, 1965), p. 124.

² Ibid.

³ Jean Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1957; Ottawa, 1969), p. 34.

⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

the medical report which went beyond the physiological problems: "[Pierre] est ce qu'on appelle un enfant pathologique, celui qui ne peut s'adapter aux circonstances extérieures, ni poursuivre une évolution psychologique permettant une activité normale."⁶ Like Edith and Fabien's child, Pierre was not equipped to confront life because of his physical handicaps. The infant's mental health was also adversely affected, for according to the doctor he would have been an idiot had he survived. The doctor explains to Jacques that, "les idiots n'arrivent pas à communiquer par la parole avec leurs semblables, à se faire comprendre d'eux ou à les comprendre. J'espère que cette définition, qui d'ailleurs n'est pas de moi, vous satisfait."⁷ Definitions such as these are highly significant for they reflect a conscious attempt on the part of the author to link the physical with the mental deficiencies of the handicapped individual. Furthermore, physiological defects which pertain primarily to the visual, aural and oral senses are symbolic of the state of consciousness of many physiologically normal members of society who are unable to comprehend reality as it is, and communicate their aspirations and sentiments to those who form a part of their milieu.

That is not to say that infants who are brought into this world with all of their faculties are spared

⁶Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible, p. 141.

⁷Ibid., p. 143.

the plight of those who are born with defects. Since we are concerned with personal incapacity as it reflects the mental state as well as the physical health of the individual, the infancy stage of development is only one aspect to be considered. The formative years are of great importance also. Physiological problems should become evident as the child begins to develop if the connection between the physical and psychological is to conform with reality. In Au pied de la pente douce, Roger Lemelin takes this into account when he describes the origins of Gaston Boucher's physical state:

Le malheur, pour Gaston, avait été une sorte de vocation. A quatre ans, atteint d'une pleurésie purulente, il s'était vu marqué ensuite d'une rougeole maligne, laquelle "lui avait tombé dans les oreilles", disait sa mère. Devenu sourd, il eut par la suite une voix de fausset. Plus tard, au temps où la thoracoplastie passait encore pour une audace, on lui avait tailladé les côtes. Il guérit, mais ensuite, d'année en année, on avait remarqué qu'il penchait, penchait. Sa colonne vertébrale déviait d'une manière inquiétante. L'épaule droite, que ne soutenait plus la cage thoracique, s'affaissait, emprisonnait le coeur dans un espace trop étroit. L'affection cardiaque en résulta. Le malade se trouvait aujourd'hui à la merci de la moindre émotion.⁸

At the age of twenty-three, Gaston Boucher was a cripple, a half-man and half-child.

Gaston arrivait le plus vite qu'il pouvait, au rythme irrégulier de ses hanches inégales. Il possédait une figure d'homme sur un corps d'enfant, un corps qu'on aurait commencé à défaire avec une masse. Des rides barraient son front et laissaient croire qu'il était toujours à résoudre quelque problème. Sa grande bouche formait aux commissures un pli désabusé et pourtant naïf qui lui donnait cet air anormal de ceux qui souffrent avant que de vivre.⁹

⁸Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 18.

⁹Ibid.

From the physical description of Gaston Boucher we conclude that he has comprehension difficulties as well as problems in communicating with others. It is also evident from his nervous condition and the heart ailment he suffers that he cannot express his sentiments openly and that he has consequently become insincere. Due to the long list of childhood diseases, Gaston Boucher has become a hopeless cripple who cannot cope with the realities of life and consequently dies a premature death.

Although many of the physical handicaps that appear in the novel primarily serve a symbolic function, many simultaneously reveal some important aspects of the society of Quebec before 1960 as well. Physical incapacities are an especially prevalent phenomenon among the less affluent members of society. Poverty is the cause most often cited for the high incidence of physical disabilities among the underprivileged. For example, in L'Argent est odeur de nuit, it is money alone that stops a father from seeking medical help for his crippled daughter:

[Georges] imagina Gaétane poursuivant elle aussi le ballon... une Gaétane forte et resplendissante de santé, avec deux jambes bien droites et musclées... Il pensa: 'toi, petite fille, tu ne peux pas jouer et moi, je n'y peux rien! et cette pensée l'accabla. "Il ne faut pas te faire de la peine, papa. Ce n'est pas ta faute si tu es pauvre."¹⁰

Gaétane's injured knee had not healed properly due to a lack of medical attention. A similar example exists in Au pied de la pente douce. Jean Colin explains how he

¹⁰Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 58.

"[...] Ce que je vas te dire à c'te heure, c'est le plus drôle de toute: imagine-toi donc qu'ils ont ramanché le vieux comme neuf; ils en ont fait un autre homme que je te dis, donné des lunettes, arraché les amygdales, vacciné de la tête aux pieds, bourré de vitamines; ils y ont jusqu'à redressé le nez qu'était un peu de travers. Il va faire un beau mort en tout cas c'ui-là avec ses fausses dents pis son nez redressé." [...] Emmanuel le suivit du regard. Alphonse lui paraissait plus mort que tous les morts de l'avenir qui seraient souchés sur les champs de bataille.¹⁷

Because too many people are complacent, handicapped individuals like Alphonse become "une curiosité"¹⁸ without any hope for the future.

The use of personal incapacity as a device to demonstrate how various obstacles can interfere with the individual during his search for personal values is very effective. The most prominent deformities utilized for this purpose include physical lameness, aural and speech impediments, abnormally small or weak physiques and serious problems resulting from physical unattractiveness. These infirmities are generally not serious enough to threaten survival. However, they are the cause of serious personality problems that interfere with the acquisition of personal values.

Lameness is often indicative of the inner struggle that some individuals undergo in a futile attempt to unchain themselves from their present condition. One of the more interesting of these is Angéline Desmarais

¹⁷Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 280.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 272.

As with other underprivileged people, Jean Colin's poor physical health affected his emotional state:

"Il souffrait d'être d'une génération d'ivrognes, et il ne rechignait pas d'en mourir."¹⁴

The underprivileged are often scorned in various ways by the healthy, affluent members of society. Alphonse in Bonheur d'occasion was held responsible for his poor physical condition because the army doctors at the recruitment centre refused to acknowledge that social conditions could determine one's state of health. Alphonse tells Emmanuel that:

"ils m'emmènent tout nu voir le docteur. 'Ouvre la bouche... Bonguienne! qu'il me dit, j'ai jamais vu tant de dents pourries de ma vie. Vous êtes donc jamais allé voir un dentiste!' Après ça, y en a un autre qui m'a engueulé parce que j'étais pas allé m'acheter des lunettes au lieu d'un sucker quand j'avais dix ans. Mais le plus drôle de la bande, c'est ct'ui-là qui m'a jeté une bordée de bêtises à la face parce qu'au lieu de bon lait pasteurisé j'avais été élevé aux binns pis aux fricassées d'oignons."¹⁵

Along with other painters of the social scene, Gabrielle Roy is aware that physical incapacity forms only a part of the overall picture, for Alphonse's intellectual faculties are found to be as wanting by the army examiners as his general physical condition. Alphonse claims that:

¹⁴Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 302.

¹⁵Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 279.

"ils nous ont questionnés chacun not' petit tour' comme à l'examen de monsieur le curé, sauf qu'au lieu de la communion, c'était pour l'Extrême-Onction qu'on se préparait. Mais ç'a l'air qu'il faut en savoir pas mal même pour la dernière onction. Tu dois avoir passé à travers ça, toi aussi [Emmanuel]. Je sais pas si t'as eu affaire à un officier épais comme le mien: ça doit pas. Il peut pas y en avoir gros qui restent en vie de c'te espèce-là. Le v'là t'y pas qui sert une petite plume en écaille, s'escore comme su un trône, se mouche, se gratte, s'étend les jambes, pis commence à me demander des questions d'arithmétique. Avec une feuille pis un crayon, tout seul pour penser à ma business, beau dommage que j'aurais trouvé la réponse, mais il me braque ça tout en blanc. Il me laisse pas le temps de réfléchir à mes oignons, et la première chose que jé sais pas, le v'là fâché rouge. 'Où c'est que vous avez passé vot' vie pour être si ignorant?' qu'il me dit. --'Où c'est que vous avez passé la vôtre?' Ça devait pas être au bord du canal, hein?' que j'y demande à mon tour. --'Non, ben sûr', qu'il me répond."¹⁶

Alphonse was rejected by the recruitment officers because of his poor physical condition and his low intelligence quotient. He is representative of the group of underprivileged individuals whose futures are seriously handicapped because of personal incapacity.

The lack of concern shown by those who are in a position to help the individuals burdened by personal incapacity is examined by many authors. Gabrielle Roy reveals that in Alphonse's case there was an alternative to the rejection he received from the army. Personal incapacity can be overcome provided that those who have the power to do so are willing to help. Alphonse tells Emmanuel that one middle-aged recruit, who was apparently worse off than he, was given such assistance by the military establishment.

¹⁶Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 278-279.

"[...] Ce que je vas te dire à c'te heure, c'est le plus drôle de toute: imagine-toi donc qu'ils ont ramanché le vieux comme neuf; ils en ont fait un autre homme que je te dis, donné des lunettes, arraché les amygdales, vacciné de la tête aux pieds, bourré de vitamines; ils y ont jusqu'à redressé le nez qu'était un peu de travers. Il va faire un beau mort en tout cas c'ui-là avec ses fausses dents pis son nez redressé." [...] Emmanuel le suivit du regard. Alphonse lui paraissait plus mort que tous les morts de l'avenir qui seraient souchés sur les champs de bataille.¹⁷

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Lameness is often indicative of the inner struggle that some individuals undergo in a futile attempt to unchain themselves from their present condition. One of the more interesting of these is Angéline Desmarais

¹⁷Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 280.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 272.

in Le Survenant. The Christian name, Angéline, conjures up visions of a spiritual being endowed with wings. The surname, Desmarais, sounds like "démarrer" which, with reference to a ship signifies to unmoor or to cast off. Figuratively, Angéline Desmarais was unmoored by the Survenant. What this unattractive country maiden "[qui était] passée fleur depuis plusieurs étés déjà"¹⁹ identified with was the unbridled freedom that the Survenant represented.

Aux yeux d'Angéline, le Survenant exprimait le jour et la nuit: l'homme des routes se montrait un bon travailleur capable de chaude amitié pour la terre; l'être insouciant, sans famille et sans but, se révélait un habile artisan de cinq ou six métiers. La première fois qu'Angéline sentit son cœur battre pour lui, elle qui s'était tant piquée d'honneur de ne pas porter en soi la folie des garçons, se rebella. De moins en moins, chaque jour, cependant.

Elle finit par accepter son sentiment, non pas comme une bénédiction, ni comme une croix, loin de là: mais ainsi qu'elle accueillait le temps quotidien: comme une force, supérieure à la volonté, contre laquelle elle n'avait pas le choix.²⁰

However, Angéline was incapable of following the Survenant in his quest for personal freedom because she was "[une] pauvre boiteuse" "[qui] traînait sa jambe faible, comme une aile blessée."²¹ Before the arrival of the Survenant in the Beauchemin household, she had not questioned the traditional peasant values. Nevertheless, she profited from his experiences of the world that existed outside the farming community of Le Chenal du Moine. Also, the Survenant gave Angéline what she had never experienced before:

¹⁹Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 29.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 65-66.

²¹Ibid., p. 224.

a pride in herself, in spite of her lameness:

Angéline ne comprenait plus rien. Ce qu'elle avait toujours cru une honte, une servitude, une pauvreté du corps, le Survenant en parlait comme d'une richesse; une richesse se complétant d'une richesse semblable cachée en un autre être, quoi? Ses yeux s'ouvraient à la vie. Maintenant, la richesse lui apparaissait partout dans la nature. C'est donc elle la beauté qui épanouit une fleur sur la tige, à côté d'une corolle stérile?²²

He made her recognize that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, and that one is a cripple only if one wishes to be. However, it takes more than a keen desire to become unfettered from the chains that bind the lame to their infirmity. Angéline's love for the Survenant and the freedom he represented was not enough to liberate her from all she knew. She was condemned by her lameness. Consequently, after he left for new adventures she remained bound to the traditional peasant values and to the soil of Le Chenal du Moine.

Just as lameness can be a physical manifestation of one's inability to attain personal freedom, aural and speech impediments shows one's lack of ability to communicate, not only with the outside world, but more importantly, with one's own feelings and sentiments. Two particularly significant characters who suffer these handicaps are Cécile in Le Refuge impossible, and Carolus Vézina in the novel Vézine. They are important not only because their particular physical handicap is revealed to be inextricably related to the problems they experience when they attempt to communicate their feelings to themselves and others,

²² Guévremont, Le Survenant, p. 188.

but also because they are representative of a host of characters who, to a lesser degree, experience similar difficulties in their quest for personal values.

Cécile is a deaf-mute who moved in with her brother Jacques, and his wife Geneviève, shortly after their marriage because there was nowhere else for her to go.

Pour tous ceux qui connaissaient [Cécile], elle était de ces personnes trop douces qui ne s'accordent aucune douceur. Elle ne semblait vivre qu'en fonction de ceux qui l'entouraient et uniquement pour le dévouement qu'on pouvait attendre d'elle. Sa vie n'avait pas d'autre but apparent. Aucune souffrance ne l'effrayait de celles qu'elle pouvait partager.²³

After she moved in with her brother, Cécile continued to play the role of servant that she had occupied in her mother's home. She denied herself everything so that she might better serve her brother and sister-in-law. Her exaggerated concern for others even led her to disregard the speech techniques she had learned, because their use caused the persons with whom she communicated to become uncomfortable. In a letter to Jacques, she revealed:

"J'ai appris à parler parce que les religieuses insistaient pour me l'apprendre et qu'il faut bien obéir à ses supérieurs. Mais, le moins possible j'emploierai ce langage mécanique dont on m'a gratifiée comme d'un don précieux. Comment oserais-je imposer aux autres ces articulations affreuses, ces distorsions pénibles des mâchoires que j'entends quand même malgré ma surdité... oui, que j'entends dans le regard effrayé des autres."²⁴

Cécile is one of those people "[qui] n'acceptait pas des hommes ce que le Ciel lui avait refusé."²⁵ She accepted her

²³Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible, p. 83.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 82-83.

²⁵Ibid., p. 82.

physical handicap, not as an impediment that had to be conquered, but as a way of life that she wanted unchanged. Her resignation is the cause not only of her reticence, but also of the suppression of her feelings and sentiments.

Vézine's physical incapacity is less acute than Cécile's. He is capable of hearing and speaking without too much difficulty. Yet, "Vézine portait sur lui, depuis sa naissance, une difformité qui lui fixait une place définitive hors des autres."²⁶ Because of his deformed left ear, he was unable to sustain an acceptably high opinion of himself.

L'oreille humaine, conformée selon la norme, est un microcosme de la beauté. Comme une fleur épinglée dans une chevelure, l'oreille est un ornement. Elle est vraiment une fleur. [...] Fleur ouverte aux pollens invisibles de la musique et du verbe: fleur qui, par son rhizome sonore, conduit jusqu'à l'âme une lumière articulée.²⁷

Vézine had allowed his unsightly left ear to affect his entire way of life. "La gêne et la honte d'être laid avaient muré Vézine dans son célibat."²⁸ Not only did he feel that he was destined to lead a life of loneliness as a result of his deformity, but like Cécile in Le Refuge impossible, he resigned himself to a way of life he detested without attempting to change it. Furthermore, he displayed that he had a poor self-image in his very

²⁶Trudel, Vézine, p. 17.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 17-18.

²⁸Ibid., p. 49.

demeanour. It is stated in the novel that strangers who met Vézine:

recevaient une impression croissante de faiblesse. Une culotte de mince étoffe, tirée durement par le haut au moyen de petites bretelles, laissait deviner un maigre fessier et une poitrine étroite. Le cou rouge, les favoris taillés en ligne droite sur le lobe de l'oreille, les joues plissées, le nez rond, les yeux brillants et gonflant les orbites, la tête tondue comme celle d'un Frère, tout montrait dans cet homme la faiblesse du célibataire timide. Il parlait du bout de la langue; il disait moi, toi, bien, comme une demoiselle de couvent, ce qui faisait rire. Dans la classification humaine, Vézine venait après la vieille fille et loin derrière elle.²⁹

Vézine's low opinion of himself was reinforced by the individuals in his milieu. His unconventional behavior was often misinterpreted.

Lorsque Vézine avait quelqu'un placé à sa gauche, il devait tourner la tête pour faire porter les paroles dans l'oreille droite; et encore ne comprenait-il pas toujours; au lieu de faire répéter, il souriait sans répondre, essayant de passer pour un malin. On le trouvait stupide. Il s'en apercevait bien et la timidité lui entraît par tous les pores.³⁰

Because of his physical deformity, Vézine was associated by others with the mentally deficient and other handicapped members of society.

The experiences of persons with hearing and speech handicaps not only affects their ability to communicate with the other members of their community. Cécile and Vézine demonstrate that they are also unable to relate to their inner selves. Cécile confesses why she had tended to Geneviève's every need during her sister-in-law's

²⁹Trudel, Vézine, p. 17.

³⁰Ibid., p. 18.

difficult pregnancy in a letter addressed to her brother.

"J'avais besoin de me dévouer à ta cause, à toi. La naissance de Pierre était douteuse, je voulais que, par mes soins, cet enfant vienne au monde malgré tout. De cette façon j'avais l'impression d'être un peu sa mère. Pierre était mon enfant à moi."³¹

After the initial admission, made to herself as much as to her brother Jacques, everything fell into place in her mind. "Je veux te faire un aveu que longtemps je n'eus pas le courage de me faire. Cet enfant, il était le petit être qu'inconsciemment je désirais de toi..."³²

The point that Filiatrault underscores is that Cécile had not been aware of her feelings for Jacques and that this lack of awareness is due, in part at least, to her personal incapacity.

Si [Jacques] avait compris combien elle l'aimait! Ce n'était pas sa faute... rien n'était de sa faute. On ne commande pas à son coeur. [...] Avant ce matin, elle n'eût jamais songé à s'avouer l'amour qu'elle lui portait. Ignorante de son propre coeur, elle eût continué cette vie de timide, cette existence de satellite gravitant autour de son astre d'élection.³³ Comment avait-elle pu se le cacher jusqu'à ce jour?

The author also points out that because Cécile is a deaf-mute who experiences difficulty in communicating with herself as well as with others, she is representative of many physically normal members of society who nevertheless lack personal awareness.

³¹Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible, p. 154.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 152.

"Tout cela était-il possible? Elle, cette Cécile qui ne parle ni n'entend, avait pu, comme tout être normal se cacher un sentiment aussi affreux: Mais à quoi avait servi son isolement puisqu'il ne lui avait pas permis de discerner en son coeur ce qui était le sens de sa vie? En dépit de son infirmité, sa pénible existence l'avait quand même distraite à ce point! Elle était donc cette personne, cette pécheresse!"³⁴

The suppression of feelings and sentiments, over a long period of time, makes one incapable of experiencing normal love when the occasion arises. In Le Refuge impossible, many years of self-denial culminated in Cécile's realization that she was guilty of incestuous fantasies.

In the novel Vézine, Marcel Trudel attempts to show the internal change that takes place before an emotionally handicapped person recognizes and accepts the sentiment of love. The fact that Vézine is forty-three years old and Luce, the girl he loves, is only sixteen is worthy of note, not simply because of the great difference in their ages, but also because Vézine's psychological profile does not vary significantly from that of many child molesters.

"Géné avec les hommes, [Vézine] l'était davantage avec les femmes et plus encore avec les fillettes, car on ne sait jamais si elles rient des autres ou avec eux."³⁵

He compared himself to "un vieil oncle, timide et laid, qu'on estime beaucoup et qu'on n'a pas envie d'embrasser."³⁶

³⁴ Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible, pp. 154-155.

³⁵ Trudel, Vézine, p. 45.

³⁶ Ibid.

At first, "il était pris d'un respect servile pour cette fillette bien élevée, qui avait en elle ce que lui n'avait jamais eu: la beauté, le charme, l'aplomb, le regard espiègle."³⁷ Because of their mutual love of nature, Vézine and Luce often found themselves together picking wild berries, observing creatures in their natural habitat or tending to the swallows that he kept in his attic. Gradually, his feelings for Luce developed into more than a natural affection that an old uncle might experience for his niece. At the Thibault's anniversary party, Vézine finally saw Luce in the company of her peers and he became violently jealous of the attention that she was receiving from Ti-Bert, one of her admirers:

Il regardait Ti-Bert, il avait envie de crier: "Ote-toi, ôte-toi!" La parole grondait dans sa poitrine, elle frémissait, prête à sortir, à emplir la salle, à frapper Ti-Bert d'épouvante. Vézine était jaloux de lui; jaloux de sa belle chevelure, de ses oreilles fines, de sa jeunesse, de ses airs dégagés, de tout ce qu'il savait dire d'amusant, il était jaloux du fauteuil, jaloux du calepin, jaloux du bois d'allumette.³⁸

Luce continued to look upon Vézine as an affectionate uncle. She chided her anxious mother for paying attention to the malicious gossip that busybodies like Mélida were spreading about her relationship with Vézine. She did not realize that he had applied for a highly sought-after government job so that he might appear desirable to her.

³⁷Trudel, Vézine, p. 45.

³⁸Ibid., p. 107.

In his letter of application to the Premier of Quebec, Vézine reveals the extent of his lack of judgement.

In part, "il déclarait au premier ministre qu'il désirait se marier et que c'était le motif qui l'avait déterminé à solliciter un poste qui ne l'intéressait pas, car il avait toujours aimé mieux faire la pêche et aller aux fruitages."³⁹ Vézine's incredible lack of savoir-faire is an outcome of the personal incapacity he experiences as a result of his physical handicap.

Both Cécile in Le Refuge impossible and Carolus Vézina in Vézine are characters who represent more than the restricted life of a small minority of individuals in the society of Quebec who are hampered in their endeavors by physical handicaps. They represent a large number of physically normal individuals who find it difficult to relate to others and impossible to communicate with their inner selves. Because of these difficulties they are often denied the experience of love. If it does come their way, the sentiment is often misdirected and borders upon a form of perversion. Like the lame, those who experience difficulties in the realm of communication often remain chained to their handicap.

For some individuals, physical size can incapacitate as severely as any other form of deformity. Being smaller than normal is a condition that cannot be changed. It is as readily noticable as a lame person's walk, or a

³⁹Trudel, Vézine, p. 185.

deaf person's deformed ear. Also, a psychological link is often made between the physical condition and such notions as narrowness, weakness and unworthiness. Although many characters in the novel suffer from an inferiority complex, the device of limited physical size to represent this group of attitudes has not been used as widely by the authors as some of the other forms of physical disabilities. One of the best examples exists in Robert Choquette's novel, Elise Velder.

Alexis Velder is described as being "pas plus haut qu'une chatte à genoux."⁴⁰ He cannot accept his dwarf-like physique and tries to compensate by arrogant behavior. "De ne pas être grand, ça le remplit d'amertume, ça lui gâte sa vie. [...] Son arrogance, ça est le bri dont il s'entoure, le pauvre enfant. Ça est sa cuirasse, son armure."⁴¹ He not only vents his frustration upon his sister, Elise. He is very cynical about women in general. According to his mother, "[Alexis] en parle ainsi parce que, d'avance, il croit que les femmes se moqueront de lui. 'Au cas' où elles se moqueraient, il souffre, pauvre petit."⁴² More frequently however, Alexis Velder takes out his aggression upon himself. Sometimes, his revolt takes the form of praising those whom he envies. That is

⁴⁰ Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 323.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁴² Ibid.

how he reacted to Marcel Latour, Elise's fiancé: "Se croyant ridicule d'être petit, et incapable d'accepter la chose avec courage, il ravageait sa blessure en louageant chez Marcel Latour précisément cette haute taille qu'il lui enviait."⁴³ More often, however, Alexis punishes himself by frequenting places where strong, athletic men are present.⁴⁴ Because he could not accept his dwarf-like physique, Alexis chose to identify with those he envied:

Alexis avait l'habitude de ces endroits, salles de quilles où l'on joue également au billard, gymnases où boxeurs et lutteurs professionnels font leur entraînement. Ces endroits, il les fréquentait comme d'autres échappent à la réalité au moyen de l'alcool, de la lecture ou du cinéma. Il pratiquait bien le cinéma et les romans policiers, mais c'était véritablement dans des endroits comme celui-ci qu'il sentait s'épanouir en lui tout ce qu'il aurait voulu être, et qui était impossible par la faute de sa petite taille. Dans ces gymnases tout à la glorification du biceps, c'était lui, ces lutteurs aux puissantes épaules, ces boxeurs aux poings implacables; dans ces salles de billard enfumées, où rivalités et rancunes éclatent souvent en chamailleries, c'était lui de toute son imagination, celui des fiers-à-bras qui subjuguait l'autre. Toute une rixe imaginaire prenait place dans l'âme d'Alexis Velder. Cet individu qu'il terrassait en lui-même, il le composait avec des traits empruntés à tous ceux-là qui, un jour ou l'autre, avaient raillé sa petite taille.⁴⁵

Alexis Velder became a prisoner to himself because he chose a life of delusion, bitterness and self-punishment instead of exploring avenues of development that could more than compensate for his slight physique.

⁴³Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 139.

⁴⁴"Il ne s'oublie jamais. Loin de là, il passe des heures dans les gymnases, avec des athlètes, des boxeurs, des lutteurs, la sorte d'hommes dont la vue le fait souffrir, puisqu'ils sont grands et forts, ceux-là." Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 194.

Physical weakness is a variation of the above. Many characters appear in the French-Canadian novel who show signs of physical incapacity without displaying any outward evidence of deformities. Nevertheless, their ability to function is seriously impaired, Alphonsine Beauchemin in both Le Survenant and Marie-Didace who is described as naturally "faible, et d'un naturel craintif",⁴⁶ experiences considerable difficulty in coping with her relatively simple role in the Beauchemin home. Her husband, Amable, is described as being too feeble to perform the normal work load that is required of a farmer. "A l'encavement des pommes de terre,"⁴⁷ for example, Amable demonstrates that he lacks the necessary strength to keep up, not only with the Survenant, but also with his sexagenarian father. "Sans vaillance à l'ouvrage, Amable, verdâtre de fatigue, essayait sur sa manche le sang qui lui coulait du nez."⁴⁸ The poor physical condition in which Alphonsine and Amable Beauchemin find themselves is a common phenomenon among city dwellers. "Il suffit, de prendre un tramway pour en sortir dégoûté. Quelle pauvre humanité!"⁴⁹ Though there may not be any outward signs of physical incapability, many individuals who are in poor physical shape become as debilitated as those who

⁴⁶Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 31.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 42.

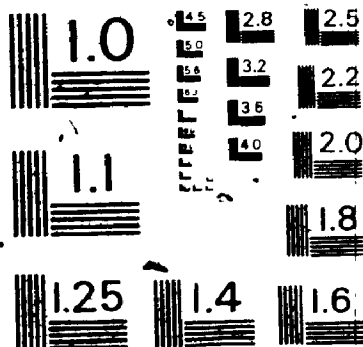
⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁴⁹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 239.

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suffer from more severe deformities. A serious lack in physical strength is often employed as a device by the authors because of the obvious relationship that exists between it and the lack of courage, determination and self-confidence. This physical handicap is particularly relevant to the quest of personal values because the strength to persevere is essential if success is to be attained.

Physical unattractiveness is intimately connected to the question of poor physical fitness. Mathieu Normand admits to Danielle that:

"Ce qui m'a amené ici, je peux bien vous l'avouer maintenant, c'est que je souffrais terriblement d'être laid. [...] Peut-être, concède-t-il après un moment d'hésitation, je n'étais peut-être pas aussi laid que je le croyais... Mais puisque je le croyais, ça revient au même. Et d'ailleurs, qu'importe! Je sais maintenant que j'étais pire que laid! [...] C'est intérieurement que j'étais laid, comprenez-vous?"⁵⁰

Unattractive people react to their milieu like the individuals mentioned above who suffer from more severe handicaps.

For example, Mathieu's attitude towards others is similar to Alexis Velder's, even though the root causes are different in the two cases. Mathieu claims:

"Je ne cessais pas d'envier les autres, de les haïr, de les mépriser, d'exiger d'eux une considération que moi-même je n'accordais à personne. Je croyais que le bonheur m'était dû et que tous mes déboires tenaient à une incroyable injustice du sort... Je ne m'attardais pas à penser que j'étais, peut-être pas complètement, mais du moins en grande partie, responsable de ce qui m'arrivait."⁵¹

⁵⁰ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 344.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 344-345.

It is apparent from the novels studied that ugliness is not only one element which forms a crucial part of the overall problem of personal incapacity, but that it accompanies each of the separate forms of it. All of the characters examined above; Angéline Desmarais, Cécile and Vézine, Alexis Velder, Amable and Alphonsine, Mathieu Normand, all of these characters, each suffering from a distinct physical disability, find themselves very unattractive indeed. There is one character, however, who demonstrates just how debilitating physical unattractiveness can be. She is Edith; the central character in Yves Thériault's novel, La Fille laide.

Edith had moved from the plains "où elle fut battue par les siens, à cause qu'elle est laide,"⁵² to the mountain hamlet of Karmac. Her father and brothers had used the unfortunate girl as a scapegoat whenever misfortune occurred in the family.⁵³ No one wanted her in their company because of her ugliness. Soon she began to doubt whether she had the right to love others, especially after she met the strong, handsome Fabien.⁵⁴ It did not take long for her to realize that the majority of the inhabitants of Karmac were not any more sympathetic towards her than the people of the plains. In fact,

⁵²Thériault, La Fille laide, p. 8.

⁵³"J'étais la guigne, le porte-malheur, le sort jeté sur eux. Voilà ce qu'ils disaient." Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁴Ibid., note pages 43 and 44 especially.

strangers are apt to be more critical than one's native people. Edith discovered this one day when her mistress, Bernadette Loubran, vociferously accused her of being ugly and useless:

Edith avait les yeux grands, et le rouge sur toute la face. Et elle haletait comme une chienne apeurée... "Je halète comme une chienne", songeait-elle, "je suis une chienne. Une chienne laide, un mauvais animal de fossé boueux... Je suis laide... Voilà le mot, et il a été dit. Je le savais et on ne me l'a jamais dit..." 55

Edith's initial reaction is to lash out against society.

"Je tuerai! hurla-t-elle, et ce fut au tour de Bernadette de reculer. Je tuerai, à cause de cette laideur et de ma bouche sans sourire...! Je vous tuerai, vous, et tous les autres... Tout le monde, chaque homme de cette terre, et chaque femme, parce que vous avez des yeux. Des yeux pour me voir!" 56

However, in keeping with the general practice of the peaceful majority of those who are physically handicapped, the heroine of La Fille laide suppressed her anger. In the long run she took out her pent-up aggression upon herself.

[Edith] vécut des heures et des jours, travaillant sans relâche, mordant dans sa douleur, mordant dans sa rage, retenant les gestes pour ne rien briser.

Une fois, seule dans sa chambre, elle alluma la lampe, et se regarda dans le miroir: [...] Le lendemain, elle se coupa les cheveux. Pas en un geste modéré, pour que la tête soit embellie, et le visage dégagé, mais en quatre coups de ciseaux rageurs. Elle tailla sa tignasse noire et terne, et les cheveux tombèrent de chaque côté d'elle. [...]

Le lendemain matin, quand elle se leva, elle ne peigna pas les cheveux trop courts, et les laissa ainsi raides. (Maintenant, elle a les cheveux qui descendent, droits, inégaux, et elle est doublement laide.) 57

55 Thériault, La Fille laide, p. 32.

56 Ibid., p. 33.

57 Ibid., p. 34.

Even characters who are socially more fortunate than Jean Colin, like Jean Sirois in Le Gouffre a toujours soif, are frequently hampered by their personal histories. Sirois feels handcuffed to his mediocre position as draftsman in an engineering firm. He has no hope of advancing into the higher ranks, but not because he could not be a competent engineer.

Sirois serait capable de passer les examens, depuis le temps qu'il travaille. Il a d'ailleurs étudié aussi la théorie qu'il connaît sur le bout de ses doigts. Mais il n'est pas admissible aux examens parce qu'il n'a pas suivi le cours régulier.⁵

Also, there are events hidden in the past that cause many middle-class people to become victims of their personal histories. For example, Fabienne Deschamps, Emile Dubreuil's long-time secretary in Rideau de neige, refuses the love of her boss' nephew Pierre, in spite of her own strong feelings for him, because of, "la différence d'âge, de situations, mon histoire passée, enfin tout ce qui nous sépare à jamais, qui rend toute la chose absurde."⁶ In fact, Fabienne has refused to consider ever getting married for fear that her past might become known, thus compromising her illegitimate daughter's future:

"Ginette ne manque de rien. Elle est reçue partout sans arrière-pensée. Personne, sauf [Françoise], moi, les Dubreuil, ne connaît son histoire. Me marier c'est risquer de tout remettre en question, remuer des souvenirs du passé, ranimer des fantômes..."⁷

⁵André Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif (Québec: L'Institut littéraire du Québec, 1953; Montréal: Fides, 1968), p. 75.

⁶Gagnon, Rideau de neige, p. 170.

⁷Ibid., p. 159.

Pierre's wretched condition: "'Si ton enfant est né anormal, n'est-ce pas ma faute [...] ? Si je n'avais pas tant fait, il ne serait pas né...'"⁶⁰ However, the majority always feels that someone else should shoulder the responsibility. For example, Fabien's love for Edith in La Fille laide turned to disdain after the birth of their handicapped son. "'Mais comment donc l'as-tu fait, cet enfant? Et qu'avais-tu dans le ventre qui le rende ainsi?'"⁶¹ Fabien was not willing to accept that he might be responsible:

"Ma semence était bonne, comme elle doit être! C'est la friche ensemencée qui était mauvaise. La mauvaise friche de femme laide, au corps sec! Comme la terre sans eau. Le corps sec, le ventre sans sucs pour faire l'enfant. Voilà ce qui a été. La semence? Mais qui blâmera la semence en voyant en quelle terre elle a été jetée!"⁶²

Fabien's biblical allusion to the good seed falling upon unfertile ground is a popular notion voiced by many authors during this era of pessimism in the literary history of Quebec.

Individuals who are different because of physical disabilities or as a result of mental and attitudinal dissimilarities are singled out for special treatment by society. Generally, the abuse they receive is in the form of ridicule. In Le Survenant, the farmers of Le Chenal du Moine, "se moquaient d'Angéline Desmarais"⁶³ because she

⁶⁰Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible, p. 157.

⁶¹Thériault, La Fille laide, p. 124.

⁶²Ibid., p. 127.

⁶³Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 129.

was lame. In Marcel Trudel's novel, everyone mocked Vézine for his deformed left ear. "Pour les uns, c'était une oreille de chauve-souris; à d'autres, elle rappelait la coquille d'un limaçon; et souvent, de loin, les enfants chantaient à Vézine: 'Colimaçon, montre tes cornes ou je te tue!'"⁶⁴ Those who are abnormally small are called "petite brute",⁶⁵ like Alexis Velder. Others like Amable Beauchemin have to put up with disparaging remarks because of their poor physical condition.⁶⁶ Those who are ugly like Edith do not want to be seen in public for fear of being jeered at.⁶⁷

In Vézine, Luce Thibault asks: "Pourquoi se moquait-on de Vézine, puisqu'il était un homme différent des autres?"⁶⁸ One could pose the same question for any of the handicapped people studied above. The answer to the question is not simple, for people do not mock others out of cruelty alone. They also act out of fear. Individuals who are different are suspected of being the cause of misfortune. It is for this reason that Féda Colin in Au pied de la pente douce does not want to do anything that might offend the Boucher family: "'C'est le bossu [Gaston] qui peut nous jeter un sort.'"⁶⁹ Vézine is also

⁶⁴Trudel, Vézine, p. 18.

⁶⁵Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 34.

⁶⁶"Le flanc-mou: Va-t-il encore s'éreinter, quoi!" Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 43.

⁶⁷Thériault, La Fille laide, p. 13.

⁶⁸Trudel, Vézine, p. 57.

⁶⁹Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 49.

suspected of being "un jeteu' de sorts."⁷⁰ Some are even accused of corrupting innocent children.⁷¹ Treatment such as this leads some individuals, like Edith in La Fille laide to escape to a different milieu, only to find that strangers are just as cruel. The majority, like Cécile in Le Refuge impossible, are coerced into departing.⁷²

In Trudel's novel, "Vézine était parti, n'emportant avec lui qu'un peu de linge et de menus souvenirs de famille."⁷³

In Elise Velder, the urban Latour family is too sophisticated to order the dwarf-sized Alexis to leave Montreal.

However, someone in the influential family, "trouverait au petit Velder une situation en dehors de Montréal, assez payante pour qu'il n'hésitât point à l'accepter."⁷⁴

Like the vulture preying upon the weak and dying, a ruthless society suspects, ridicules, accuses and banishes any member of the group who is different.

Personal incapacity is often used as a device to symbolize those Quebeckers who did not recognize how precarious their situation was under the regime of Maurice Duplessis. Like the blind, some could not see what transpired under the leadership of "le chef". Among

⁷⁰Trudel, Vézine, p. 123.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²"Mais il faut qu'elle parte d'ici. Comprends-moi, j'ai peur d'elle," insiste Geneviève." Filiatrault, Le Refuge impossible, p. 81.

⁷³Trudel, Vézine, p. 219.

⁷⁴Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 324.

those who could there were the deaf-mutes who either did not understand what they heard or could not communicate it to others. Like the lame, the abnormally small and the feeble, those with insight saw how corrupt the Duplessis regime was, but they lacked the necessary ability, competence or strength to do anything about it. The symbol also represents those in society who are striving to acquire personal values. This group is fettered by a force that is even more powerful than the influential political machine of the day. All of society preyed upon this group's weaknesses, like the vulture that feasted daily upon the liver of Prometheus, and rapaciously consumed their every life-giving desire. Those who sought to attain the personal values that prevailed outside the existing social system were forced into submission by the powerful majority which insisted that everyone maintain the status quo.

CHAPTER V
CHAINED BY PERSONAL HISTORY

By personal history we mean the sum total of what has occurred in the past to influence the development of an individual. Everyone in society is a product of history. However, the person who searches for a set of personal values is particularly aware of the part that personal histories play in determining how one will react in the present. Like the duckling that must break out of its shell before attaining freedom, the individual who wants to live by his own values discovers the necessity of breaking loose from the powerful dominance of his personal history over the other aspects of his existence.

One's history often acts as an obstacle to the attainment of one's goals. This is especially true with regard to the sentiment of love where personal background is often very important. In the peasantry for example, it is important that the beloved be a member of the rural community. In Vézine, Carolus Vézina experienced typical feelings regarding his background after he became attracted to Luce:

[...] [Vézine] compare son passé, plein de privations, de coups de fêrule, de vie close et surveillée, à celui de la belle enfant choyée, de la benjamine qui obtenait de son papa tout ce qu'elle voulait. Il trouve ces deux vies si différentes l'une de l'autre, si éloignées, impossible à rejoindre!¹

¹Trudel, Vézine, p. 152.

However, the same kind of peasant background also determines how ambitious farm girls react to love after immigrating to the city. Louise in La Veuve, refused to date farmers after she became established in Quebec City because she was afraid that she might fall in love with one who would ask her to return to the rural community.² Similarly, in Rideau de neige, Françoise Létourneau's choice to remain single was influenced by her experiences as a child.

Issue d'une famille de colons du Lac Saint-Jean, [Françoise] ne pouvait secouer le souvenir de la cabane paternelle, du grouillement de la marmaille autour du poêle, de l'omniprésence des mouches, des cris, de l'énorme fatigue qui courbait les épaules de sa mère. Elle avait fui cette promiscuité, se jurant de vivre seule plutôt que de jamais se soumettre au risque de retrouver l'esclavage domestique.³

As well, there are many workers who regard their background with disdain. Raised in the working-class slums of St. Sauveur, Jean Colin does not believe that he will win Lise Lévesque's affection, especially with the more fortunate Denis Boucher for a rival:

Jean n'était pourtant pas déçu, puisque l'espoir, pour lui, ce n'était jamais vrai. [...] Lise n'était pas faite pour lui, Jean. Elle ne connaissait pas la saleté des manufactures, elle ignorait la paie qu'on nous arrache. Boucher était étudiant, il n'avait pas ce passé inquiet d'enfant ouvrier pour le tirer par en bas. Il vivait dans la magie des livres merveilleux qui ne vous parlent que d'avenir. Denis l'avait volé, tout le monde l'avait volé. Le bon Dieu l'avait volé de l'avoir mis dans un trou pareil, lui qui aurait voulu être un grand homme comme devait les aimer Lise.⁴

²Ouvrard, La Veuve, see pages 94 and 149.

³Maurice Gagnon, Rideau de neige (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1957), p. 129.

⁴Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 112.

Even characters who are socially more fortunate than Jean Colin, like Jean Sirois in Le Gouffre a toujours soif, are frequently hampered by their personal histories. Sirois feels handcuffed to his mediocre position as draftsman in an engineering firm. He has no hope of advancing into the higher ranks, but not because he could not be a competent engineer.

Sirois serait capable de passer les examens, depuis le temps qu'il travaille. Il a d'ailleurs étudié aussi la théorie qu'il connaît sur le bout de ses doigts. Mais il n'est pas admissible aux examens parce qu'il n'a pas suivi le cours régulier.⁵

Also, there are events hidden in the past that cause many middle-class people to become victims of their personal histories. For example, Fabienne Deschamps, Emile Dubreuil's long-time secretary in Rideau de neige, refuses the love of her boss' nephew Pierre, in spite of her own strong feelings for him, because of, "la différence d'âge, de situations, mon histoire passée, enfin tout ce qui nous sépare à jamais, qui rend toute la chose absurde."⁶ In fact, Fabienne has refused to consider ever getting married for fear that her past might become known, thus compromising her illegitimate daughter's future:

"Ginette ne manque de rien. Elle est reçue partout sans arrière-pensée. Personne, sauf [Françoise], moi, les Dubreuil, ne connaît son histoire. Me marier c'est risquer de tout remettre en question, remuer des souvenirs du passé, ranimer des fantômes..."⁷

⁵André Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif (Québec: L'Institut littéraire du Québec, 1953; Montréal: Fides, 1968), p. 75.

⁶Gagnon, Rideau de neige, p. 170.

⁷Ibid., p. 159.

Personal history, very often limits the options that are open to an individual who has aspirations that go beyond the standards set by society. Everyone is a product of history, regardless of social status.

In a symbolic way, the backgrounds of many characters in the novel parallel what has happened during the development of the province of Quebec. In a great many novels, the reader is presented with one or several characters who are bereaved of their parents, who are abandoned children, or who are orphans in a metaphorical sense. In Un soir d'hiver for example, Marion Val was abandoned as an infant, and Firman Bouchette, the young man she loves, is fatherless. Carolus Vézina in Vézine, an orphan in his youth, was raised by his grandmother. Alain and Marthe Villemure in Le Mauvais pain, and Georges Langis in Délivrez-nous du mal did not have fathers. In Rideau de neige, Fabienne Deschamps' mother, her only parent, died while she was in university, as did both of Jean Sirois' parents in Le Gouffre a toujours soif. In the novel Mathieu, the hero's father abandoned both Mathieu and his mother and only returns to them to die towards the end of the novel. There are a multitude of characters who are orphans in a metaphorical sense also. Among these, André Dastous in Délivrez-nous du mal, Claudie Montreuil in Visage de fièvre, and Jean Colin in Au pied de la pente douce are typical. Many French-Canadian authors create a link between the personal histories of their principal characters and the history of the

province of Quebec.

After the conquest of Quebec in 1759, all of the seigneurs, businessmen and community leaders who had the means abandoned Quebec and their countrymen and returned to France. The clergy was the only segment of the population remaining behind which could possibly fill the void that had been created in the leadership. Closely paralleling historical events, Quebec literature abounds in examples of orphans who were either abandoned as a result of death or simply because one or both of the parents refused to accept the responsibility of their upbringing. It is not by mere coincidence that these children find themselves under the charge of the clergy, for they often represent the agrarian population which had been entrusted in the care of the priests, brothers, and nuns after the Conquest. The early clerical leaders had been trained as missionaries whose chief aim was to instil the fear of God in the souls of pagans who would then become their converts. They lacked the patience to be effective community leaders and loving parents. Nevertheless, they undertook the "pénible devoir",⁸ becoming the disciplinarians of the leaderless population which had been abandoned by France. The harsh treatment meted out by the clergy is examined by Jean Pellerin in Un soir d'hiver, both in the context of Firman Bouchette's cruel experiences at school, as well as by Marion Val's

⁸Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 25.

severe upbringing. Although he is a layman, Marion's step-father, Anselme Val believed in the notion that: "[...] il y a des limites à la patience divine: Le bras de Dieu est terrible... Il s'abat, parfois... au détour du chemin, pour arrêter le pécheur et le précipiter, à jamais, dans l'abîme de son malheureux destin."⁹

Consequently, Marion's home environment was every bit as frightening as the atmosphere that existed in the strictest of orphanages, as Firman Bouchette discovers:

"Je compris, tout de suite, la gravité de la situation. Ce fameux 'lui' ... se dressait, constamment, entre nous deux, si bien qu'il me terrifiait, moi aussi. Il était la hantise de Marion. Elle ne décidait rien sans s'inquiéter, d'abord, de ce qu'il devenait ... à quelle heure il rentrerait ... est-ce qu'il ne finirait pas par savoir... Les inquiétudes constantes de la pauvre fille avaient engendré, chez moi, un solide sentiment de répulsion à l'égard de ce père despotique et ténébreux [...]."¹⁰

It is interesting to note that when problems arise that do not have moral overtones, the mighty disciplinarians are at a loss for solutions. It is because she does not receive practical guidance from her father that Claudie Montreuil in Visage de fièvre has little regard for him as head of the family. "Si [Claudie] aimait bien son père, elle lui en voulait aussi de cette faiblesse et cette fragilité qu'elle tenait de lui."¹¹

⁹Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, pp. 71-72.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 156.

¹¹Viviane Da Silva, Visage de fièvre (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960), p. 30.

Similarly, M. Dastous in Délivrez-nous du mal is a weakling in his son's eyes because he lacks the wherewithal to be a source of inspiration for him. "'Mais aujourd'hui, 'mon père qui êtes dans votre bureau', vous parlez fort, vous êtes turbulent, vous élevez la voix, c'est rare,"¹² remarks André to himself during the course of a confrontation they had over the younger Dastous' "immoral" activities. M. Dastous had been made aware of his son's homosexuality. He promptly ordered his thirty-year-old offspring to become heterosexual, but not before revealing a great deal about himself:

"Après tout, tu as peut-être hérité de moi ceci: les femmes ne m'intéressent pas, comprends-moi bien. J'aurais dû devenir...je ne sais pas moi...entrer dans les ordres comme j'en avais envie. [...] Oui, je voulais devenir dominicain. [...] Moine, c'est ce que je fus toute mon existence. Tu sais ce qu'on dit de moi là-haut? que je travaille comme un 'moine' et c'est vrai. On fait allusion à mes méthodes lentes mais claires et efficaces, à mes études fouillées, à mes rédactions de mémoires minutieuses, détaillées."¹³

That many parents identify with the clergy does not only indicate that many generations of Quebeckers have received a restricted upbringing. It also demonstrates how profoundly Quebec's historical events have influenced the daily activities of an entire population.

The woman's role, both as mother and wife, was greatly affected by the close resemblance of the male head of the family with the clerical leader of the parish

¹²Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 182.

¹³Ibid., pp. 185-186.

in significant spheres of action. In Visage de fièvre, Claudie's mother interprets M. Montreuil's monastic existence as a form of rejection.

Madame Montreuil n'était pas une femme sotte, mais elle s'était aigrie à vivre seule. Son mari était un rêveur qui se retirait trop aisément dans sa solitude sans paraître se soucier d'avoir près de lui une femme de chair et de sang avec des goûts, des sentiments et des aspirations. Ni l'un ni l'autre n'avait jamais appris à se rejoindre. A quarante ans, elle en était là, jeune encore, mais trop aigrie pour être vraiment belle.¹⁴

Because of "cette sourde rancœur que sa mère déversait à flot sur tout l'univers,"¹⁵ Claudie had never been able to tolerate her mother. In Délivrez-nous du mal, André harbours similar resentment for his mother because of her constant complaints regarding M. Dastous' ascetism:

Maman, je ne te demandais que de me consoler et tu profitais de ma détresse pour m'apprendre qui était réellement cet homme. Tu n'avais pas le droit, je le détestais assez comme ça. Ah! maman, ces histoires sordides d'un ménage en complet désaccord ne concernaient pas un enfant de douze ans! Je n'en pouvais plus de le haïr! Je ne voulais pas tant le détester. Cela me rendait malade. Je priais, je priais, je m'usais les genoux en prières. Je demandais pardon à Dieu et à tous ses saints de tant de haine filiale! J'étouffais...¹⁶

Mathieu Normand experienced similar feelings because his mother delighted in the suffering caused by the departure of her husband:

¹⁴Silva, Visage de fièvre, pp. 29-30.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁶Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 183.

[...] Les souffrances imprimées sur les traits durs et secs de Lucienne Normand ne lui inspirèrent qu'un surcroît de rancœur. Pourquoi aurait-il pitié d'elle? Que lui importait son amère jeunesse de fille riche mais laide et cet amour malheureux qui l'avait jetée dans les bras du plus séduisant et du plus faible des hommes? Au nom de quoi blâmerait-il son père d'avoir ruiné et abandonné sa mère après trois années de vie conjugale?

Tant pis pour elle qui avait pris le risque et qui avait au moins retiré quelques avantages de cette union. Pourquoi la plaindrait-il? Ne supportait-il pas, depuis vingt-cinq ans, les mêmes humiliations, la même misère, et sans qu'il y soit pour rien? Avait-il demandé à naître? A naître d'elle, surtout?¹⁷

The common denominator linking the above three families is the intransigent position of the elusive male head of each family. Like the priest who was active in the life of his parish in a detached sort of way, the above paternal figures demonstrate their unwillingness to actively promote the development of the complex human relationships that bind a family together, preferring to rule from a distance. Most of the women resent the harsh, unloving atmosphere that prevails in such a setting. As a result, they provoke feelings of animosity in their children, not only against their fathers, but inadvertently against themselves also.

Some novelists portray Quebeckers as having an ingrained defeatist attitude towards life. This is partially due to the fact that, as a nation, they were conquered by the British in 1759. At first, they did not express a pride in their distinct cultural identity because they were constantly reminded, sometimes threateningly,

¹⁷Loranger, Mathieu, p. 10.

that they were a conquered people. Their deep-seated religious beliefs, especially those involving original sin, personal servitude, and the concept of determinism also contributed to their pessimistic outlook on life. Furthermore, the realities of life furnished most Quebeckers with very little to rejoice about. The youth, who cling desperately to the ray of hope that accompanies their state of innocence, resent the well-intentioned attempts that are made to shackle them to their dreary prospects. Like the hero of Mathieu, many idealists rebel "contre ce répertoire acrimonieux dont [sa mère] a assaisonné son enfance."¹⁸ A list of Lucienne Normand's favorite sayings demonstrates the degree of her pessimism:

"Quand on est né pour un petit pain...né pour souffrir...né pour la misère...S'il y a du bonheur, il n'est pas pour nous...Tu n'as pas été créé pour faire ce qui te plaît...Nous ne sommes pas sur la terre pour être heureux...Le bonheur n'est pas de ce monde... Vie de malheur...Vie injuste...Ah! sale vie!..."¹⁹

What Mathieu discovers is that there is very little chance of escaping from the gloomy predictions presented to him.

Et au collège, ne lui a-t-on pas appris la même rengaine sur un ton différent, sur un rythme grégorien?
 "L'homme condamné à souffrir pour réparer le premier péché, portant dès sa naissance le poids d'une faute qu'il n'a pas commise... La triste condition humaine... La pauvre humanité ployant sous le poids de la douleur... Satan qui veille, la tentation qui rôde, partout le mal, le péché... Souffrez donc pour expier... Il faut souffrir pour mériter le ciel... Offrez vos douleurs au bon Dieu... pliez le front, courbez la tête, repentez-vous..."²⁰

¹⁸Loranger, Mathieu, p. 223.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

French-Canadian idealists are seriously handicapped in their quest for personal values because of the defeatism that forms a great part of their personal histories.

The importance placed upon moral conduct adversely influences many Quebeckers during all stages of life. It plays a particularly significant role during the adolescent stage, as demonstrated in the novel Autour de toi Tristan. Simon Tremblay is anxious about how his son Pascal will reconcile his budding sex drives with the puritanical upbringing he has received, recalling that he had greeted his own adolescence as an evil omen: "Simon se rappelait ses luttes sourdes, les craintes, les gaucheries, les sévérités familiales et collégiales qui l'avaient forcé à accueillir sa propre adolescence comme un maléfice."²¹ Now that he is the mature father of three children, Simon realizes that his childhood beliefs had been oversimplified, for they had neglected to take the human side of Man's complex nature into account.

Simon pensait qu'une religion trop pragmatique avait montré à sa jeunesse des vertus à visage unique, plate monnaie des bonnes intentions qui se dévaluaient souvent aux fluctuations de la très multiple existence. Mais pour les prêtres d'alors, nul chemin possible, à part l'enseignement livresque, un dogme cubique à distribuer d'après une géométrie humaine, limitatrice.²²

Although Simon now recognizes that some influences had poisoned his youth, he is too firmly established in the puritanical ethic to forewarn his son of the pitfalls that lie in the path of his sexual development.

²¹France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 320.

²²Ibid.

Cette clairvoyance ne l'en guérissait pas, car le scrupule ne lui apparaissait qu'une fois dompté. Durant la lutte, l'homme, l'époux, le père devait affronter de lancinantes interrogations. Cette fois encore, et malgré toute sa compréhension, Simon appréhendait la gaucherie d'un échange aveugle. Sa propre puberté l'avait marqué de trop d'angoisses; il craignait de tromper Pascal.²³

As a result, Pascal Tremblay was not spared the moral traumas that had plagued his father's adolescence.

Likewise, Marcel Larocque in La Fin des songes bore the scars of a rigid upbringing well into manhood. While watching his young daughter bathe, he declares: "'Mes yeux sont trop avides pour ne pas gêner.'"²⁴ He is bitter because he cannot rid himself of the absurd notions that form his personal history: "'Petit, on m'a appris à associer l'idée du mal à celle du nu [...]. Je hais ceux qui ont profané mon désir, ces moralistes qui n'ont jamais connu l'innocente chair...'"²⁵ The characters examined in this chapter resent the upbringing they have received because, despite their better judgement, it causes them to suspect that evil lurks everywhere.

In Un soir d'hiver, Firman Bouchette reveals how stifling his upbringing had been: "'J'ai grandi dans une tour... une tour noire. D'un côté, il y avait les yeux vides de ma mère, de l'autre... ceux du moine.'"²⁶

²³France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 322.

²⁴Robert Elie, La Fin des songes (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1950; Fides, 1968), p. 147.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 112.

Firman had been an ambitious student who allowed his curiosity to go beyond the narrow confines of monkish discretion. He was caught reading a censured book,²⁷ and was promptly expelled from the college, but not before being publicly humiliated by the director:

"Depuis longtemps, on surveillait ce sinistre individu... ses agissements louches. Ah! un ermite en apparence... un sage garçon! Allez-y voir! Sous la modestie, se cache le Malin. Malheur à ces esprits forts, ces loups ravisseurs, fêrus de journaux et de littérature anarchiques... sous-produits d'une France déchue... Que Dieu nous garde de cette engeance!" Le directeur reprit haleine et se mit à brandir la brochure au bout de son bras. "Eh bien! lança-t-il avec force, on a maintenant la preuve que c'est ça...: cette ignoble saleté qu'il lisait, lui, le sage garçon, le soir, au dortoir!"²⁸

The high priority that his milieu placed upon ethical principles severely affected Firman's destiny.

Bouchette's girl friend, Marion Val, had also been made a victim of her personal history. Her stepfather in particular had contempt for her because she was an abandoned child: "Ni père...ni mère...ni tante... une fille trouvée...qui a le vice dans le sang!"²⁹

Anselme did not distinguish between a child "born in sin", and a sinful child. Marion claims that:

"Il voit du mal partout! A l'entendre, je suis cousue de défauts...je n'ai que des vices. Par moment, je ne sais plus ce qu'il faut penser. Il y a des jours où il me semble que je n'ai rien à me reprocher; d'autres jours, je me demande si je suis normale; d'autres jours encore, j'ai envie d'être méchante pour de bon...Je ferais n'importe quoi, pour savoir, enfin, ce que je suis."³⁰

²⁷The book was Une petite chose, by Alphonse Daudet.

²⁸Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 25.

²⁹Ibid., p. 202.

³⁰Ibid., p. 164.

Although the circumstances surrounding Marion's birth seem relatively unusual, according to Roman Catholicism, everyone is born in a state of sin. It is the concept of original sin, almost universally acclaimed among Quebeckers, that has contributed more to their defeatism than any other factor. It is widely held that the tendency to sin and depravity is inherent in mankind as a direct result of Adam's sin of rebellion. Parents relentlessly punish behavior that is considered to be evil, rarely rewarding that which is good. The result is that many children, like Marion Val, believe that they are evil. "Je n'ai jamais pu faire que le mal; les personnes qui me connaissent le mieux me le reprochent depuis toujours... Tous ces gens savent ce qu'ils disent."³¹ Mathieu Normand states that because of the emphasis that had been placed upon the concept of sin, he too had led a very unhappy childhood:

Jamais il n'avait été question de joie; tout, au contraire, tendait à l'abolir et à faire ramper les âmes vers le confessionnal. Tout au plus parlait-on de plaisirs innocents, jamais rien qui puisse exalter les enfants et leur faire désirer des bonheurs plus grands.³²

Pascal Tremblay's tragic end in Autour de toi Tristan bears witness to the harmful effects of over-emphasizing questions of morality.

Like all boys his age, Pascal Tremblay began to experience "[les] réactions de la chair à l'obscénité sourde."³³

³¹Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 164.

³²Loranger, Mathieu, p. 223.

³³France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 439.

During the early stages of sexual development, "la curiosité irrépressible"³⁴ is commonly recognized as normal. However, due to "une intégrité sans appel,"³⁵ the yet immature Pascal found himself in an irreconcilable dilemma. The uncontrollable sexual urges he experienced were totally incompatible with his moral and ethical principles. In a state of quandary, "Pascal retrouve sa dureté d'enfant."³⁶ The attempts he made to halt his physical development were all futile.

Ces lointains remous de l'âme ne se sont pas calmés et rejoignent aujourd'hui, dans la sensibilité de Pascal, le souvenir de ses premières faiblesses. Le front courbé, il couvre son visage de ses mains. Le sentiment d'indignité, d'absolution inacceptable, cette impuissance à réparer qui l'a déchiré si fort après la faute, va-t-il donc la connaître encore?³⁷

Because his reasoning faculties were not yet sufficiently developed, he could not accept the internal physical changes that were slowly transforming him into a man. He could not accept that he was like all mortals, vulnerable to change.

Pascal's uncompromising attitude regarding his potential to cause evil is a direct outcome of the moral lessons he had received. He had been taught that man is vulnerable because he is born in original sin. Pascal's aim is to curb the natural tendency to sin that is inherent

³⁴ France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 439.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

in him. Furthermore, because he sees himself as a potential occasion of sin for others, as they are for him, he feels accountable to God whenever evil acts occur in his presence.

A tort ou à raison, les êtres profondément fragiles éprouvent, en certaines circonstances de leur vie, la certitude que cette vulnérabilité même leur est imputable et donc qu'elle les rend coupables en lieu et place de ceux qui les blessent. Pascal devine, grâce à ce sentiment, la très faible responsabilité de scandale applicable à ceux et celles qui l'ont troublé dans sa délicatesse.³⁸

What Pascal is seeking is the unattainable state of complete innocence that had characterized his earlier childhood.

"Maintenant, je sais, le monde est en guerre. Mais tous ensemble, si on essayait de rester pareil dans son coeur, même en grandissant, est-ce qu'on n'arriverait pas à retrouver la paix? Est-ce qu'on ne la rendrait pas de nouveau possible, cette paix d'il y a longtemps? Est-ce qu'on ne sauverait pas des humains? Est-ce qu'on n'aiderait pas ceux qui sont dans le danger? [...] Depuis le jour où l'abbé Grégoire m'a expliqué la communion des Saints... Oui, je sais qu'en restant bon on peut empêcher les autres de devenir mauvais; en faisant des sacrifices on peut repousser le mal. Le mal est inévitable, mais on n'est pas obligé de l'accueillir."

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With all of his childhood naïveté, Pascal Tremblay sought an answer to the dilemma of good and evil that sagacious moralists have been unable to resolve throughout the centuries. On the bank of a lake, he found his answer in the glow of an evening sunset:

³⁸France, Autour de toi Tristan, pp. 438-439.

³⁹Ibid., p. 438.

"Je vais nager sur le chemin d'or avant qu'il ne s'efface. Après je serai guéri. Après je comprendrai maman. Je saurai parler à papa. Je saurai comment aider Paul et comment aimer Maud. Je serai bon avec Anne. Je serai plus près de Tristan. Nous serons heureux. Je pourrai jouer comme avant avec mon petit frère. Je l'emmènerai à cheval. Je composerai des chansons. Je serai doux. Je serai fort. Je serai pur. Oh oui! Je serai pur!..."⁴⁰

Pascal's search for his lost innocence resulted in what was officially called death by drowning.

One proposed solution to the problem of an obstructive personal history is to strive towards complete liberation from it. That was the course chosen by Jean Colin in Au pied de la pente douce, when he realized that his family background hindered his chances of winning Lise Lévesque's affection. He tells Denis Boucher, his rival: "'Oh! moi, ça ne m'occupera plus, les affaires de mes parents. Hier, j'ai tout coupé les attaches. Je recommence à neuf.'"⁴¹ Jean even sold his worm business because he considered it a degrading enterprise. In Mathieu, the hero's aim also was to forget the past by leaving Montreal: "Hormis l'image de Danielle, tout ce qui concernait son passé lui était si odieux que le moins pénible de ses souvenirs lui donnait la nausée. 'Je veux oublier tout cela et me refaire complètement...'"⁴² In effect, what these characters are attempting to do is to rid themselves of their identities because it drags them

⁴⁰France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 441.

⁴¹Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, pp. 160-161.

⁴²Loranger, Mathieu, p. 257.

down rather than allowing them the freedom to evolve. Despatis, one of the characters who participates in the imaginary trial of André Dastous (in Délivrez-nous du mal, explains the point of view held by many French-Canadian intellectuals during the 1950's regarding the identity they shared, both in their own province as well as outside their frontiers.

"Mon nom n'intéresse personne. Je cherche à perdre mon identité de plus en plus. Tout le monde devrait en faire autant. Nous ne sommes personne, nous sommes hors de nous-mêmes, un peu partout, à errer, à chercher les lois du bonheur. [...] J'expliquerai mieux que Kierkegaard, mieux que Heidegger, mieux que Sartre, l'existentialisme parfait. L'action dans l'inactivité concertée et sublimée. Sortir de nous-mêmes, tout est là. Se dépersonnifier, perdre sa petite notion de soi, son identité!"⁴³

The desire of many characters to be delivered from the identity given to them by others is a positive first step towards the attainment of a greater goal: the realization of their full potentials as human beings. The end result is a shedding of the false habitant shroud, thereby exposing the personality that is unique to each individual.

The public images of each individual come together to form the identity of the "typical" French Canadian. Before 1960, the powerless Quebecker thought himself a failure. Certain crucial events in the province's history, particularly those involving defeat, the dictatorial regime of Duplessis which politically subjugated the Quebecker, the unpropitious influence of the Church which

⁴³Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 163.

controlled almost every facet of his existence, and the miserable conditions of his working and home life were daily reminders of his powerless state. In Un soir d'hiver, Firman Bouchette states that the attempts that had been made by the college authorities to foist a preconceived identity upon him were both cruel and wrong.

"Le moine au collège, [...] il m'a jeté un sort! Il m'a dit que j'étais un vicieux...un raté!"
Là, [Firman] baissait la tête, et puis, il ajoutait, entre les dents: "Ça, mon vieux, c'est des choses qu'y faut pas dire! D'abord, parce que c'est pas vrai, et puis, parce qu'on finit toujours par y croire! C'est comme un méchant coup qu'on recevrait sur la caboche. On tourne en rond comme un chien assommé, et il en reste toujours quelque chose..."⁴⁴

Firman adds that it is almost impossible to object when one is being mistreated in this way.

"Ah! bien sûr, je voudrais protester! J'ai toujours voulu protester: c'est ma mauvaise tête qui se redresse encore, la mauvaise tête du criminel qui a toujours d'excellents motifs pour justifier son crime. Il raconte son histoire--une histoire insensée! Il veut expliquer, mais, les gens sérieux, les gens très forts ne croient pas aux histoires insensées! Ces gens-là disent qu'il n'y a rien à expliquer. Ils ont sans doute raison! Alors, à quoi bon discuter?"⁴⁵

Rather than leading to more independence, Firman's personal protest against the system resulted in his expulsion from college and the fulfillment of the monk's prophesy. He was forced to return to the debasing way of life from which he had attempted to escape. "'Eh ben, t'en as un, devant toi, un raté! Regarde-moi: j'étais destiné à une étoile..."

⁴⁴Pellerin, Un Soir d'hiver, p. 110.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 214.

la plus haute: Eh bah, tu vois: je charge de la pitoune sur les chalands!' Il restait, un bout de temps à renifler comme un morveux [...]."⁴⁶ The events that followed, especially Marion's untimely death, supported the allegations that had been made by the authorities regarding Firman's bad character:

"J'entendais encore les paroles de mon ancien supérieur: 'Vous êtes sur la pente: Ça commence par la révolte, ça finit par le vice: Les vicieux... on les arrache, on les coupe, on les jette dehors...'

Ah! ce que j'en ai mis du temps à comprendre! Tout s'explique! Le supérieur avait raison! Je suis marqué; je suis un vicieux, un proscrit... Tout le monde le dit et tout le monde ne peut pas se tromper! Je suis sur le palier d'en-dessous... le palier des assassins!

Au fait, rien de plus facile que d'être un assassin! Il m'a suffi d'une gaffe de potache, un coussinet qui s'écrabouille sur un essieu, et voilà: c'est tout! Sans m'en apercevoir, j'ai tenu mon rôle, et je l'ai bien tenu... tel que prévu!"⁴⁷

The misfortunes that befell Firman Bouchette appeared to conform to the bad reputation he had earned in college.

Because personal history is an essential component of identity, it is impossible to get rid of it without affecting the entire personality in some way. Because André Dastous in Délivrez-nous du mal despised his father⁴⁸ and the work ethic he stood for, at the age of thirty, he was still a "'playboy' désœuvré".⁴⁹ His carefree life style ran counter to the emphasis his father

⁴⁶ Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, pp. 109-110.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 214.

⁴⁸ "Je le hais ce père silencieux, hargneux, détaché de tout [...]." Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

placed upon the value of work and the ascetism that went along with it. Despite his revolt, André retained the Christian beliefs that he considered vital for survival.

"Oui, moi je suis idiot, je crois en Saint Christophe et à tout le reste. Je crois en tout, en toutes choses: en l'astrologie et en Dieu, aux tabous: échelles, chats noirs, vendredis treizé; aux médailles et aux lampions allumés, j'aime ça. Je ne suis pas fort moi, Georges, j'ai besoin de tout ça. Je suis comme ça." 50

Not only was André unsuccessful in his attempt to break all ties that bound him to his personal history, he continued to conduct his life according to the basic principles that had helped to fashion the very history that he would have liked to forget. One of these basic truths is that man is such an imperfect being that he must constantly strive to emulate some external ideal. On the highest spiritual plane, the ideal is personified by Jesus Christ for Christians, Mohammed for Moslems, and Buddha for Buddhists. However, humans can play similar roles in an individual's psychological makeup. For example, André idealized his friend, Georges Langis. At the same time, however, he resented Georges because of the superiority he manifested:

Oui, ah oui, [Georges Langis] est débrouillard: Trop. Moi, je serais perdu, pas lui. Il peut toujours se retrouver, même démuné de tout. Dire que je me suis attaché à un tel gars, un type qui n'a jamais besoin de rien ni de personne. Je l'envie. C'est vrai, je ne le savais pas assez. [...] Je l'ai toujours envié! Que j'ai mal. Je ne l'ai donc même pas aimé? Je n'aime donc personne, personne puisque Georges est le seul être vivant que je 'croyais' aimer. 51

⁵⁰Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 21

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 41-42.

Viviane Da Silva writes in Visage de fièvre that: "Il est parfois dans la vie de ces rencontres bizarres qui décident de vous comme une main détermine les mouvements d'un pantin. Telle avait été cette rencontre de Claudie avec Anne."⁵² Like André Dastous in Délivrez-nous du mal, the eighteen-year-old Claudie Montreuil idealized her new actress friend. Everything that Anne represented became,

une tentative [pour Claudie] d'échapper au milieu qui était le sien et qu'elle détestait. [...] Il lui semblait depuis peu que les années passées dans sa famille, avaient été des années perdues et qu'il fallait bien vite rattraper. Elle commençait à goûter à cette ivresse d'être libre et de prendre sa vie en main, mais elle n'était plus sûre du tout de savoir où cela allait la conduire.⁵³

Claudie, who had always been "indéniablement attirée par la vie artistique,"⁵⁴ became immediately enchanted by Anne's life style:

L'attitude, les opinions, toute la vie d'Anne l'appelaient, l'attiraient au point de réduire sa propre personnalité à une ombre. Elle n'avait plus qu'un seul désir: s'assimiler à "elle", à "eux tous". Et Anne était "eux tous."⁵⁵

Although Claudie began to rely less upon her family and background, she did not become independent.

Graduellement les sentiments de dépendance s'accroissaient chez Claudie. Elle en vint à considérer Anne comme sa raison de vivre. Toutes ses forces étaient tendues pour se rapprocher d'elle. C'est ainsi que désireuse d'imiter cette liberté et cette promiscuité sans façon qu'elle enviait tellement chez Anne, elle voulut avoir sa petite aventure [...]. Pour Claudie qui venait d'un milieu bourgeois et rigide, cette seule pensée avait quelque chose d'excitant et constituait une sorte de défi qu'il lui fallait relever.⁵⁶

⁵²Silva, Visage de fièvre, p. 13.

⁵³Ibid., p. 17.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 14

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 41

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 15.

Unlike André Dastous and Claudie Montreuil, Georges Langis in Délivrez-nous du mal, an immigrant from the Lac Saint-Jean area, never sought to emulate another human. From early childhood, Georges had the confidence that he would become "un être supérieur [...] supérieur en tout, à tous."⁵⁷ Unable to accept the fact that he was a mere mortal, he rebelled against society, rather than concentrate upon improving the qualities he did possess.

"Vraiment je ne pouvais pas accepter de devenir quelqu'un comme tout le monde. Oui, quelqu'un avec un ventre, des tripes, un estomac, une bouche. Je me suis pris, oh! ça a commencé très jeune, pour un dieu, pour un génie. Ça arrive souvent tu vas me dire mais pour moi, c'est plus grave, car à mesure que je me rendais compte de n'être pas différent des autres, n'être pas plus intelligent que la moyenne des gens, je me butais."⁵⁸

In a variety of cruel ways, Georges vented his frustrations upon André, the man who idealized him. He not only lived off André's money like a shameless gigolo, he also despised his benefactor for his weaknesses.

"Georges rendait [André] impuissant, incapable de se gouverner, bête, crétin, canaille. Je l'ai entendu cent fois, mille fois lui parler comme on n'oserait pas parler à son chien. Maintes fois, je l'ai vu le battre, le ridiculiser en public. Ce monstre ne reculait devant rien. Les paroles les plus cyniques étaient son vocabulaire coutumier, les gestes les plus cruels..."⁵⁹

Despite his behavior, there is an affinity between Georges, Claudie and André, for like them, all he did was rebel

⁵⁷Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 105.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 161.

against being a failure. All ties with his family and previous background were broken, so his aggression had to find another avenue of escape. "J'enrageais. Je maudissais le sort, la vie, la société. Tout le monde, le monde entier était responsable de mes échecs, de mon existence ratée."⁶⁰ Georges Langis did not restrict his attacks to his family and background. Society was his battlefield, and everyone in it was his enemy.

The individuals who, in order to facilitate a break with their deplorable personal histories, adopted a different identity, soon came to realize that they were the victims of their newly acquired existence. For example, when André Dastous became aware of the extent of his dependence upon Georges, he decided to change his way of life. "Oui, j'ai juré de me débrouiller seul désormais. J'ai, moi aussi, besoin de me mesurer avec l'existence, comme [Georges], comme tout le monde."⁶¹ However, he discovered that the man he idealized was "comme une drogue,"⁶² and he frequently gave up the struggle, like the evening he spent in a gay bar waiting for Georges:

Mais ce soir, je suis venu et je te le dirai enfin, je suis venu pour boire et ne pas l'oublier. Non, je ne veux plus l'oublier, puisque je ne peux pas. Je sais au moins cela, je ne peux pas. Je suis venu ici attendre, attendre le jour et l'heure où enfin, Georges consentira à faire la paix.⁶³

⁶⁰ Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 105.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 107.

⁶² Ibid., p. 64.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 69.

Except for the rare moments when he capitulated, André remained determined to see his project through to the end.

"Il me faut trouver le courage et la force de lui résister [...]. Je vais désormais lui montrer le chemin de l'amitié véritable et c'est ainsi que je défais avec vigueur tous les signes extérieurs de son règne démentiel. Plus rien ne subsistera de son passage. Je décroche tout, je défais tout, j'efface."⁶⁴

André rationalized that the only way he would succeed was if he killed Georges:

"Je changerai [Georges], puisque ce soir, j'ai décidé de le tuer. Oui, de le tuer, mon Dieu. Je ne vois aucun autre moyen de [le] sauver de lui-même. Je me damnerai pour le sauver. Je sais que vous accepterez, Dieu de bonté et de miséricorde, son âme malheureuse en échange de la mienne qui ne peut servir à personne, si ce n'est à lui. Ainsi, il ne pourra plus risquer la vie de l'âme de Lucille ni celle de personne."⁶⁵

Using a line of reasoning similar to that which led Pascal Tremblay to commit suicide, André decided to forfeit his eternal salvation so that Georges and those with whom he came into contact would be saved. This act demonstrates not only that he could not reasonably change his present identity at will, but that he had also retained strong links with the personal history that had preceded "l'époque 'Georges décidera.'"⁶⁶

Before his untimely death, Georges Langis had also made an attempt to change his existence, for he too

⁶⁴Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, pp. 94-95.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 102.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 94.

had come to realize that André was a bad influence on him:

"Voilà mon ennemi: ton amitié [...]. Tu m'encourageais à me mentir. Tu applaudissais trop à mes petites crises. Tu m'as fait beaucoup de tort André, je sais, tu ne pouvais pas savoir et je jouais si bien le génie méconnu, incompris. Maintenant, je crois que c'est fini. Oui, je vais apprendre à être quelqu'un comme tout le monde. Si possible, je vais essayer de devenir quelqu'un de mieux que tout le monde, mais cette fois, sans crier, sans boire, sans frapper, sans blasphémer. Ce sera difficile."⁶⁷

However, Georges cannot realize his goal without André's assistance, for he requires \$10,000.00 to found the magazine that would give him a feeling of independence.

In Visage de fièvre, the enormous influence that Anne had upon Claudie endured long after the young girl's initial infatuation with the actress had passed. Alain, Claudie's drama instructor and confidant,

connaissait l'ascendant d'Anne sur Claudie et cette histoire l'ennuyait énormément. Il se rendait compte que cette influence néfaste la paralysait, l'empêchait de laisser couler le talent dont elle était toute pleine. Chaque fois que Claudie arrivait, il pouvait presque lire sur son visage les péripéties de sa dernière rencontre avec Anne, tellement il était devenu attentif à ses moindres réactions.⁶⁸

Anne's presence was an obstacle to Claudie's acting career, just as her personal history had hampered her from realizing her childhood fantasies before she met Anne. Like André and Georges in Délivrez-nous du mal, Claudie Montreuil became a victim to her newly acquired existence.

⁶⁷Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, pp. 105-106.

⁶⁸Silva, Visage de fièvre, p. 63.

The homosexual relationships depicted in both Délivrez-nous du mal and Visage de fièvre are particularly relevant to the question of identity. The theme of homosexuality symbolizes a complete break from the traditional standards of morality which are so important to the identity and personal history of French Canadians. It also demonstrates a lack of awareness on the part of the character, or a refusal to play the sex role that society considers appropriate. Just as these characters demonstrate a confusion in their sexuality, they are also bewildered by the identity they have assumed. Whereas in Un soir d'hiver, Firman Bouchette's identity at college likened him to the "sous-produits d'une France déchue,"⁶⁹ it is significant that the identity chosen by the principal characters of Délivrez-nous du mal and Visage de fièvre is distinctly American in outlook. Claudie Montreuil was attracted to Anne because she exemplified the glamour of Hollywood. The bulk of the action in Délivrez-nous du mal takes place in the Eastern United States, particularly at Old Orchard Beach, which was a favorite vacation spot of many Quebeckers during the 1950's. In the novels mentioned above, the theme of homosexuality not only illustrates an unwillingness to assume the traditional Quebec identity. It also indicates a distinct inclination to exchange a restrictive personal history for a laxer way of life.

⁶⁹Pellérin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 25.

Failure is the usual outcome for those who lose sight of their personal history by assuming in toto an identity which is foreign to them. Georges Langis, who had harassed the guilt-ridden André during their entire relationship with statements like: "'Viens, allons au 'ball-room', nous danserons ensemble, pressés, collés, comme deux frères siamois,"⁷⁰ was assassinated by his benefactor. Claudie Montreuil's life, plagued by guilt because of her lesbian relationship with Anne,⁷¹ became a "véritable cauchemar"⁷² after she met Vincent, but fell in love with Alain, her drama teacher. The young girl quickly became greater than the star she had idealized. However, in the process, she never succeeded in finding her real identity. Paralyzed by remorse and "la culpabilité,"⁷³ André Dastous faces a long prison term, if he is lucky enough to escape the hang-man's noose. Along with Firman Bouchette in Un soir d'hiver, the principal characters of Délivrez-nous du mal and Visage de fièvre are all failures because, in their search for an identity, they have looked everywhere except inside themselves.

⁷⁰Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 36.

⁷¹Silva, Visage de fièvre, p. 38.

⁷²Ibid., p. 40.

⁷³Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 152.

Individuals in quest of personal values quickly discover that one's personal history interferes with the search as much as personal incapacity does. The repeated military and political defeats which characterize the history of the province are deeply felt by individual Quebecers, even centuries after the events have taken place. In their private lives, they transform these feelings into the images they have of themselves as failures. The spiritual background is particularly significant because it has left them with concepts that are not relevant to contemporary life styles. There are individuals who cannot adapt to the modern world with the traditional notions that form their personal histories. They try to wipe the slate clean and forget all about their background. However, as one author put it: "On ne peut jamais vraiment se défaire du passé: c'est à cause des racines de l'homme."⁷⁴ Because one needs reference points as a guide in recognizing reality, it is most difficult, if not impossible, to get rid of one's personal history. Many individuals who attempt it do little more than substitute a glossy foreign life style, especially one that resembles the American experience, for the personal history that is theirs. The most unfortunate individuals cast off their personal histories without first establishing the reference points they need. They quickly find themselves in an appalling state of solitude.

⁷⁴Thériault, Cul-de-sac, p. 29.

CHAPTER VI
CHAINED BY SOLITUDE

Man is a social being. The incompatibility between the traditional values of society and the personal values of the individual produces alienation in society. The resulting condition is what we have termed the state of solitude. It involves not only a physical seclusion and emotional isolation, but also a kind of moral remoteness from the other members of society. The state of solitude is characterized by a lack of companionship and intense loneliness.

There are two aspects to the question of solitude, each one producing a characteristic behavior model. Individuals may be viewed as being composed of contradictory forces, described by Freud as Eros and Thanatos, and it is often fate that determines which of the forces will dominate, life or death. The hero of Gabrielle Roy's novel, Alexandre Chenevert, feeling trapped by all of the activity in Montreal, "s'était plaint que la solitude lui manquât."¹ He retreated to Lac Vert, an isolated area of Quebec to regain his health and emotional equilibrium: "Et alors, sans plus de subterfuges possibles, il sut qu'il était devant celle qui l'avait appelé, séduit, trompé, que parfois il avait cru aimer, que, dans le fond, il n'avait jamais rencontrée: la solitude."² After only a few short days of rustication,

¹Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 197.

²Ibid.

"de plus en plus grandissait l'impression de vide autour d'Alexandre. La solitude parut absence; absence de tout: des hommes, du passé, de l'avenir, du malheur, du bonheur; complet dépouillement."³ Isolated from everyone and everything he had known, Alexandre concluded that his desire for solitude had been exaggerated. The peace he imagined would accompany the state of solitude still eluded him: "O sottise et humaine prétention! Même aspirée en elle, Alexandre n'arrivait pas à voir ce que [la solitude] était. Un bien? Un mal?"⁴ There are many characters who, like Alexandre Chenevert, suppose that the state of solitude is the quality missing from their lives.

Some are correct in their assumption, for example, André Dastous in Délivrez-nous du mal. After being arrested for the murder of his friend Georges Langis, André looks forward to a long prison term.

C'est bête, j'ai le goût de cette incarcération. J'ai le goût de la discipline des prisons. [...] Et surtout, je serai seul, je serai bien seul, je serai tout à fait seul au milieu des autres. Il y a toujours eu quelqu'un pour m'aider à m'habiller, à manger, à penser ce qu'il faut penser. Là-bas, j'écrirai. J'inventerai quelque chose, je ne sais pas moi, j'aurai enfin la solitude et surtout le temps de devenir quelqu'un. Etre quelqu'un! Voilà vers quoi je tendais à travers tout le monde... surtout à travers Georges. Ma faillite! Ma faillite!⁵

Many people benefit from being entirely alone. This is the positive aspect of solitude which will be studied

³Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 198.

⁴Ibid., p. 197.

⁵Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, pp. 176-177.

in detail in the next part of the work. However, there are a number of individuals who are dragged down by the negative effects of solitude. They cannot cope with the feelings of isolation, alienation and rejection, and therefore become chained to their state like Prometheus to his rock. It is this aspect of solitude which is analyzed here.

The individual who is seriously harmed by solitude goes through several distinct phases that are readily identifiable. The initial stage concerns one's inability to deal with the condition of being entirely alone which often occurs when one is rejected either by a loved one or by society as a whole. When this condition continues into the second phase, the individual, consumed by hate, becomes erratic, striking out indiscriminately against individuals and society in general. Later the revolt turns to a desire for self-destruction which is manifested by giving up one's goals and allowing oneself to drift aimlessly through life. Alcoholism, reverie, and somnolence are all symptoms of this phase. As well as accompanying an advanced state of solitude, these conditions also act as agents exacerbating the progression of loneliness. The final stage we have termed the state of torpor because it best describes the absolute apathy that is characteristic of this phase. Although loneliness severely restricts the individual who is in quest of personal values, the significant parallels that can be drawn between the solitary individual

and the isolated province of Quebec in politics, both on the domestic and international fronts, cannot go unnoted.

Being entirely alone is generally harmful when it is an involuntary condition. Like Alexandre Chenevert, some characters who are caught up in a humdrum existence imagine solitude to be a tantalizing state until they actually experience it first hand. From an early age the heroine of the novel Maryse had voluntarily sought to be alone. However, when she became aware that she was rejected by her parents and the young man for whom she experienced more than a passing infatuation: "la solitude n'était plus une amie."⁶ Because she is rejected by those she loves, Maryse feels alienated from her most trusted friend: nature. "[...] Mes évasions ne conduisaient plus à des rendez-vous. J'arrivais au pied d'une colline qui n'avait plus rien de familier."⁷ She often spoke to the brook, imploring it to take her away, "n'importe où / et enlève-moi mes chaînes."⁸ Now, when evening came, humming Edith Piaf songs "refermées et noires,"⁹ she returned to the house where she lived with her "chagrins de nids vides, et des branches qui continuaient de pleurer après la pluie."¹⁰ Like Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince, Maryse rejected the materialistic values of the adult world, and was rejected by adults in return. The hero of Gabrielle Roy's novel Alexandre Chenevert, a mature bank clerk who is preoccupied

⁶Doran, Maryse, p. 122.

⁷Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 120.

⁸Ibid., p. 119.

¹⁰Ibid.

with the material problems of existence, is forced, like Maryse, into a state of solitude because his views regarding humanity are rejected by those around him. Although Maryse and Alexandre pursue different goals, both experience a similar deep sense of loneliness because they are rejected by others.

Loneliness often affects married people to a greater degree than it does single individuals, especially when one partner is absent for any length of time. In Poussière sur la ville, when Madeleine decides to leave Macklin and her husband for a month, Alain is overcome by the thought of being entirely alone: "Que Madeleine me revienne avant un mois: La solitude m'est déjà insupportable."¹¹ Alain is anxious about the temporary separation because, without ever having articulated it, he is aware that he had been existing in a state of solitude from the beginning of his stay in Macklin. Madeleine's comportment toward her lover Richard Hétu, had caused Alain to become alienated from his role of loving husband. Consequently, he became a stranger to his home, his wife, his profession and himself:

Ce bureau n'est pas le mien et la femme qui dort ou lit en haut ne m'appartient pas. J'ai rêvé et, somnambule, je m'éveille dans la maison d'un autre. Je réussis presque à considérer ma nouvelle vie--mon mariage et mon cabinet de médecin--en étranger, comme au retour d'une absence de vingt ans qui me ferait ne reconnaître ni ma femme, ni la maison.¹²

¹¹ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 187.

¹² Ibid., p. 16.

Like Madeleine, Berthe Richardson in L'Argent est odéur de nuit discovers that the man she married does not love her as she would like. Unable to continue living without the kind of affection she needed from a man, Berthe entered into a relationship with Félix Dastoue, a scoundrel who ended up blackmailing her. After his untimely death, she became despondent and isolated herself in her room for a period of three months. Like Alain Dubois, Marcel Larocque in La Fin des songes finds "l'horrible sensation de vidé et d'absence complète."¹³ in the marital relationship he has with his wife, Jeanne. However, unlike either of the two women mentioned above, Jeanne remained faithful to her husband. She reveals to her confessor: "'J'ai peur pour lui parce qu'il est seul, terriblement seul.'"¹⁴ His deportment demonstrates how gravely he is affected by loneliness. "La démarche de [Marcel] renseignait clairement sur sa détresse intérieure: il avançait tête baissée, en se traînant les pieds, et c'est à peine s'il élevait assez sa voix pour se faire entendre."¹⁵ After his return from overseas military service, Marcel discovered that he was no longer content with his lot in life. He detested "ce travail idiot de traducteur dans un journal,"¹⁶ and at home, "leurs relations deviennent impossible [...] cet amour sans amour le dégoûte."¹⁷

¹³Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 22.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁷Ibid.

Marcel is completely alone, not because those around him have rejected him, but because he has spiritually isolated himself from the very people who love him. Since his return from Europe, Marcel has become spiritually alienated from others and himself because he is plagued by homosexual tendencies.¹⁸ Marcel Larocque has rejected himself in the same way that the characters we have examined above are rejected by those who are closest to them.

Though many single people in the novels studied rarely experience loneliness, there are some among this group who are seriously affected by it. The solitary Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit, after he fell in love with Micheline Giraud, realized that he would not be capable of returning to the solitary life he had known before meeting her.

Lorsque Micheline l'avait quitté sans un mot au cabaret, [...] quelque chose s'était dénouée en [Marcel]; une contraction sénile qui le poussait à exclure de sa vie tous et tout, à substituer la haine à tout ce que la pitié avait d'édulcoré, d'émollient; à vivre replié dans l'attitude du gibier qui bondit. Contraction dont il mesurait maintenant toute la dérision, mais qu'il sentait prête à renaître si celle qui l'avait libéré le fuyait. Pourtant il savait que Micheline était partie irrémédiablement, que les fils ténus et fragiles qui les avaient liés durant si peu de temps étaient rompus. Tout son être la désirait maintenant avec violence; il ne retrouverait la paix que lorsqu'il aurait revu les yeux dans lesquels se reflétaient la tendresse et l'émoi de toutes les fragilités.¹⁹

Jean's fear is similar to that experienced by the hero of Mathieu. However, unlike Jean Cherteffe, Mathieu Normand

¹⁸Elie, La Fin des songes, note Marcel's relationship with both Louis and Louise, and especially the confusion in his mind between the two on page 186.

¹⁹Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 139.

is still looking for the young lady "qui m'arrachera malgré moi à ce puits de solitude dont seul je ne parviendrai jamais à sortir."²⁰ Unlike Micheline whose friendship for Marcel represented his hope of escape from the loneliness that had overshadowed his previous life, Danielle Cinq-Mars symbolized despair for Mathieu. He writes in his "deuxième cahier":

"Danielle, Danielle, il ne fallait pas me faire signe! Avant le soir où vous m'avez offert votre amitié, je croyais être seul parce que les autres me rejetaient, mais je pouvais encore espérer qu'un jour quelqu'un me tendrait la main et m'aiderait à dénouer ce noeud qui m'étouffe. Vous êtes venue et je sais maintenant que le noeud ne peut pas être dénoué. Il est trop tard, comprenez-vous, trop tard! Je suis condamné à vivre emprisonné dans ma carcasse, étranglé par un silence qui dure depuis trop longtemps. Il n'y a plus de libération à espérer. [...] Votre secours est venu trop tard. Il est trop tard pour l'amitié, trop tard pour l'amour. Je suis le pauvre à qui l'on apporte trop tard le pain et l'eau. Danielle, Danielle, pourquoi avez-vous tant tardé à venir?"²¹

The mere threat of rejection causes one to act in peculiar ways, for loneliness is often the outcome of it. The reaction of married individuals to the state of solitude is generally very pronounced because they have relatively long periods of companionship with a mate. However, unmarried individuals who feel rejected can also react violently when their attempts to gain freedom from the yoke of loneliness fails.

A depressing state of solitude extending over a period of time can effectively kill whatever aspirations

²⁰ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 139.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 139-140

one might have had. For example, Maryse's attitude towards her school work changed completely along with her outlook on life after Charles rejected her for the priesthood:

Ce n'était plus tolérable: l'existence était vide, l'étude me paraissait une duperie. Que m'importaient ces choses révolues alors que j'avais déjà dépassé mon siècle, avec tout ce que cela comportait de faux raisonnements, de mauvais calcul et même de fautes d'orthographe. Ainsi, j'étais arrivée trop tard dans la vie de Charles.²²

Berthe Richardson who had sought to give meaning to her life by her liaison with Félix Dastoue found herself completely isolated from human companionship after her lover revealed his blackmail plans to her. She began to see herself, her lover, and Joseph her husband in a different light:

Elle détesta [Joseph] de toute son âme: s'il avait été plus clairvoyant, elle n'aurait pas à vivre ces jours affreux. Le drame éclaterait et, d'une façon ou d'une autre, elle serait délivrée. Elle s'en voulait aussi. N'était-ce pas pour Joseph, pour sa réputation à lui, qu'elle se sacrifiait, qu'elle acceptait de vivre des heures d'horreur? N'était-ce pas parce qu'il ne pouvait rien pour elle qu'elle avait dû chercher ailleurs un sens à sa vie? Un instant la frappa cette idée que, si elle se décidait à tuer pour se libérer, ce serait également une libération que de tirer sur l'un comme sur l'autre.²³

As for Mathieu, Danielle discovers that a life of solitude had turned him into a complete cynic: "Oh, moi, je ne respecte rien pour une bonne raison: déclara [Mathieu] en ricanant. Je n'ai encore rien trouvé qui mérite d'être respecté."²⁴

²²Doran, Maryse, p. 101.

²³Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, pp. 170-171.

²⁴Loranger, Mathieu, p. 37.

One cannot be scornful of others over an extended period of time without becoming aware of one's own contemptibility. Alexandre Chenevert, who had disdain for anyone who disagreed with his ideas, became aware of what he was really like one day after telling Godias, the only friend he had, that he was despicable and incredibly ignorant.

[...] C'était fini, que jamais plus désormais il n'aurait d'amis. Mais en avait-il jamais eu? S'était-il trouvé un seul être sur terre pour penser comme lui ou, du moins, reconnaître qu'il pensait au meilleur de son intelligence?

Ainsi, il aurait vécu, il partirait de ce monde et "personne", lança Alexandre à mi-voix vers un passant qui filait, n'aurait rien compris à l'affaire. Mais il lui arriva de se voir dans son propre cœur tel qu'il devait être aux yeux des autres: un homme aigre, contrariant, et qu'il eût été le premier à ne pouvoir supporter.

Il s'arrêta devant une vitrine, cloué sur place par l'image soudainement si haïssable qu'il avait de lui-même. Dans la vitre embuée, il chercha, comme une corroboration de ce jugement, son propre visage aux lèvres pincées. Une grande souffrance se peignit sur ses traits. Si étranger, si hostile à lui-même, Alexandre avait envie d'en pleurer.²⁵

Unlike Alexandre who scorns others because they think differently than he does, Jean Cherteffe sees a reflection of himself in the people he despises most. After his father's death he began to frequent skid-row pubs because he wanted to see his own image reflected in the faces of the alcoholics he learned to detest as much as the memory of his deceased father.

²⁵Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 76.

Certains conversaient entre eux d'une voix lasse, avec des gestes appesantis par l'alcool. D'autres, mornes ou tendus, buvaient seuls, avec un air de se regarder se consumer. Pour la première fois, Jean les voyait véritablement, ces compagnons, non pas d'ivresse, mais de stupeur, et il comprenait, comme une réalité qu'il eût pu toucher, pourquoi il ne pouvait les aimer. Qui étaient-ils ces étrangers semblables et, pourtant, si éloignés?

Des frères, évidemment. Eux aussi cherchaient à n'être plus, doucement, sans souffrance aiguë. Eux aussi se fuyaient éperdument, parce qu'ils n'étaient pas heureux. Rien de pitoyable dans tout cela, certes. Le sort commun, sans plus, ni moins. Il n'avait pas à les refuser, ni à les accepter. Ils étaient là, des frères, qui n'imploreraient même pas. Un peu son reflet en cent miroirs plus ou moins ternis. Tu me renvoies mon regard et je le renvoie à d'autres. Personne ne perd au change.²⁶

There are some like Marcel Larocque who direct all of their animosity at themselves. He reveals in his journal that while shaving one day, he looked carefully into the mirror and discovered what he was. Unable to cope with the discovery that a part of himself was abominable, he became depressed and suffered a nervous breakdown. He wrote:

Cette petite crise de dédoublement, dont je me suis souvenu en commençant ce journal, a failli me détruire. Je ne pouvais échapper à cette image de moi-même, vraiment irréfutable, absolument insupportable. [...] Je sais aujourd'hui que j'ai retrouvé la solitude que je regrettais bêtement, et la plus cruelle des solitudes puisque mon attention n'est plus retenue que par cette image de moi-même que je ne puis détruire.²⁷

It is the feeling of being entirely alone that causes a person to become self-destructive. Because such attitudes effectively thwart whatever self-improvement aspirations one might have had, individuals who are in quest of personal values have to be on their guard against them.

²⁶Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 41.

²⁷Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 126.

Lonely people who find out how contemptible they have become react to the discovery in erratic ways. In Evadé de la nuit, André Langevin examines this phase of solitude in relation to two of the principal characters; Roger Benoît, and Jean Cherteffe. Rejected and lonely in his youth, Roger despised himself and the world in which he lived. He vented his aggression against the universe the only way he knew how, by publishing a collection of poetry. He tells Jean:

"En vain, je crus devoir trouver un équilibre et une force en injuriant l'univers, les dieux. Ma haine était malade comme mon amour et elle n'enfanta qu'un être malingre, sans ressources, avorté. C'est à ce moment que je publiai mes poèmes. On reçut comme révolte et expression de force ce qui était né de l'impuissance."²⁸

On the other hand, Jean Cherteffe openly admits that he is "un névrosé de la pire espèce, celle que les psychiatres ne peuvent dépister."²⁹ He realizes that he had tried to hurt Micheline. Nevertheless, when he found himself abandoned by the only woman who had ever meant anything to him:

Il se heurtait, avec la ténacité d'un moustique contre la lumière, à la réalité de son mal, inchangé, soustrait à tout analgésique, avivé plutôt par la persistance des touchers qui l'interrogeaient. Tout le reste avait perdu couleur et saveur, résonnait ainsi que les harmoniques que l'oreille, déchirée par le son aigu, n'entend pas. Si on l'avait interrogé sur ce qu'il avait fait durant ces trois jours, il eût été étonné du peu de poids de ses oeuvres, car sa veille d'obsédé l'épuisait.³⁰

²⁸Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 57.

²⁹Ibid., p. 140.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 138-139.

Jean's unpredictable behavior in the face of utter solitude is also visible in his relationship with Roger Benoît. After his father's death, Jean came to the conclusion that he had to recreate his identity. Like Benoît whose rebellion some twenty years before had taken the form of a book of quasi-seditious verse, Jean Cherteffe also decided to be creative in his revolt. However, if he was to see his Pygmalion project through to the end, Jean realized that he had to be physically and emotionally strong:

Son nouveau personnage devait être sans prises; froid, lumineux, inoculé contre les miasmes de la sensibilité. Est-ce qu'un créateur pouvait trembler devant l'argile à pétrir, pleurer sur le papier blanc? [...] Et il toucha un monde solide, étalé à perte de vue, sur lequel il pourrait glisser sans fin, fort comme l'homme primitif, parce qu'il ne désirait qu'étancher ses soifs. Et il avait soif d'un homme. [...] Lui, il s'affranchissait, subissait une métamorphose totale; il formerait désormais des destins qui permettraient le sien, le libéreraient.³¹

In L'Argent est odeur de nuit, Berthe Richardson's impulse was to destroy rather than create. After her lover's death, the solitary Berthe was haunted by his imaginary presence in her bed. In an attempt to break the spell, she decided to testify against Félix at the trial of Georges Ethier who was accused of his murder. The scandal that her testimony would cause would also serve to destroy her own reputation, as well as disgrace Joseph, the husband she despised:

³¹ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 43.

Puis ce matin, soudain la joie, ce besoin d'obéir à une impulsion, à un ordre venu des profondeurs de son être. [...] Enfin [Berthe] pourra chasser de son esprit cette image... Oui, elle le pourra, cela ne fait aucun doute: l'aveur, elle le désire ardemment, attirera sur sa tête un châtement ... ses souffrances, puisqu'elle ne peut vivre sans souffrir, prendront source en dehors de son univers. Elle croit fermement que c'est le seul moyen qui lui reste de tuer en elle cet homme qu'un autre pour elle a tué ... à moins que sa propre mort soit aussi une solution!³²

Many lonely people favour the latter course of action. Rejected by everyone since childhood, the hero of Mathieu sought confirmation of his own existence by attracting attention to himself. At a cast party hosted by Danielle Cinq-Mars and her brother Bruno, we see Mathieu,

ses yeux pleins d'anxiété [qui] cherchèrent autour de lui un sourire, même pas, un simple regard qui lui eût permis de prendre conscience de sa réalité; mais les verres étaient pleins, personne n'avait besoin de lui. Ce milieu le rejetait comme les gens du monde l'avaient rejeté.

"Non! non, ce n'est même pas cela, c'est encore pire! ... Tout se passe, au contraire, comme si je n'existais pas, comme si je vivais à l'insu de tout le monde. Je suis le seul à savoir que je vis! Il faut pourtant que les autres le sachent..."³³

Because he loathed others as much as himself, Mathieu heaped insults upon whoever crossed his path.

Comment manifesterait-il désormais sa présence, si les autres n'accusaient plus réception de ses flèches? Comment leur ferait-il comprendre qu'il était vivant, qu'il n'en pouvait plus d'être seul, qu'il crevait de solitude?³⁴

³²Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 118.

³³Loranger, Mathieu, p. 51.

³⁴Ibid.

The benevolent Etienne Beaulieu describes Mathieu's desperate condition in the following terms:

A examiner [Mathieu] ainsi, [Etienne] en venait à éprouver la sensation bizarre que Mathieu se désagrégait devant lui. Pour un peu, c'est avec ses propres mains qu'[Etienne] aurait voulu réunir autour de ce corps inquiet les cellules éparses, comme s'il lui était possible de regrouper le noyau initial. Il lui semblait que l'essence même de Mathieu, ce qui faisait que Mathieu était Mathieu et non un autre--un être unique de son espèce, sans modèle ou réplique ni dans le passé, ni dans le présent, ni dans l'avenir; n'ayant de commun avec les autres que le fait d'être unique de son espèce--s'écartait de lui à son insu dans mille directions opposées. Que resterait-il de lui, de l'entité Mathieu si ce travail de désagrégation continuait? Un corps sans âme? Est-ce ainsi que la folie commençait?³⁵

The erratic behavior displayed by these characters in a vain attempt to overcome loneliness amounts to an external manifestation of the internal disintegration of the personality. Like Alexandre Chenevert whose physical appearance proclaims that a cancer is consuming him from within, the abnormal behavior of the above-mentioned characters is a warning that they are on the road to self-destruction.

The inevitable fate of the individual who allows himself to be trapped in a state of solitude is analyzed by André Langevin in Evadé de la nuit. Roger Benoit, who at the age of twenty had published a book of poetry in which he protested against the human condition, is confronted by Jean Cherteffe some twenty years later:

³⁵Loranger, Mathieu, p. 121.

Il devait avoir quarante ans, peut-être moins. L'alcool avait modelé un masque derrière lequel l'homme disparaissait. Des yeux sans couleur, malades, aux paupières rougies, douloureuses comme les lèvres d'une plaie. Le front, qui avait dû être noble jadis et en conservait comme une nostalgie, était avili par une peau épaisse et comme s'écaillant. La laideur du nez, large et presque inconsistant, empêchait que l'on vît dès l'abord le vestige d'humanité qui persistait sur le front. La bouche était de celles qui ont bu toutes les amertumes. De longs cheveux gras pendaient en couronne sous le chapeau informe et décoloré. On devinait sous le manteau un corps maigre, sale et maladif. Ses mains, enfin, accusaient un certain raffinement, un genre de vie que démentait l'aspect général.³⁶

Roger explains that after the initial uprising which culminated in the publication of his book:

"Je tombai dès lors dans une résignation sans amertume, puis dans la veulerie. J'avais compris qu'il n'y avait rien d'autre à obtenir de la vie qu'une immense banqueroute où se perdent les démarches les plus nobles comme les actes les plus bas. Je compris que nous étions façonnés par la vie plutôt que nous ne la dirigeons, que tout se confond dans un néant dont nulle puissance ne fait le compte, que nos cris n'éveillent aucun écho, que l'homme s'était forgé des mythes géniaux pour pouvoir croire en son esprit."³⁷

He advised Jean to follow the example that he has set for him, not out of moral conviction, but because it is the only course of action that remains open to them who have never experienced anything but failure and defeat.

"Je préfère m'abandonner que résister. Car il est impossible de résister. Et [Jean] vous coulerez comme les autres, et vous vous heurterez la tête contre les limites étroites de votre être. Vous ne serez qu'un fétu, vous aussi. Vous pleurerez de honte sur des consentements que vous ne pourrez retenir. Vous remercieriez vous aussi la puissance qui vous abaissera la tête sur le pavé."³⁸

³⁶ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 42.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

Defeatist attitudes like Benoît's are very dangerous for individuals seeking personal values.

The means used to exacerbate the defeatism of individuals who have reached an advanced state of solitude vary from person to person. Many abuse alcohol. Others indulge in extended periods of reverie or sleep, while some become insomniacs. Both Roger Benoît and Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit abused alcohol during their periods of loneliness, as did Alain Dubois in Poussière sur la ville. Roger Benoît, who we suspect has been an alcoholic for some twenty years, views the drug as a vehicle by which he can become a witness, as well as a participant, in the self-destructive process that he sees beginning at birth and culminating in death. In his explanation to Cherteffe, Benoît states:

"J'ai dit que l'alcool était un moyen, non pas une cause. Vous êtes trop jeune pour comprendre ce que j'appellerai, faute de terme plus précis, la séduction d'une démission. Savoir que l'on descend et désirer avec ferveur glisser au plus profond de l'abîme. Je parle ainsi en votre langage. Pour nous, il n'est pas d'abîme, ni noblesse, ni dégénérescence. Ce serait trop simple. Nous envisageons la vie dans son absolu; c'est-à-dire que nous en voyons la naissance et la mort. Nous créons le vide entre les deux pôles. Nous nous regardons nous consumer."³⁹

Benoît claims that the agony that alcoholics confront daily has conditioned them to accept suffering as a way of life.

³⁹Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, pp. 51-52.

"L'alcool seul donne à la vie une intensité qui permette de s'en accommoder. Il vous conduit non seulement à accepter la souffrance, mais encore à la rechercher. Un ivrogne méprise le quotidien. C'est un héros. Il lui faut de grandes colères à vide pour apaiser sa soif de persécution. Nous avons une âme à vif, comprenez-vous? Les caresses ne font qu'accentuer nos douleurs, tandis que de grands coups nous en distraient."⁴⁰

Mathieu Normand discovered that alcohol was one way of alleviating mental anguish. He writes in his journal: "J'ai trouvé un moyen terme entre l'acceptation et la mort: l'alcool, évasion des ratés..."⁴¹ Unlike Benoit who views alcoholism in a quasi-philosophical light, Mathieu takes the practical view that it dulls the senses, thereby rendering an individual less susceptible to both mental and physical pain:

Depuis quelque temps, il s'était mis à boire, puisant dans l'alcool une somnolence qui l'abstenait de penser. Il ne se grisait pas complètement, ayant soin de se maintenir dans un vague état d'indifférence qui paralysait l'acuité de ses sensations et donnait à ses actes un automatisme qui l'empêchait d'en constater la monotonie. Il abandonnait la lutte, il renonçait, endormant cette voix familière qui toujours l'avait tenu en éveil. Ni heureux, ni malheureux; mi-éveillé, mi-endormi; il se laissait emporter par les événements, évitant de réagir, glissant doucement dans un torpeur dont il espérait bien ne plus jamais sortir.⁴²

For those who abuse it, alcohol can be effective both to desensitize as well as to increase the capacity to suffer.

Similar results can be arrived at without the use of alcohol. For example, one can escape torment in the real

⁴⁰ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 51.

⁴¹ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 141.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 110-111.

world by withdrawing into one's private world of reverie. After his emotional collapse, Marcel Larocque in La Fin des songes almost never came out of his fantasy world. He even began to question the reality of life. "'On ne rejoint la vie, on ne la possède que si on en prend conscience, mais si elle nous échappe au premier moment de réflexion, n'est-ce pas le signe qu'elle a moins de réalité qu'on ne croit [...]?"⁴³ Although she was not troubled by this kind of question, Berthe Richardson in L'Argent est odeur de nuit, like Marcel, withdrew into her own world of fantasy after the untimely death of her lover, Félix Dastoue:

Le crime l'avait laissée comme morte. Trois mois presque sans quitter son lit, à brûler, à le sentir près d'elle, à l'imaginer répétant les gestes extatiques, qui la poussaient jusqu'au paroxysme de l'ardeur et la laissaient inerte en deçà de l'assouvissement. Mort, elle avait cru qu'elle serait délivrée. Non, il était là, présent en même temps que trop absent. Elle n'arrivait pas à détacher sa pensée du corps qui lui avait procuré tant de bienheureux tourments.⁴⁴

As if incapacitated by alcohol, Berthe Richardson for three months was completely unaware of reality. "Elle a vécu des jours immobiles et qui se sont suivis sans qu'elle quittât un seul instant son monde de rêves et de cauchemars."⁴⁵ She wanted to be punished for being adulterous. Because her kindly husband would never resort to any form of castigation, she withdrew into a world of

⁴³ Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 157.

⁴⁴ Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 117.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 181.

reverie where she conducted a futile search for the man who no longer existed. It was the realization that her quest was utterly futile that brought Berthe so much grief:

Berthe vivait trop hors du monde pour que présence ou absence ait quelque signification. Elle ne voyait en vérité personne, trop prise par la recherche de l'homme qu'elle s'efforçait de recréer à ses côtés, malgré elle, après avoir souhaité de toute son âme sa disparition. Ce qui la faisait souffrir, c'était d'être impuissante à s'empêcher d'imaginer cette chaleur qui la consumait sans l'assouvir... Toujours, toujours cette soif qu'elle n'arrivait pas à éteindre.⁴⁶

Unlike Berthe whose need for self-punishment was fulfilled by an almost continual state of somnolence, the protagonist of Alexandre Chenevert prolonged the satisfaction he derived from his miserable condition by not sleeping at all.

Au bout d'une nuit d'insomnie, profondément vexé, Alexandre s'imaginait avoir du moins choisi d'être malheureux. Il en tirait une sorte de fierté. Si il ne dormait pas, c'est qu'il avait l'âme trop sensible, la conscience déliée, qu'il n'avait pas, ⁴⁷ Dieu merci, l'insouciance de la plupart des hommes.

Alexandre Chenevert was profoundly affected by the suffering that existed in the world. He identified closely with Mahatma Gandhi,⁴⁸ and felt compelled to carry the world on his shoulders.⁴⁹ His doctor's warnings went unheeded⁵⁰ because, like the characters mentioned above, Alexandre wanted to suffer. That is the reason for his insomnia.

⁴⁶ Filiatrault, L'Argent est odeur de nuit, p. 118.

⁴⁷ Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 31.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 173.

Le sommeil était clairvoyant et subtil; la ruse même lui devenait perceptible. L'indifférence absolue seule, sans doute, touchait le sommeil. Au fond, le sommeil était cruel et gratuit comme la santé, l'amour et même le talent que, pendant des années, Alexandre avait désiré de loin avec timidité. Tout était gratuit, sauf peut-être le malheur.⁵¹

Using insomnia as a means of self-castigation, Alexandre abandoned himself to sleepless nights like his counterparts who withdrew into a world of reverie, or like the alcoholics who became slaves to the bottle.

Death is the inevitable end when the state of torpor takes hold of one who has sustained prolonged periods of solitude. Jean Cherteffe read this message in his father's lifeless features, the only legacy left by the alcoholic who had abandoned him as a child.

Une vie misérable, une existence dont toute joie a dû être absente, tout emplie d'un ennui exacerbé. Combien facilement la figure se prête à la traduction! Elle s'affirme avec une joie sardonique. La bouche, les yeux, le nez, tout le visage crie une souffrance intolérable, laide, que l'homme n'a probablement jamais avouée de son vivant. Cette chair morte propose un désespoir qui glace et retient.⁵²

Jean was destined to a similar fate. "[...] Je suis son fils. L'on connaîtra de moi un tel visage, cette expression haineuse. Frapper le ciel à poings fermés pour trouver le ressort de cela et s'affirmer éternel. O miroir, mon père, pourquoi n'êtes-vous terni? Il faudra vous briser, parce que vous ne savez pas mentir."⁵³ Jean temporarily fought

⁵¹Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 31.

⁵²Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 20.

⁵³Ibid.

against the inevitable outcome by identifying with the Roger Benoît he was creating. After Benoît's suicide, he received a further reprieve when Micheline Giraud fell in love with him. After she died in childbirth, his death sentence was postponed again for a period of some twenty years. But the inevitable occurred one lonely winter's night as he tried to reach the cabin in the snowbound forest where he and Micheline had found happiness:

Puis il pensa qu'il nageait dans du lait et qu'à chaque élan en avant il lui fallait fendre une muraille plus épaisse. Il s'abandonna et le lait lui emplit la bouche et gela ses veines. Ses jambes s'appesantirent et il coula. Les ténèbres s'abolissaient. Il devenait lumineux. La peau de Micheline qui le couvrait tout entier, sa bouche qui glaçait la sienne et sa voix douce et pacifiante qui l'appelait de loin, de très loin. La douceur le tuait.⁵⁴

In La Fin des songes, Marcel Laroqué met a more violent end under the wheels of a streetcar. "La vie est terrible et Marcel ne savait pas se défendre. [...] Il ne savait plus comment vivre, comment rejoindre les autres. C'est la vie qui l'a tuée."⁵⁵ The same can be said of Berthe Richardson in L'Argent est odeur de nuit. She took her own life with the revolver that her husband kept in his store to protect his property. The teen-age heroine of Maryse did away with herself in the St. Lawrence River, within shouting distance of the ocean liner carrying her parents back from a European vacation. As the ship was about to dock, Maryse experienced the following:

⁵⁴Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 245.

⁵⁵Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 194.

Un silence extraordinaire de compagne endormie voltigeait dans l'air. Soudain quelque chose s'assombrit en moi; je n'y voyais plus. Un moment, je faillis retourner. Cette lassitude de tout, ce dégoût de ce qui aurait pu être, ce désir de néant, renaissait en moi. J'avais beau lever la tête, respirer très fort, courir encore plus fort, je m'épuisais. Je m'arrêtais, m'appuyant à un arbre, puis je me remettais à marcher plus lentement. J'étais maintenant au bord de l'eau, je longuais le fleuve. Je vis le bateau qui allait amarrer. J'avais toujours ressenti de l'angoisse à une arrivée, comme à un départ. C'était revenu. Ça ne me surprenait pas, il était resté trop de marques en moi. [...] Les heures blessent toutes, la dernière tue.⁵⁶

Like his counterparts who abandoned themselves to the inevitable end, Alexandre Chenevert finally succumbed to the cancer that was gnawing at him from within. Of the characters studied in this chapter, only Alain Dubois (Poussière sur la ville), and Mathieu Normand (Mathieu), escaped the fate of those who fall prey to the state of solitude. It is worthy to note here that both were saved by love. Alain's unselfish love for Madeleine flourished after her suicide, taking the form of a deep compassion and affection for the inhabitants of Macklin. Danielle Cinq-Mars was instrumental in helping Mathieu overcome the torpor that had plagued him for so long.

As one might suspect, the political climate can seriously affect personal goals. The state of solitude discussed in this chapter accurately reflects the situation that prevailed at the time between the individual and the government of Quebec. There are four historical elements that contributed greatly to this state of solitude. First, Quebec's cultural survival was threatened by two distinct

⁵⁶Doran, Maryse, pp. 170-171.

factors. One was the narrow provincialism evident during both world wars, which grew out of the poor treatment French-Canadian minorities received in provinces other than Quebec. Also, there was the cleavage brought about in Canada as an outcome of the conscription crises of both 1917 and 1942.⁵⁷ The other factor was Canada's growing involvement in international affairs, a move viewed in Quebec as detrimental to the country's domestic affairs and to Canadian nationalism. The second historical element that contributed to the alienation of the Quebecker was the interest shown by the English-speaking nations of the world in the resources of Quebec. The exploitation by Britain, and then America, of the province's natural resources during these decades was inadequately offset by payments in the form of manufactured goods which curtailed industrial growth, giving credence to the cliché that Quebeckers were treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water. Add to this the agriculturalist policies foisted upon the populace by the religious and political leaders at the turn of the century, and the point where Quebec's industrial development could ever match Ontario's rapid growth was long-since past. In addition to these frustrations, there is a fourth element; the despotic rule of Maurice Duplessis and his complete disregard for individual and human rights. The debilitating effects of the above upon the individual resulted in a state of

⁵⁷Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967. Volume II (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1955; 1968), see especially p. 781.

despondency that is characterized by the aspects of solitude examined in this chapter. Alexandre Chenevert, who had tried to escape the outcome of outside pressure, like the government, expresses his defeat thus: "A quoi bon guérir pour tourner autour d'insignifiantes occupations: rentrer du bois, faire chauffer les aliments et, jour après jour, accomplir la même ennuyeuse corvée d'eau."⁵⁸ Events in Quebec's history have influenced many significant areas in the life of the average Quebecker. The political climate is an important factor contributing to the individual's state of solitude.

Because man is a social being, he becomes despondent when forced into a solitary situation over an extended period of time. Although some people are attracted to the state of solitude, a majority who find themselves alone as a result of rejection cannot cope with the feelings of ~~utter~~ loneliness. They heap scorn upon themselves and others because love gives way to resentment and hatred. Alcoholism, long periods of reverie and even insomnia are symptoms of the erratic behavior that characterizes this state of despair. The French-Canadian author is acutely aware of the sense of solitude because he is constantly reminded of the isolation that exists between himself and the reading public. Still, no-one is more adversely affected by the debilitating nature of loneliness

⁵⁸ Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 248.

than the young individual who attempts to function in Quebec's traditional society with his private system of personal values.

* * *

The individual in quest of personal values is faced with a Promethean challenge. Often, there is a clear idea of the values that can be assimilated into a specific life style. However, many searchers find that they lack the wherewithal to satisfy all of the demands that their recently acquired values place upon them. Their personal failures are symbolically depicted in the form of physical and mental handicaps. Also, many are failures because of an inappropriate personal background where too much stress was placed upon principles and too little upon adapting to different situations. The state of solitude produces a great deal of anguish and it is generally only a matter of time before despondency leads to suicide. Despite the pessimistic chord struck by the authors, a ray of hope for the emergence of personal values in society continues to illumine the horizon. As Cul-de-sac demonstrates,⁵⁹ hope exists even in the gloomiest cases. Like Prometheus, Victor Debreux had been condemned to experience the agony of total helplessness while the savage beak of a rapacious bird tore away at his live flesh. It is the kind of herculean deliverance which was granted him that will be examined next.

⁵⁹Thériault, Cul-de-sac, note pages 179-180.

THE QUEST FOR PERSONAL VALUES
IN
THE FRENCH-CANADIAN NOVEL
(1940-1960)

by
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PART III
HERCULEAN DELIVERANCE

Because the oppressed Quebecker described in the novel is cast in the role of Prometheus, it is appropriate that the liberation he seeks appear herculean in scope. It is the element of hope which links these characters to Hercules; for the mythical hero symbolizes the individual who succeeds in freeing himself from the banal concerns of life. His heroic striving for immortality sets an example for those who seek deliverance from their oppressive condition. Escape, both in its negative and positive aspects, is one of the most effective means employed to arrive at this end. Though more impetuous characters resort to forms of revolt that go beyond the act of escaping from one milieu to another, there are patient idealists who place their trust in evolution, believing that change and progress are inevitable with time. Escape, revolt, and evolution, any one or a combination of these three options, present the struggling Quebecker with the hope that he will be delivered from the bonds of oppression.

is based upon the belief that it is possible to break free from society's bondage.

One could argue that the majority of those who escape from the boredom of organized society and seek the freedom that often accompanies a life of adventure are carrying on the "coureur de bois" tradition. Nevertheless, there are immediate reasons that cause one to depart from a particular milieu which are only indirectly related to that tradition. For example, the adventurous Eskimo hero of Thériault's novel, Agaguk, had two specific reasons for breaking all ties with his tribe. Firstly, he did not approve of his father's conduct after his mother's death. Ramook, the chief of the tribe, defamed his wife's memory when he accepted a non-Eskimo woman for his mistress.

[Agaguk] n'alla pas à la hutte qu'habitait Ramook. Que ce dernier fût son père n'importait plus. Depuis que le vieux avait pris une Montagnaise pour remplacer la femme morte, Agaguk considérait que la lignée était rompue.¹¹

Secondly, Agaguk did not trust his fellow tribesmen who looked upon Iriook, the Eskimo girl he had chosen to marry, as easy prey for their promiscuous intentions, because she was an unprotected orphan.

[Agaguk] trouverait un monticule, loin sur la toundra, y bâtirait une hutte, Aux neiges, un igloo. Très grand, l'igloo, solide à résister à tous les vents. Ils vivraient là, lui et la fille, loin de Ramook, de Chorok, d'Ayallik, de tous les autres. Nul souvenir; un recommencement.¹²

¹¹ Yves Thériault, Agaguk (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1958; Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1964), p. 10.

¹² Ibid.

The desire to escape implies a wish to break loose from an objectionable situation. Some want to be freed from boredom; others from the threat of punishment. Everyone who escapes wants to get away from a particular milieu, either because they find it too restrictive, or because of the pressures it imposes upon the individual. Still, for many others, the act of fleeing from society is an expression of a keen desire to escape from their own inner troubles.

In the novels dealing with the peasant segment of Quebec society, we find several young men who are bored with the life they are obliged to lead on the farm. In Nord-sud, Hippolyte Douaire expresses a deep concern because he has three sons who are more attracted to travel and adventure than to the sedentary life demanded of the farmer:

Oui, ils étaient d'âge à se marier, ses fils. Mais le pouvaient-ils? Des vagabonds sans feu ni lieu. Ils ne seraient pas comme lui, comme ses ancêtres, des habitants propriétaires de fermes très grandes, sans un sou de dette, indépendants, libres comme de petits rois sur leur terre.¹

For eight years his oldest son, Vincent, had been living like a vagabond, returning home only during the harvest season. For Vincent, the only alternative to his life of travel was to clear some land and settle down in a remote part of northern Quebec.

¹Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 31.

Là, il n'y avait qu'un même travail, exigeant toujours un même fêste, dans le même paysage, puis la solitude, la stagnation, l'éloignement de tout. Vincent se voyait prisonnier de sa passion d'aventures; elle exigeait inexorablement les voyages.²

Like his four travelling companions, Vincent Douaire does not possess the deliberate temperament of which contented farmers are made. He is too spirited for the sedulous demands of farming:

[...] Vincent se lançait dans une activité forcénée. Il aurait voulu procéder par sauts et par bonds, semblable à un cheval qui s'empôrte, se fatigue, au lieu de traîner sa charge avec patience. Finir pour passer à des travaux différents était devenu son idée fixe.³

As a result, he quickly became bored with farming, and the only option open to him was to escape from "cette atmosphère oppressante".⁴

[...] Le travail n'annihilait pas son ennui; il ne brisait pas la monotonie épaisse qui l'enveloppait. Et pour créer de son propre fond ce qui lui manquait, il avait la tentation de crier, de chanter, de s'agiter sans répit.⁵

A similar situation occurs in Trente arcents. Although Ephrem Moisan is not affected by the spirit of adventure to the same high degree as Vincent Douaire, he does harbour similar feelings regarding the peasant way of life. When asked why he spends all of his spare time "chez la mère Auger", the local meeting place, rather than

²Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 201.

³Ibid., p. 104.

⁴Ibid., p. 207.

⁵Ibid., p. 104.

remain at home, he replied: "'Pourquoi faire, ~~baptême~~? c'est assez ennuyant par icitte sans rester à la maison tout le temps.'"⁶ He even expresses his contempt for the rural life in the presence of his father and older brother, Etienne. When it is suggested that Alphée Larivière and his family are returning to Canada, not simply for a vacation, but perhaps to buy a farm, Ephrem interjects:

"S'en revenir par icitte? s'écria Ephrem railleur. J'a pas de saint danger. Ça prendrait des maudits fous pour lâcher Lowell, oùsqu'on gagne des grosses gages réguliers, à coeur d'année, pour venir se crever su' une terre."⁷

Both Vincent Douaire and Ephrem Moisan were bored with the kind of life that farmers led in rural Quebec. The former escaped to a life of adventure in California during the gold rush; the latter to the excitement of urban life in the Eastern United States.

Pierre Boisjoly in Pierre le magnifique was forced to leave the urban milieu of Quebec city. Because he was implicated, along with Denis Boucher, in the death of Mme. Isabelle Boisseau, he sought refuge from probable arrest by fleeing into the forest.⁸ It is interesting to note that in choosing to escape to the lumbercamp, Pierre is carrying on the "coureur de bois" folklore, especially the "libertin" aspect of the tradition. In The Long Journey,⁴ Warwick states that the word "libertin" means

⁶ Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 123.

⁷ Ibid., p. 134.

⁸ "Il fallait quitter cette ville maudite. Pierre se dirigea vers le bureau d'embauchage d'une compagnie forestière." Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 78.

"either a man free from religious authority or one who has overthrown all rules."⁹ Pierre satisfies both of these conditions. Not only did he break loose from religious authority when he abandoned the seminary and his vocation, he also overthrew all rules when he became an accomplice in the death of an elderly lady, and subsequently escaped from the law. Vincent Douaire, in his thoughts as well as his actions also carried on the "coureur de bois" tradition. His notion that he could get rich quickly in California is one aspect which allies him with the adventurers of yore. In eight years of vagabondage, he had acquired a taste for the kind of life that the "coureurs de bois" had led.

Son passé, si différent, qui présentait un tel contraste avec son présent, lui revenait par lambeaux. Une impression, un mot, un aspect du ciel et il revoyait des scènes du temps où il "était heureux". Il avait la nostalgie de cette existence antérieure, insouciance, libre, à l'aventure à travers le continent inhabité.¹⁰

The boredom of farming, coupled with the keen desire for adventure demonstrates that there are close ties between the twentieth-century Quebec nonconformist and his historical counterpart. The practice of escaping into the woods to avoid the law, as the fictional Pierre Boisjoly did, along with many conscripts during the two world wars, is a further development of the "coureur de bois" folklore. In both its historical and modern context, this tradition

⁹Warwick, The Long Journey, p. 15.

¹⁰Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 105.

is based upon the belief that it is possible to break free from society's bondage.

One could argue that the majority of those who escape from the boredom of organized society and seek the freedom that often accompanies a life of adventure are carrying on the "coureur de bois" tradition. Nevertheless, there are immediate reasons that cause one to depart from a particular milieu which are only indirectly related to that tradition. For example, the adventurous Eskimo hero of Thériault's novel, Agaguk, had two specific reasons for breaking all ties with his tribe. Firstly, he did not approve of his father's conduct after his mother's death. Ramook, the chief of the tribe, defamed his wife's memory when he accepted a non-Eskimo woman for his mistress.

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¹¹ Yves Thériault, Agaguk (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1958; Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1964), p. 10.

¹² Ibid.

Agaguk and Iriook left their tribe for the deserted tundra, "sans adieux, sans regarder derrière",¹³ because they disapproved of the lack of any moral code among the tribesmen. At the other extreme, there is the heroine of Bertrand Vac's novel, Louise Genest, who escaped into the forest with the Métis, Thomas Clarey, because she could no longer endure the strict moral code that village life imposed upon her.

[Thomas] comprenait que [Louise] abdiquait le rang de femme respectée auquel elle s'était agrippée depuis tant d'années, qu'elle brisait avec un passé de luttes et de déboires qui avaient fait d'elle cette masse anéantie. Et, pour la consoler, Thomas Clarey ne trouva rien d'autre que de l'amener au plus vite parmi les arbres et les oiseaux. Là seulement, elle se reprendrait à vivre.¹⁴

There are others who escape into nature in search of a release from the stresses of urban life. Alexandre Chenevert figures among this group.

Qu'est-ce donc qu'Alexandre demandait à la vie de plus que son frigidaire, enfin payé, un gagne-pain assuré et un habit neuf tous les deux ans? Or, dans l'instant où il se posa la question, il reconnut qu'il était loin d'être seul au monde. Presque tous sur terre, si Alexandre avait pu les interroger cette nuit, auraient répondu: la paix, c'est la paix que nous voulons.¹⁵

At first, Alexandre was not certain that a holiday in the wilds of Tremblay Provincial Park would bring him peace of mind from the pressures of his job at the bank. He even thought that he could easily "forgive himself for

¹³Thériault, Agaguk, p. 12.

¹⁴Bertrand Vac, Louise Genest (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1950; Ottawa, 1967), p. 22.

¹⁵Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 18.

future errors if he were to find himself with a grave illness. "[...] Assez éloignée de lui, la maladie l'attira presque autant que les îles: en avoir fini avec les chiffres, n'être plus coupable surtout."¹⁶

At his doctor's insistence, he did go for a holiday to Lac Vert and was temporarily released from the pressures that were severely threatening his physical and emotional well-being.

Although he is not aware of it, Alexandre Chenevert is his own worst enemy, for he has allowed the pressures of living to affect his emotional and physical state. There are some lucid characters, like the hero of Mathieu, who realize that their desire to withdraw from society is little more than an attempt to escape from themselves:

La pluie continue: une pluie qui ne cessera jamais. Mathieu court. Où aller?... Où aller pour ne plus souffrir? Où aller pour oublier? "Qu'est-ce que je fais? Qu'est-ce que je fais? C'est ridicule de tant courir... Si loin que j'aille, il sera toujours mon père, elle sera toujours ma mère... et je serai toujours ce que je suis... Alors pourquoi courir? Qu'est-ce que je fais? Qu'est-ce que je crois fuir?"¹⁷

Unlike Mathieu Normand, who at the moment of his escape does not know what part of his personality he is running away from, Pierre Dupas, the ex-priest in Le Temps des hommes knows that it is his guilty conscience that is responsible for his lengthy departure

¹⁶Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 107.

¹⁷Loranger, Mathieu, p. 207.

into the forest. Because Pierre could not understand why God would condemn an innocent child to suffer and die, he questioned His justice. He had chosen Man over God, hence, his decision to renounce his vocation and escape into the forest for a period of ten years. "'C'était loin. Je voulais qu'on m'oublie. Personne ne me connaît ici.'"¹⁸ Although he came to accept God's will, Pierre could not forget that he had betrayed his vocation: "'J'ai été lâche; je suis resté. C'était trop facile ici. J'oubliais presque.'"¹⁹ Many characters break loose from society because of the restrictions and pressures it imposes upon the individual. Several in this group are also searching for a means to gain freedom from themselves.

Hope implies a desire on the part of an individual for some good along with at least a slight expectation of obtaining it. Consequently, those who attempt to escape do more than simply try to get away from an undesirable situation. They are also seeking something positive. The characters previously examined in Part II who successfully escape from their milieu do so in the hope that they will be delivered from the chains that bind them, either to their personal incapacity, their personal history, or to the state of solitude. Others leave their milieu behind in search of adventure. They generally find it in the journey which they regard as a kind of pilgrimage towards their personal progress.

¹⁸Langevin, Le Temps des hommes, p. 157.

¹⁹Ibid.

There are many among the group plagued by personal incapacity who are saved from further diminution in their physical and mental health as a result of the break they make with their environment. As is the case with Alexandre Chenevert, the escape is generally only temporary, and it involves direct contact with nature. Alexandre's physical and emotional health had progressively worsened over the years to the point where he suffered from insomnia.

Il avait souffert vingt ans, trente ans, des bruits de la ville, chiens qui jappent, portes qui claquent, tintements de bouteilles à lait. Cependant, en trois jours, il s'était accoutumé à un réveil naturel.²⁰

After only a few days alone in the wilderness, Alexandre came to terms with nature and consequently forgot the pressures of city life. The fact that after only three days at Lac Vert he no longer suffers from insomnia is a small but nevertheless significant stage in his physical and emotional rehabilitation. Mathieu Normand, who suffers from physical weakness as well as from a lack of self-esteem, arrives at the conclusion that: "'Ce que je veux surtout, c'est la tranquillité.'"²¹ But it was not until he read the newspaper advertisements that the idea of withdrawing from his urban environment came to him.

²⁰Roy, Alexandre Chenevert, p. 208.

²¹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 225.

"Val-Morin: Camp des Athlètes. Centre de culture physique", lit-il au bas de la page. "Voilà ce qui me ferait tous les biens en ce moment. Val-Morin... C'est joli Val-Morin." Il se souvient d'y être passé un jour en automobile avec les Beaulieu. D'autres hôtels annoncent leurs chambres dans le même village, et aussi des pensions de familles..

"C'est là que j'irai d'abord, décide-t-il, poussé par un désir vague qu'il ne s'explique pas mais qu'il croit bon de suivre." 22

It took Mathieu five months of strenuous physical activity to build up his strength to the point where he could be confident enough to deal with the demands of city dwelling again. What Mathieu achieved for himself in an organized centre for physical rehabilitation in the Laurentian Mountains, others accomplish by themselves in the wilderness of the vast forests. The forest presents a major challenge to the individual, for in order to survive in it one must learn its mysteries, develop the physical stamina to deal with it on its terms, and acquire the courage to continue the struggle for survival. Once one has come to terms with nature, one has acquired all of the self-confidence, courage and strength that is necessary for survival in any environment. In Evadé de la nuit, Jean Cherteffe explains why he is happiest when he is alone in the wilderness:

Encerclé de toutes parts par des milliers d'arbres, seul de votre espèce au centre de myriades de vie, et, dans la bouche, le goût d'une joie neuve, puissante. L'animal le plus rusé de la forêt, le plus fort. Une ivresse aiguë vous transcende. L'ours qui pèse cinq fois votre poids, le loup aux mâchoires mille fois plus rapides que votre main, le chevreuil qui vous épuiserait à la course, l'orignal qui vous

²²Loranger, Mathieu, p. 225.

écraserait d'un seul de ses sabots, tous vous craignent, vous fuient.

Votre marche pénible sous les branches est soulignée d'une course éperdue, multiforme, sous terre, dans les fourrés et dans l'air. Pour mille vies vous prenez figure de cataclysme. Vous êtes Jupiter.²³

The message imparted by Cherriffe implies that coming to terms with nature may be the best way to conquer the wilderness in one's own soul.

The act of escaping from a particular environment brings hope for release from the ties that bind one to one's personal history. Mathieu Normand was very conscious that his personal background was responsible for his inability to find happiness. His decision to leave Montreal was accompanied by the equally strong determination to forget all he had learned regarding man's role on earth.

"Puisque tout le reste m'a trompé, rien ne m'empêche d'essayer maintenant d'être heureux à ma façon... Puisque je sais aujourd'hui à quoi m'en tenir sur leur enseignement fondé sur la souffrance, il n'y a qu'à le rejeter et chercher ailleurs..."²⁴

The act of escape, in itself, forces one to live for the present. For example, in Louise Genest's case: "La vue du métis [Thomas Clarey] la rend heureuse et maîtresse d'elle-même. Il lui fait oublier le reste de l'univers."²⁵

The morning after their arrival in the forest, Louise recalls the guilt she had once experienced years before

²³Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 134.

²⁴Loranger, Mathieu, p. 224.

²⁵Vac, Louise Genest, p. 15.

her departure into the wilderness. She had gone to church to pray for Clarey's safety:

Ce matin, tout ça était loin; tout, sauf le beau métis aux yeux bleus, et la chemise rouge sous son oreille, avec de la chaleur à travers.

Les conventions, les misères de la vie, comme elles étaient loin!

"Le présent, il n'y a que le présent qui existe, se disait-elle. Le passé n'est plus, l'avenir n'y est pas encore. Pourquoi s'en faire puisqu'on a toujours le présent?"²⁶

Man is an historical being because he has been gifted with memory. Hence, it is impossible for him, in the long term, to dismiss his personal history as meaningless. In her initial enthusiasm, Louise Genest did not take this reality into account, so overjoyed was she to share her life with the man she had secretly loved for so many years. However, when the novelty of living with Thomas Clarey wore off, her mind wandered back to the village and to her teen-age son who remained under the despotic control of her husband, Armand. She was soon plagued by feelings of guilt for having abandoned him. The forest triumphed over Louise Genest for she would not put out of her mind that which she could not reconcile in her heart. Characters like Louise demonstrate that one must come to terms with one's personal background while enjoying the freedom that accompanies the act of escape, for it is only with peace of mind that one can confidently approach the future.

²⁶Vac, Louise Genest, p. 41.

The one aspect of personal history over which the individual can exercise considerable influence is the present reality. Since we are what we are in the present as a result of what has transpired in our past, it is entirely possible to influence future events by planning our actions in the present. The act of escaping from one's immediate environment in the present can therefore significantly alter one's future. For many, the escape is an expression of hope for the future as well. That is true of Ephrem Moisan in Trente arpents. Ephrem's situation is particularly significant because it points out the degree to which personal history can limit one's future options. Because he is not the oldest son, Ephrem is not eligible to inherit the Moisan farm. Consequently, if he wishes to remain true to the family tradition, he will be forced to relocate in a remote area of Quebec where agricultural land is available at a reasonable price. Because he wants to be fair with all of his sons, Euchariste Moisan suggests that Ephrem and he investigate the possibility of purchasing the abandoned Picard farm, "pour t'établir dessus avec une bonne petite femme, comme la Louissette à Edouard, par exemple."²⁷ Ephrem's curt reply leaves his father momentarily stunned: "Qu'est-ce que c'est que c't'affaire de Louissette pi d'la terre aux Picard? Vous avez dit t'à-l'heure que vous le saviez que je pars aux Etats!"²⁸ In his turn, Ephrem becomes

²⁷Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 182.

²⁸Ibid.

riled when his friends suggest that he should consider himself lucky because, unlike many among them, he has "un père qu'a les moyens."²⁹ Ephrem exclaims:

"C'est quand je les entends! J'le sais-t'y moé? En tout cas, c'que je sais ben, c'est que ça me donne pas une chris' de cenne. J'commence à en avoir assez."

"Voyons, Ephrem, t'es pas pire que les autres, chez vous, attisà le Rouge, voyant qu'il commençait à se monter."

"Non...? Ben, y a Oguinase: lui, son affaire est correc', y va faire un prêtre. Ben habillé, ben nourri. Roi et maître dans sa paroisse. Encore un an, pi y prend la soutane. Etienne, lui, va rester sur la terre du père. Pi moé, la dedans?"

Les autres l'écoutaient, personne n'osant lui donner ouvertement raison et personne surtout ne comprenant qu'on n'acceptât point l'état de choses éternel et fatal et qu'on pût vouloir lutter contre; que l'un d'entre eux essayât de prendre le chemin de traverse des décisions humaines qui ne sont pas imposées par la nature ou la coutume. Mais ils n'en avaient pas moins une espèce d'admiration étonnée pour le rebelle, pour cette mauvaise tête d'Ephrem Moisan.³⁰

Ephrem found the courage to rebel against the traditions that would have presented him with only those limited opportunities that were normally available to a person with his background. He was rewarded for his act of defiance, for: "depuis qu'il avait déserté, tout lui avait réussi; tandis que la terre avait failli à ceux qui en elle avaient placé leur confiance."³¹

The act of escape can also deliver one from the torpor of solitude. Mathieu Normand stands out as a notable exception to the majority of characters examined

²⁹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 125.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 235.

in the last chapter who succumbed to the temptation of suicide when they recognized the futility of the struggle against despondency. Yet, in many ways, Mathieu's situation was as desperate as theirs before he thought of escaping from Montreal.

Il cherche encore, mais en vain, une autre issue à son désespoir. "Si au moins j'entrevois une petite espérance, un moyen, si petit soit-il, d'être heureux un jour, mais je ne vois rien. Il n'y a rien à espérer, rien à attendre, ni des autres, ni de moi." Son existence se déroule devant lui; souvenirs d'enfance, souvenirs d'adolescence; larmes, révoltes, haine, colère, angoisse, accablement, rien d'autre! Il passe en revue les emplois qu'il a tenus depuis dix ans, les journées de parasitisme chez les Beaulieu, les retours au bercail, les repas lugubres en face de Lucienne, les soirées solitaires à ruminer, dans sa chambre, ses raisons de souffrir: haine encore, derniers soubresauts de rébellion, amertume, dégoût, mépris, haine encore, haine toujours. Enfin l'alcool, l'alcool qui tue en lui les derniers vestiges de fierté, l'alcool abrutissant... 32

Not only did Mathieu "essaie de penser froidement à sa mort,"³³ he also attempted suicide from atop Mount Royal. However, he lacked the courage to see his project through to its conclusion. Instead, he decided to get away from Montreal. In so doing, he delivered himself from the state of solitude that was threatening to destroy him.

The act of escape is important not only because it can deliver the unfortunate individual from the chains that shackle him to his personal incapacity, his personal history or to the state of solitude. It can serve another

³²Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 207-208.

³³Ibid., p. 207.

positive role; that of bringing adventure to an otherwise boring life. For those in the peasant class who are bored with their sedentary existence like Vincent Douaire in Nord-sud, it is the journey itself that holds particular appeal. Desrosiers compares Vincent to the Vikings of yore:

Jeune viking conquérant, [Vincent] était prêt à se pencher sur les plaines du continent comme autrefois ses ancêtres sur les vastes étendues de la mer. Ce virus qui s'était développé durant des années d'aventure, il le sentait agir au dedans de lui-même. Chants lointains, feux emportés par le courant, souvenirs, tout le troublait.³⁴

The desire to travel in the wilderness was constantly with Vincent. As a result, the act of escape produced a deep sense of satisfaction in his soul that could not be realized by any other activity, not even by the prospects of marriage with Josephte, the girl he loved.

Aller, venir, rôder à son caprice, quelle existence aurait pu se comparer à celle-là? Il lui semblait qu'elle réservait plus de jouissances et surtout, une espèce de satisfaction animale. Elle l'aurait délivré de son insupportable ennui de l'été. Est-ce là grande poésie de la forêt, que sentent en leur chair ceux qui ne savent pas penser? Ils ne pourraient l'exprimer, mais la mélancolie sauvage d'un crépuscule, la joie d'une aube, l'excitation d'une chasse hantent tout leur corps. Ils entendent bramer l'orignal, ils voient passer les volées d'outardes et ils ne peuvent s'empêcher de partir. Car la forêt possède ses sirènes comme la mer et ceux qui ont entendu leurs appels ne peuvent plus les oublier.³⁵

Although it is the adventure of travel which fascinated individuals like Vincent, there is also the satisfaction

³⁴Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 176.

³⁵Ibid., p. 149.

that one derives from successfully carrying out a bold undertaking. The journey which the young men will undertake in Nord-sud leads to California and to the prospect of getting rich quickly if they strike gold.³⁶ The highly speculative business of prospecting only adds to the adventure of the journey which is a hazardous undertaking in itself.

Although the above discussion concerning the theme of journey and its relation to the element of hope in escape is based upon Nord-sud, a novel first published in 1931, there is a great number of novels published after 1940 that deal with the subject. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find even a few contemporary novels where journeys do not occur in the course of the novel. As Warwick points out, it is significant that:

In the literary schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the journey was less admired than the farm, which represented the official side of order and stability. There was little in writing before 1930 to suggest the sudden reversal of this preference; it is explained mainly as a reaction. Nor was there much to suggest the re-emergence of the deeper sense of the journey.³⁷

Though the nationalist writers of the "roman de la fidelité" era preached only the positive aspects of the agriculturist movement in their works, there were very real reasons why a reversal of the preference towards adventurous journeys should occur with the advent of the realistic novel.

³⁶Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 53.

³⁷Warwick, The Long Journey, p. 78.

If the novelists of this school were to remain true to reality, they could no longer hide the truth regarding the drudgery and boredom of farming in certain remote areas of Quebec. Desrosiers claims in Nord-sud:

A' qui voudrait partir, les prétextes ne manqueraient pas. L'un dirait: "Je ne peux plus subsister sur ma ferme, ou bien ma terre est épuisée". L'autre répondrait: "Le climat ne vaut plus rien, ou la mouche hessoise ravage mes blés, ou les pommes de terre ne viennent plus". Et qui aurait pu leur riposter qu'ils mentaient?³⁸

For decades the nationalist writers had popularized the ideas of French-Canadian traditions, language and religion in their works of art. By the late 1920's they had succeeded in their drive to the degree that these concepts could better serve the cause of French-Canadian nationhood were they transformed into slogans and placed in the mouths of politicians, thereby freeing the genuine artist to pursue other themes. The depression can also be singled out as a cause for the radical change that occurred in the novel in the 1930's. Mason Wade notes that:

French-Canadian nationalism always comes to a head in periods of economic, as well as political, crisis. It was inevitable, considering the economic bent which Abbé Groulx had given to the movement, that it should revive with new intensity in the troubled 1930's, when French Canada felt the effects of the depression more deeply than English Canada, because its lower standard of living afforded less margin for subsistence.³⁹

The politicians were forced by the electorate to adopt nationalist slogans, thereby unburdening the artist of his over-worked themes. At the same time, the public

³⁸Desrosiers, Nord-sud, p. 52.

³⁹Wade, The French Canadians, Vol. II, p. 901.

needed an escape from the realities of the depression. The journey therefore became popular, and reversed the trend that had heretofore characterized the French-Canadian novel.

Because the novel Nord-sud is set in the nineteenth century, it is natural that Vincent Douaire find adventure in a hazardous journey across the expanse of the North American continent. Similar opportunities are open to the young twentieth-century peasants who are bored with the rural life and possess an appetite for adventure. However, the nature of the journey is different. For example, during the late 1930's, Ephrem Moisan in Trente arpents was discontent with the sedentary life. His journey took him to Lowell, Massachusetts. However, for Ephrem, the physical journey was only a minor part of the overall adventure that he hoped to experience. In a very real sense, he began the journey before his actual departure from the farm. His voyage began with the arrival of his father's cousin and his family on the Moisan farm. Ephrem was immediately attracted to Grace Larivière, Alphée's wife, because she was different from the rural girls of the parish. She became an adventure for him, as he was for her:

Il la regardait de côté, sournoisement, toute audace perdue devant cette femme d'une espèce différente; détaillant à petites oeillades furtives le visage aux yeux gris un peu troubles, la bouche mince et équivoque, la poitrine affichée où, lorsqu'elle se penchait pour boire son bol de thé, la blouse décollée ne cachait plus les choses secrètes. Grace, par moments, levait sur lui des yeux amusés

et avertis qui abattaient précipitamment les siens. Tout de suite ces deux-là avaient commencé de s'entendre; elle, attirée par sa force visible de rustre solide qu'elle devinait audacieux sous des dehors de bête domptée; lui, retrouvant en elle tout ce qui, de la femme, lui paraissait le plus désirable au monde: des vêtements qui ne soient pas de travail, une conversation qui ne soit pas de la terre, des soucis qui ne soient ni des bêtes ni des moissons. Il sentait surtout en elle la femme habituée à vivre au contact d'hommes divers, à sentir leur désir peser sur sa poitrine et lui serrer les hanches; et à lutter constamment contre lui. Il la croyait capable d'y céder sans hésitation, par un acte formel de consentement, et non par terreur ou par simplicité, comme celles qu'il avait eues jusqu'ici. Telle était du moins l'idée qu'il se faisait des femmes étrangères.

Entre eux s'était engagée l'éternelle joute qui ne pousse les sexes l'un vers l'autre que pour les faire se fuir aussitôt, cette lutte qui dans la ville remplace celle, plus directe, de l'homme contre la terre, femme aussi, et jamais soumise entièrement ni l'une ni l'autre.⁴⁰

Likewise, Bertrand Vac's heroine, Louise Genest experienced love for the first time when she undertook the journey into the forest with Thomas Clarey.

Elle glissa la main sur le torse du métis. "Seize ans, songea-t-elle tout haut, et jamais un plaisir, jamais une minute d'amour. [Armand] me laissait là, pantelante. J'ai attendu seize ans un frisson qu'il n'a pas su me donner. J'ai eu mon Pierre sans connaître autre chose que l'accouchement. Ce que je l'ai méprisé, cet homme-là, jusqu'à le haïr."⁴¹

For twentieth-century man, the journey has taken on symbolic meaning which is characterized by an urgent desire to discover that which continues to elude him. For both Ephrem Moisan and Louise Genest, the real voyage lies in the discovery that a dull uneventful existence can be transformed into an exciting human experience that leaves its mark upon one's personal history.

⁴⁰Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 141.

⁴¹Vac, Louise Genest, p. 39.

Indeed, the element of discovery is such a vital part of the journey that the individual's initial hope to break free is transformed into an urgent need to seek out new experiences.

From the spiritual point of view, the journey is never merely a passage through space, but rather an expression of the urgent desire for discovery and change that underlies the actual movement and experience of travelling. Hence, to study, to inquire, to seek or to live with intensity through new and profound experiences are all modes of travelling on, to put it another way, spiritual and symbolic equivalents of the journey. Heroes are always travellers, in that they are restless. [...] Primarily, to travel is to seek.⁴²

Pierre Cadourai in La Montagne secrète is the paragon of the ideal traveller in the symbolic sense. Over a period of ten years he had braved the elements of the far north "pour chercher ce que le monde voulait de lui--ou lui du monde."⁴³ Often, in the darkness of the night, he awoke with the feeling that what he was seeking was only a short distance away. On one such evening, he could not fight the urge to break camp. He set out in his canoe before dawn broke.

D'abord, il eut l'impression d'un vaste paysage, d'une splendeur étrange et froide; il ne le voyait pas véritablement; il le connaissait pourtant, à la manière dont se révèlent à quelqu'un qui rêve éveillé des aspects inconnus du monde. Sans doute ne s'agissait-il que d'un paysage--il entendait pourtant l'appel d'une beauté qui n'existait pas encore, mais qui, s'il en atteignait la révélation, le comblerait d'un bonheur sans pareil. A une distance indéterminée quel était donc ce bonheur à venir dont il recevait déjà une telle chaleur d'âme?⁴⁴

⁴²J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (2nd ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), s.v. journey.

⁴³Gabrielle Roy, La Montagne secrète (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1961), p: 21.

Pierre Cadourai's journey in La Montagne secrète, although analogous to Vincent Douaire's in Nord-sud in terms of the physical exertion it demanded of him appears more realistic to the twentieth-century reader. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the nineteenth century with its expanses of wilderness no longer exists except in the North. In novels like La Montagne secrète, authors like Gabrielle Roy ask whether the only meaningful journey one can conduct in our civilized world is a symbolic one?

Some of the characters we have examined in the preceding pages hope that by breaking free from their environment, they will succeed in rehabilitating themselves in both the physical and spiritual sense. Alexandre Chenevert and Mathieu Normand demonstrate that it is possible to overcome one's physical incapacities. By escaping from the milieu, it is also possible to come to terms with one's personal background. In some cases one's personal history can be drastically changed as Ephrem Moisan demonstrated when he escaped from the Moisan farm and established himself in Massachusetts. As seen in the novel Mathieu, it is also apparent that the act of withdrawal can save one from the despondency that is often the outcome of the state of solitude. But the act of getting away can serve other positive functions as well. Firstly, it can provide a feeling of adventure for those who lead an otherwise boring life. More important, the journey itself takes on symbolic significance when it becomes an expression of one's desire for discovery and change.

An important aspect of the question which has not yet been discussed concerns the duration of the escape. For some, the act represents hope for a complete break from the existing life style. Still others view it as a temporary state, a kind of respite from the pressures of urban life, which does not vary significantly from the kind of rest cures that many doctors recommend for their patients who are under constant stress over a long period of time.

Ephrem Moisan in Trente arpents is an obvious example of one who has escaped from one kind of existence so that he might become eligible to enjoy a completely different life style in the future. It is important to note, however, that not all of the individuals who break loose from their milieu are free to return at will without suffering serious consequences. Louise Genest, for example, could not return to her village to visit her son without placing his personal happiness in jeopardy. She even contemplated going to the lumber camp where he worked:

"Mais elle avait peur de tout gâcher en y allant. Car en se révoltant contre les conventions, elle avait abandonné le seul bouclier qui tienne l'opinion du monde en échec. Depuis, elle se voyait, vulnérable, toute nue aux yeux des gens; et c'est de ça que le petit ne se souviendrait que trop, ce qu'il ne lui pardonnerait peut-être jamais. Si on allait lui lancer l'injure à la face devant lui, son fils! Si on souillait sa mémoire après son départ! Non! Elle lui avait déjà fait assez mal."⁴⁵

There are others like Agaguk who have found everything that they desire in their new isolated environment. Even

⁴⁵vac, Louise Genest, p. 130.

though he has been nominated to replace his father Ramook as chief of the tribe, Agaguk realizes that he would not be able to resume the tribal way of life that he had led for eighteen years.

[Agaguk] réfléchissait, prenant sa décision. L'on n'est pas chef si jeune, dans les tribus. L'honneur était alléchant. Mais il signifiait le retour à la vie de village. Agaguk ne voulait point perdre ce qu'il possédait. La paix surtout, l'isolement, la liberté qu'il avait de décider de ses moindres mouvements.⁴⁶

The majority of those who escape from society, however, do so with the intention of returning to their milieu when they feel adequately rehabilitated. Alexandre Chenevert cut short his brief stay at Lac Vert when he felt that he had recovered sufficiently to be able to cope with his job again. Mathieu Normand did not dare return to Montreal for a period of five months, and even after that length of time, he remained uncertain about his ability to cope with society on its terms. Pierre Boisjoly in Pierre le magnifique remained in Savard's lumber camp for a year, and although Pierre Dupas in Le Temps des hommes is still afraid to return to civilization after a period of ten years,⁴⁷ the reader assumes that he will resume his vocation one day in the near future. Even if the act of escape represents the hope that some individuals have for a completely new life style in a different environment, for the majority,

⁴⁶Thériault, Agaguk, p. 284.

⁴⁷Langevin, Le Temps des hommes, p. 157.

it functions as a temporary period of relief from the normal daily activities. The respite provides the freedom to build up a strong resistance so that one might be better able to function as a progressive member of society.

The hope that many characters acquired as a result of escaping from society is what was needed to build up the self-confidence that had been lost. Some require only a temporary release from the boredom, the restrictions and the stresses of life before realizing that they can overcome the depression of the spirits. Others are obliged to get away from their milieu for a longer period of time, especially if they seek to liberate themselves from personal incapacity, personal history or the state of solitude. Many experience hope in the physical journey away from society. The hope that they gain is linked to the discoveries that are made while in the act of breaking free. It is this phenomenon which is of greatest consequence to the individuals who become disheartened in their quest of personal values, for despite the feelings of dejection, they realize that there is always hope where there is a possibility of escape.

CHAPTER VIII

HOPE IN REVOLT

During the period following the Second World War to 1960, many of the individuals described in the novel confidently looked upon revolt as the most effective, if not the only, means of attaining their goals. Unlike the Absurdist's whose notion of revolt is based upon resignation, for the characters examined in this chapter, the ethic of revolt means deliverance from a general or specific condition in life that is found to be objectionable. The force which motivates certain acts of aggression is the powerful and often irrational emotion of hate. The abhorrence that violent individuals feel for people and conditions in their milieu often results in violence because such acts represent a hope that the conditions will be rectified. Also, the state of revolt is seen as a hiatus by many rebellious young people. A break in the normal course of events created by a period of violence has a similar effect as an escape. It provides one with the hope that the hateful conditions of life will be eradicated when the normal pace of living is resumed after the period of revolt. The state of revolt is not devoid of a sense of remorse however, for like all acts that stem from hate rather than love, one is

often obliged to accept responsibility for the injuries incurred by the innocent victims of one's violent acts.

Like the sentiment of love, hate is a complex and powerful emotion that often causes one to perform irrational acts. Hate is often the outcome when an individual is victimized, whether it be by a person or by the general condition. Contradictions in one's own personality can also be highly oppressive.

The general condition that victimizes the individual is depicted in various ways. For example, in one episode in Agaguk, Thériault describes the north wind as a symbol representing the external forces that prevail over his hero, Agaguk.

Le vent avait augmenté. Agaguk avait tenté de se distraire en parlant. Mais depuis que le vent hurlait plus fort sur la toundra, il était redevenu silencieux. Son visage s'était fermé, ses yeux brillaient d'un étrange éclat.¹

Agaguk abhors the wind "[parce qu'il] est plus fort que moi! Rien ne doit être plus fort que moi!"² In the novels of Roger Lemelin dealing with the proletariat, the social conditions in which heroes like Denis Boucher are raised serve as causes of frustration, and Boucher often expresses his aversion for "la misère et l'ignorance de ceux qui m'entouraient."³ Because one's personal history is often highly oppressive, many characters despise the

¹Thériault, Agaguk, p. 21.

²Ibid.

³Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 68.

past. In Les Canadiens errants, Richard Lanoué "disait qu'il considérait son adolescence comme 'un fruit vert pourri'".⁴ Not only did Lanoué resent his past like many characters previously examined,⁵ he also attempted to change his personal history by participating in the orgies of violence that took place on the battlefields of Europe.

There are specific areas of the general condition that are particularly oppressive and therefore engender hatred in even the most placid of characters. Perhaps the most frequent source of animosity stems from the paternalism that exists in many varied forms in the society of French Canada. The usually calm Jean Sirois in Le Gouffre a toujours soif often conjures up a vision of his authoritarian boss, Charles Poirier, that makes him cringe with fear. In a delirious state, Jean on his deathbed begs Poirier "'de cesser de me menacer comme vous le faites.'"⁶ Jean's invectives are also focused upon the Church, and the parish priest's constant demands for money:

"Vous scandalisez vos paroissiens. A Noël, vous leur avez recommandé d'apporter une obole généreuse, en cadeau au petit Jésus, une obole royale, vous avez dit. Pourquoi n'avez-vous pas plutôt suggéré d'apporter un coeur pur? Le seul cadeau que vous ayez suggéré, c'était de l'argent, l'argent qu'il a maudit. Et beaucoup d'argent! Et vive le veau

⁴ Jean Vaillancourt, Les Canadiens errants (Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1954), p. 59.

⁵ See Chapter V above, especially pp. 297-303.

⁶ Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif, p. 186.

d'argent! Et Satan conduit le bal, conduit le bal! Je vous le dis, monseigneur le curé, vous avez perdu le sens de la charité. [...] Vous parlez d'argent avec la même chaleur, la même onction que vous parlez de Dieu. Cette hantise que vous avez de parachever l'église sous votre règne! D'autres générations l'utiliseront, pardi! Routez-nous donc la paix avec l'argent! Essayez plutôt d'améliorer nos âmes.⁷

Jean Sirois' objection to the manner in which the clergy perform their spiritual function falls just short of a censure of the religious doctrines themselves. At the other end of the spectrum, Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit, abhors everything about organized religion. He even finds it difficult to sit through the Requiem Mass that was celebrated for his deceased father:

Jean se laisse griser par sa propre exaspération. "Quel acharnement aveugle faut-il pour vêtir de dignité, tendre aux dimensions de l'éternel, juger à la barre de l'univers entier, ce qui était périssable et a péri, ce qui était affreusement limité dans le temps et dans l'espace, ce qui n'avait aucune puissance, qui n'a pu commettre de crimes que de connaître son impotence? Que signifient ce décor, ces mots, cette amertume que l'on nous promet pour lorsque plus rien n'existera? Qui, qui peut s'arroger le pouvoir de prononcer jugement sur la pourriture? Qui peut faire retentir des anathèmes à la face du monde pour un seul homme mort? Alors que le mot exister n'a plus de sens que celui d'une impasse: des gestes sans prolongements, sous mille contraintes, un poids sur les épaules et, à la fin de la boue, quand chaque parcelle de peau a été macérée à outrance, un abîme impensable, une virevolte dérisoire sur l'infini du cercle. Le giron paternel secoué de colère sur l'enfant sale parce qu'il est mort. Pourquoi le Ciel se livrerait-il à des convulsions pour une tristesse si démunie?"⁸

The aversion that Cherteffe has for spiritual anguish is matched by Agaguk's abhorrence of physical suffering.

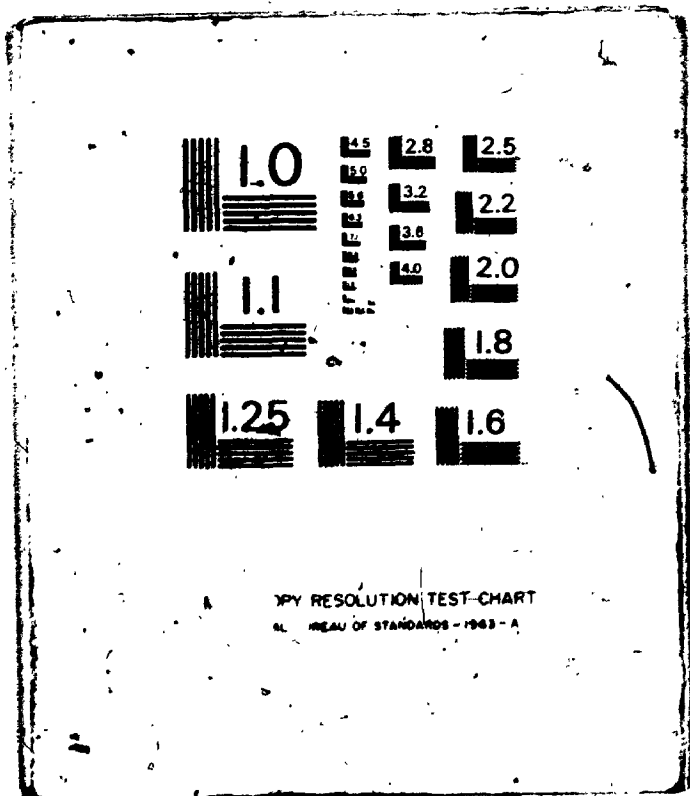
⁷Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif, pp. 159-160.

⁸Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, pp. 26-27.

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What frustrates the Eskimo is that despite his physical strength he is powerless to ease Iriook's excruciating labour pains: "Agaguk assistait impuissant à cette lutte. Gêné dans sa force brutale, humilié tout à coup par l'inutilité de ses muscles, il regardait avec un effroi grandissant ce travail de la nature où l'homme n'a plus sa place."⁹ Instead of resigning himself to man's place in Nature, Agaguk felt obliged to struggle against the pain experienced by his wife. "Il lui fallait le détruire, le chasser à jamais. C'était un démon, un Mauvais Esprit, une bête à vaincre."¹⁰ Agaguk is driven into a rage as a result of the hate he experiences for the suffering that he is unable to eradicate. In Neuf jours de haine, one reads that on the battlefield, the wounded or dying soldier is guided by his reflexes, "vers la peur et vers la haine. Vers la peur causée par son impuissance à s'évader. Vers la haine dictée par l'irréremédiable."¹¹ A similar statement can be said of those individuals who fall victim to the invisible arbitrary forces that form a part of the general condition.

There are people as well as situations who inspire resentment and hatred in others. Often it is very difficult for the victimized person to separate the individual from the hateful condition. In Le Gouffre a toujours soif,

⁹Thériault, Agaguk, p. 87.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹Jean-Jules Richard, Neuf jours de haine (Montréal: Editions de l'Arbre, 1948; Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1968), p. 299.

Sirois' invectives against the Church's high regard for money include a denunciation of the parish priest who is responsible for propagating the attitude.¹² Denis Boucher's condemnation of the army in Pierre le magnifique includes a verbal attack upon the military personnel. The resentment and insubordination he displayed resulted in a dishonorable discharge when he called his sergeant "un crétin meurtrier."¹³ Others in society inspire hate in their victims, not because they derive a certain pleasure out of victimizing innocent people, but because they are greedy. Agaguk loathed both Brown and McTavish because they had the power to cheat him out of the just remuneration he deserved for the pelts he wanted to trade. Still others rouse the ire of certain individuals because they love to humiliate people. It is this group of individuals that Pierre Boisjoly dislikes with intensity, as Dick O'Riley discovers: "'Grand Dick, vous n'auriez pas dû m'humilier. Toute ma vie j'ai été bafoué.'"¹⁴ For characters like Boisjoly and Noiraud in Neuf jours de haine, the feeling of humiliation, "ça ne s'endure pas. Pas par un homme comme lui. Un homme fort. Un batailleur."¹⁵ There is another group that we often meet in the novel; those who resent the mediocre masses. Mathieu Normand, who like Alexandre Chenevert is a bank teller, expresses his aversion for

¹²Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif, pp. 159-160.

¹³Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 70.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁵Richard, Neuf jours de haine, p. 51.

this group particularly well:

Au début de son stage, pour éviter de sombrer dans le désespoir, [Mathieu] avait cherché à s'intéresser à tous ces gagné-petit, déposant, retirant, déposant, retirant, sans jamais parvenir à grossir leurs maigres économies. Mais, peu à peu, lassé de ces visages où se lisait toujours la même histoire, il s'était mis à les détester, les accusant de lui apporter du monde une image trop mesquine. Ce soir plus que jamais, il en avait par-dessus, la tête de leurs espoirs mort-nés. Sa propre vie n'était-elle pas une réplique exacte de la leur? Pauvre, médiocre et morne, si morne, si pitoyablement morne...¹⁶

The low socio-economic condition of the masses is often a source of irritation for the ambitious individual who seeks escape from the constant reminders of his own lowly state. Consequently the weak and insignificant members of society are despised along with those who are strong enough to victimize others. In the final analysis any individual or condition in society can incite resentment and hatred. As Anna Schoderboeck aptly noted in her study: "The Element of Frustration in the French-Canadian Novel 1940-1954", "the causes [of frustration and resentment] themselves range from almost entirely external situations to those which arise primarily from contradictions within the personality itself."¹⁷

Violence, whether it appears as a rising up against the centres of power and influence, or in the form of refusing to submit to authority, has been used by man since the beginning of time. In this chapter, we are

¹⁶Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 111-112.

¹⁷Anna Schoderboeck, "The Element of Frustration in the French-Canadian Novel (1940-1954)" (University of Western Ontario: Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1958), p. x.

interested in characters whose revolt is motivated by a desire for good. Having arrived at an impasse in their attempts to realize their aspirations by non-violent means, the characters we shall examine turn to acts of violence. There are two fundamental approaches to the state of revolt as it is experienced by characters in the French-Canadian novel. The first is characterized by sporadic violent acts executed as a reaction to a condition in life that may or may not be related to the actual source of frustration. The second approach considers revolt as a state rather than an act that could last over a relatively long period of time, thereby producing a hiatus in the normal progression of events. The anticipation of a desirable outcome constitutes the element of hope that is a necessary ingredient in the revolt.

When one's feelings of resentment continue over a period of time, and when the hate becomes too intense, a release of the pent-up aggressive forces generally occurs in the form of uncontrolled anger. In the novel Agaguk, the Eskimo hero who had endured the howling of the North Wind for a long time found himself in a state of raving fury: "Agaguk se roula par terre, atteignit des deux mains un séchoir d'os de phoque. D'un geste fou il le brisa en cent morceaux. Et il hurlait sur une note un son de rage [...]"¹⁸ Because of the immense stamina and strength he needed to combat the harsh tundra environment,

¹⁸Thériault, Agaguk, p. 21.

Agaguk was unable to concede that there existed forces over which he did not have a direct influence. When he confronted such forces, "une rage hystérique s'empara de lui."¹⁹ The irrationality of his reaction in these circumstances is witnessed when he found himself unable to ease the labour pains suffered by his wife Iriook:

Il avait jusqu'alors réussi à maîtriser sa rage. Mais c'était fini. Il lui fallait combattre le mal immense chez la femme. [...] Il se rua sur Iriook, la jeta par terre sur la glace humide. Il la roua de coups de pied et de coups de poing, cherchant ainsi à tuer la douleur, à l'obliger à fuir le ventre de la femme. Et tout ce temps, Agaguk hurlait comme un déchaîné et ses cris se mêlaient à ceux d'Iriook qu'il mordait au bras, qu'il frappait en pleine figure. Le sang giclait des lèvres tuméfiées.²⁰

The Eskimo hero of Agaguk is not unique in his violent reaction to situations that are unacceptable to him. In Pierre le magnifique, the primitive side of Pierre Boisjoly's character comes to the fore when he is insulted by Dick O'Riley:

[Pierre] sauta sur [Dick], et quand son poing atteignit le menton du Grand Dick, Pierre ferma les yeux et laissa tomber ses bras le long de son corps, car il savait la bataille terminée et le Grand Dick assommé; il avait frappé cette figure à la mesure de sa colère et au moment du coup, une étrange et forte volupté était montée de son poing jusqu'à son coeur.²¹

Denis Boucher reacted in a similar manner when the army sergeant had taken out "son révolver et m'ordonna de me taire. Je bondis sur lui, j'entendis une détonation et sentis cuire mon épaule. Quand je perdis connaissance,

¹⁹Thériault, Agaguk, p. 27.

²⁰Ibid., p. 89.

²¹Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 95.

il était presque étranglé."²² Direct, spontaneous acts of aggression are the most frequent and probably the most effective means of quickly relieving one's pent-up emotions.

Consequently, impulsive violence is often seen as a hopeful sign, especially when the rebellious individual has a long history of accepting defeat. The hero of the novel Mathieu is one character who had such a history. However, his anger got the best of him one evening at the bank. He was unable to find the source of an accounting error he had made, hence, his ledger would not balance. He vented his rage upon the columns of figures by placing a large piece of blueberry pie between the sheets and stamping the large ledger shut.

Pris de fièvre, [Mathieu] courut chercher d'autres livres, qu'il empila sur le premier afin que le jus des fruits pénètre à fond les pages et que son dégoût et sa haine soient à jamais imprimés au milieu de ces chiffres, source de ses angoisses et de ses sueurs quotidiennes.²³

Although Mathieu appeared to accept resignation and failure as a condition of life, he often ruminated about getting even with the world for the suffering he had endured.

Souffrir, souffrir encore! Un jour viendra pourtant où j'éclaterai de rage. Ah! pouvoir n'être qu'un volcan qui se lasse un soir de sa résignation et libère ses entrailles en crachant dans l'air tout ce qu'il amassait, depuis des années, de boue, de pierres et de lave! Etre un volcan assez puissant pour ensevelir le monde entier sous le feu de ma haine!²⁴

²² Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 70.

²³ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 112.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 140-141.

Though minor, Mathieu's rebellious act at the bank is significant because it represented the beginnings of hope for his future welfare. It was the first step of the revolt that ultimately led him to the Laurentian Mountains and his complete physical and emotional rehabilitation.

Not all acts of violence are semi-irrational reactions to an immediate situation. There are many characters whose aim it is "de combattre pour un monde meilleur."²⁵ They utilize the faculty of reason rather than blind emotion to make their acts of violence more effective. As Marcel Cherteffe realized in Evadé de la nuit, "agir dans le concret pour un but précis et, pour cela, ne dédaigner aucun moyen. Quel autre choix existe-t-il?"²⁶ As a soldier trained to kill, Marcel's approach to violence is calculated and rational rather than emotional and hysterical. The mechanical nature of a professional killer's actions is evident in the following episode. Marcel was secretly approaching a farmhouse that had fallen into enemy hands:

Soudain une petite fille surgit devant lui. Elle ouvre déjà la bouche pour crier sa frayeur. Il n'a que le temps de bondir pour la bâillonner de ses mains. Il l'oblige à se coucher à ses côtés. Le petit corps trépigne dans ses bras. Il désire subitement parler à l'enfant, la rassurer, la faire rire. Un homme paraît qui traverse lentement la cour aux animaux. L'enfant réussit à se dégager, ébauche un cri. D'un geste précis, mécanique il serre la gorge et un corps tiède roule sur lui, abandonné et mou.²⁷

²⁵Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 37.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 38.

It is not only trained soldiers who have a calculated, unemotional approach towards the act of killing others. For example, when Agaguk decided to rid the Far North of Brown, the bootlegger who had cheated him out of his furs at gunpoint; he executed the assassination with the precision of a commando:

Avec des gestes de velours, [Agaguk] dévissa le bouchon du bidon de kérosène. Maintenant il était prêt. Il prit dans sa poche une allumette, une grosse allumette de Blanc. Le geste devint une sorte de rituel rythmé comme quelque danse des religions antiques. En un arc large et précis, son bras s'arrondit, la kérosène jaillit du bidon et inonda l'homme. Au même instant, l'allumette flambait, touchait le liquide et Brown, poussant un hurlement terrible, devenait une torche vivante.

Agaguk sortit en trombe, avait attrapé son ballot et voilà qu'il était déjà loin à regarder cet enfer qu'il avait allumé.²⁸

It is interesting to note that many of the authors who wrote about violence before the 1960's often situated their rebellious protagonists outside the immediate social context of Quebec. Although authors like Thériault used the Far North in Agaguk, and Langevin the battlefields of Europe in the case of Marcel Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit, and a remote lumber camp for the site of the several murders in Le Temps des hommes, they are still describing the realities of Quebec's society before the quiet revolution.

Lemelin does not hesitate to describe the rebellious working-class youths of Quebec City in their true social setting. For example, Denis Boucher who had spent "une enfance révoltée",²⁹ expressed hope for the

²⁸Thériault, Agaguk, p. 44.

²⁹Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 68.

Quebec working class by refusing to submit to established society. "Mon enfance s'est passée à chercher des ennemis, des gens à qui dire 'non'. L'autorité: le curé de ma paroisse, l'échevin de mon quartier, le député de mon comté, le maire, le premier ministre, je les méprisais."³⁰

By his revolt, Denis was attempting to prove that he was not made to wallow in proletarian mediocrity.⁴ Pierre Boisjoly displays similar hope through his revolt against Father Martel's persecutors.³¹ During the course of the confrontation he had with Yvon Letellier and the Quebec authorities, Pierre demonstrated that his aim was to advance the cause of freedom of the individual in Quebec. This aspiration could be realized only by entering into a hostile relationship with established authority.

Violence is often more than an isolated act or a series of deeds, whether they be irrational, spontaneous reactions to a particular situation, or the calculated use of force to bring about specific results. There are instances where violence becomes a welcomed state because it creates a hiatus in one's life. The particular condition which the use of force creates can free the individual from the oppression of the past and provide hope for a better future. There comes a time in the lives of an oppressed people when the routine of living has to be interrupted if only for a short while so that the individual

³⁰Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 68.

³¹Ibid., p. 146.

can assess his situation and the direction in which he is progressing. It is this hiatus, accompanied by some form of revolt which can free one from the past and thereby provide hope for a change in the future.

After undertaking an arduous trip lasting several days to trade furs for the supplies he and his family require for the winter, the Eskimo hero of Agaguk became aware that he was being short-changed by McTavish, the manager of the Hudson's Bay trading post. However, there was nothing that Agaguk could do about it. He had already killed one dishonest trader, Brown, and he knew full well that he could not get away with such an act at the trading post which doubled as a base for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Nevertheless, Agaguk was in a state of desperate turmoil that could be calmed only by violent exertion on his part.

Il fallait que le geste posé par Agaguk fût un geste extraordinaire, peu accordé à ses habitudes de vie, quelque chose qui marquât l'instant de façon précise, et pour longtemps.

Petit à petit, il formula cette évasion, la précisa. Brusquement il comprit ce qu'il devait faire. Il fallait qu'entre l'instant déplaisant devant McTavish et son arrivée à l'igloo où Iriook attendait, quelque chose se produisît, un hiatus. Il ne pouvait reprendre son chemin. Il ne pouvait retourner immédiatement vers la femme.³²

So, he purchased four bottles of whiskey in the hope that alcohol in his veins might give vent to his frustrations. The first night, he drank two of the bottles: "Après, il éprouva de la rage. Elle lui vint soudain, immense,

³²Thériault, Agaguk, p. 71.

dominatrice, mais avant que de céder à cette colère, il tomba endormi. L'alcool en ses veines avait vaincu toute résistance."³³ The third day, he awoke with a gigantic hangover. The four bottles of liquor were depleted, but so was the emotional condition that had led him to consume their contents: "L'épisode chez McTavish n'était plus une honte, pas même un souvenir dont il eut cure. C'était fini. L'hiatus était comblé, il pouvait maintenant retourner vers Iriook."³⁴ In the solitude of a small, make-shift igloo, dug out of the frozen tundra snows, Agaguk's frustrations over being cheated by the white man were resolved during a drunken three-day spree.

The symbol of burying oneself in the snow signifies the suppression of the personality as well as self-punishment. This episode in Agaguk is particularly reminiscent of the manner in which the oppressed Quebeckers of the Duplessis era handled the state of violence that was surging from inside their troubled beings. However, an alternative to self-effacement was open to a number of rebellious young men who were seeking an avenue which would give vent to their frustrations. Denis Boucher explains his particular predicament and that of his generation in Pierre le magnifique:

³³Thériault, Agaguk, p. 74.

³⁴Ibid., p. 75.

"J'ai toujours été tendu comme un tigre prêt à bondir sur la vie et je n'ai bondi sur rien. Seuls mes poings ont frappé et il me semblait que les coups que je donnais soulignaient mon impuissance. [...] La guerre, je le crus, m'apporterait la délivrance; ses orgies de violence et de sacrifices inutiles seraient peut-être à la mesure de ma soif. [...] J'ai vu des champs de bataille, j'ai connu l'exaltation de la douleur devant toutes ces jeunes victimes, mortes pour rien, sans orgueil, effacées et oubliées comme des mots superflus. Je les aimais." 35

There are many young men who chose the violence of war as an avenue for giving vent to the profound frustrations they experienced in their daily lives. Indeed, some characters, like Lanoue in Les Canadiens errants, "semblaient avoir trouvé [leur] élément naturel à la guerre." 36

It is highly significant that the military establishment and the Second World War should provide the stage upon which the rebellious French Canadians could act out their hopes for the future. The war provided a hiatus for these individuals in the same way that Agaguk's three-day drinking spree did, except that it was adventure and violence instead of liquor that acted as the vehicle by which the individual could ultimately acquire control over his rage and direct it towards goals which were not only acceptable, but actively promoted by society. Instead of the violent physical reactions that great quantities of liquor produce within the body, it is the external adventures that the young men went to

³⁵Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 69.

³⁶Vaillancourt, Les Canadiens errants, p. 57.

find in Europe. In Neuf jours de haine, Richard examines the nagging question that plagued many soldiers:

Que venaient-ils faire ici? Jusqu'à présent la propagande les a tenus. Maintenant, cette question les remplit de malaise. McDeen aurait dit être venu défendre l'impérialisme britannique. Donshire, plus clairvoyant, qu'on s'efforçait de sauver la civilisation. Kouska, qu'il était venu s'instruire. Les avocats de baraquements, plus fatalistes, qu'on ne pouvait guérir le mal millénaire du monde.

Mais on était venu pour l'aventure. Il fallait rester. Vivre l'aventure.³⁷

The adventure began when the person joined the military, for that was the commencement of the definite break in the continuity that had characterized his previous life. After only a short while, some soldiers, like Lanthier in Les Canadiens errants: "ne se reconnut plus, sentit entre son passé et sa vie nouvelle un gouffre aussi large que l'Atlantique."³⁸ Lanoue who felt "qu'il avait commencé à vivre le jour où il était entré dans l'armée [dit] que son passé n'existait pas."³⁹ It is not only because one is physically isolated from Quebec society that such a clean break with the past is so readily attainable. More significant than that:

L'Armée était une société artificielle à laquelle ils avaient dû s'adapter, la guerre une drôle d'aventure pour laquelle ils avaient dû se munir; mais ils s'étaient adaptés à la première, et munis pour la seconde au point de les identifier avec la Vie.⁴⁰

³⁷Richard, Neuf jours de haine, p. 120.

³⁸Vaillancourt, Les Canadiens errants, p. 112.

³⁹Ibid., p. 58.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 192-193.

Some authors intimate that perhaps the most humane aspect of the whole adventure can be expressed in terms of the friendships that were created during the normal course of combat.

L'union morale des soldats surgissait d'une nécessité pragmatique. Elle se bâclait sous forme de pactes utilitaires, à l'ombre du péril commun. Mais quand le péril était passé et la nécessité disparue, il était rare qu'il n'en restât pas quelque chose. On risquait sa vie ensemble; ou consécutivement en attendant son tour, ce qui revenait au même; on la risquait parfois l'un pour l'autre.⁴¹

In military life one is not given any real latitude to choose one's friends and close associates.

C'était pourquoi ç'avait été une telle aventure. La vie ordinaire n'eût pas fait se rencontrer des garçons comme Lanoue, Lanthier, Dubuc, Hurtubise et Gagnon. L'eût-elle fait qu'ils se seraient à peine regardés et auraient passé leur chemin. Mais la guerre avait fait qu'ils dussent se regarder longtemps vivre, avant de passer leur chemin. La guerre avait happé leurs destins pour les associer. Ils avaient vécu ensemble les meilleures années de leur jeunesse, les plus riches, les plus fortes et les plus généreuses. Les irrétractables; les parties-à-jamais; les irrémplaçables.⁴²

Due to the positive aspects of military life, for example the hiatus it creates in one's normal life style, the adventures associated with the discovery of different peoples, lands, and customs; and particularly, the strong bonds of friendship that often developed between soldiers, the violent side of war quickly lost the negative meaning that the uninitiated masses generally associate with it. The soldiers who are constantly exposed to the perilous

⁴¹ Vaillancourt, > Les Canadiens errants, p. 192.

⁴² Ibid., p. 193.

nature of combat are often willing to subscribe to it.

For example:

Lanoue avait déjà songé que la guerre était une immense symphonie. Il avait prêté l'oreille, surtout dans les ténèbres, à ses éclats rythmés, ses grondements lointains ou proches, ses murmures, pour imaginer quelque musique cosmique.⁴³

When a soldier in combat associates the rhythmic detonation of bombs with an imaginary form of cosmic music that an immense orchestra might create, he is giving his unqualified assent to the positive aspects of military life.

Along with a keener insight of others, the constant presence of violence brings with it a desire for self-awareness. That is how Richard Lanoue in Les Canadiens errants accounts for the courage he has witnessed among his comrades. They had found a kind of personal satisfaction in exposing themselves to the threat of death in a foreign country for ideals which were not at all clear to them.

Il y avait l'homme seul avec son destin, puissance ténébreuse. Il y avait le courage de cet homme, sa grandeur à bouche fermée [...]. Avoir marché au devant de son destin pour soumettre sa vie à l'épreuve suprême; s'être trouvé, tel que prévu, face à la Mort; l'avoir défiée en combat singulier, s'être battu comme Jacob avec l'ange;--Qu'on eût vaincu ou perdu, cela, peut-être, était digne d'un homme?⁴⁴

A particularly interesting instance of one soldier's face-to-face confrontation with death is examined from

⁴³Vaillancourt, Les Canadiens errants, p. 78.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 196.

the dead man's point of view in Neuf jours de haine:

"On ne sent réellement tout son corps que quand il nous fait mal. Ça m'a fait mal. Pas trop. Le choc a eu trop de violence. [...] Ça s'est fait trop vite. Mes sens ne sont pas organisés pour tant de sensations. [...] Je sais que j'ai changé de forme, mais je n'ai pas été asservi à mes sens. Je n'ai réellement pas souffert."⁴⁵

Jean-Jules Richard has attempted the impossible in this passage. He has tried to capture the fleeting spirit of a dying man, and communicate with it on a verbal level. Despite the obvious shortcomings inherent in the literary experiment, it is significant that Paul should see himself primarily as a sensory being only after experiencing the violent shock produced when he detonated the land mine. It is also interesting to note that Paul's pursuit of the temporal aspects of his being takes place only after the violent explosion that transformed him into a disembodied spirit.

"Je me cherche.

Je cherche mes cheveux roux [...]. Je cherche mes mains [...]. Mes yeux. Mes lèvres. [...] Je cherche mes jambes ou du moins l'angle vide entre mes jambes. Je cherche mon ventre [...].

Je ne trouve rien. Pourtant, je vois. Mieux qu'avec mes yeux. Je suis possédé d'une lucidité plus pure. Je perçois au lieu d'entendre. Je discerne au lieu de voir. Je comprends au lieu de ressentir. C'est drôle."⁴⁶

The connection that can be drawn between Paul's disembodied spirit and the overly pious French Canadian who values the restrictions placed upon human feelings and sentiments

⁴⁵Richard, Neuf jours de haine, p. 168.

⁴⁶Ibid.

by the traditionalists is obvious. It is also apparent from the example that a violent explosion can be of great significance especially in the process of recognizing that man is a sensory being. Violence is often necessary before the senses can be awakened because of the long time interval during which they have been repressed and kept in a state of dormancy. Indeed, for many people, hope is a direct outcome of violence, for contrary to the propaganda prevalent in the milieu, man often becomes aware of himself as a sensory being only after a violent incident activates the senses.

Even though the revolt manifested by acts of violence signifies a hope that one will soon be free from a state of oppression, rebellious individuals like the hero of Mathieu are often introspective after committing violent acts:

Pourquoi cette subite révolte succédant à des semaines de résignation? L'esprit de lutte n'était donc pas complètement étouffé en lui? Avait-il eu la bêtise de croire qu'il se libérerait en agissant ainsi? C'était sortir d'une prison pour entrer dans une autre! [...].⁴⁷

Even if one manages to escape imprisonment by the authorities, one can never attain true freedom by violence because the human conscience will not permit it. Even Denis Boucher, the thirty-year-old hardened rebel in Pierre le magnifique, continues to be guided by his conscience in his relationship with Pierre Boisjoly, as he had in the past:

⁴⁷Loranger, Mathieu, p. 112.

"C'est à cause de cette fraternité absolue que je t'avais invité chez moi, l'an dernier! Quand je me suis aperçu que notre rencontre te détournait de ta vocation, il était trop tard. [...] Je me sentais responsable de toi. Je t'avais à ma charge. [...] Ne représentais-je pas pour toi le malheur? Je t'ai dit 'Va-t'en!', je te le répète aujourd'hui." 48

Denis' conscience troubles him not only because he directed Pierre away from the priesthood. As a direct result of his actions, his mistress, Fernande, had miscarried. Soldiers in combat, as well, regret the suffering that they inadvertently inflict, especially upon the innocent. For example, after killing the young girl in the barnyard in order to save himself, "Mardel s'affaîsse, enfonce ses doigts dans la terre pour se libérer du tremblement nerveux reparu. Lorsqu'il se relève pour rejoindre ses hommes, des larmes lui modèlent un masque de boue." 49

There is also a recognition, that as the perpetrator of violence, one is apt to become its victim. This applies particularly to soldiers like Noiraud in Neuf jours de haine, who face daily combat at the front lines. In spite of the propaganda that is meted out to infantrymen in an attempt to desensitize them as human beings, they often find themselves reflecting upon the violence that has become a principal reason for their existence.

[Noiraud] tire une mitrailleuse à lui. Il en a besoin pour se défendre. Pour venger les copains. Pour tuer. Pour le plaisir de tuer? L'odeur de fer chaud, de boue, de sang dilué l'intoxique. Il

⁴⁸ Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 268.

⁴⁹ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 38.

grimace. Il cligne des yeux. Sa pensée vacille.
 Puis il se frappe d'horreur. Il se maudit.
 "Ai-je vraiment le goût de tuer?"⁵⁰

Individuals who respect human life often become preoccupied with matters of conscience when compelled by circumstance to engage in acts that are injurious to others. This also applies to those who might at first appear to be oblivious to humanitarian considerations. The hero of Yves Thériault's novel Agaguk is representative of this group. Initially, the Eskimo did not think twice about the murder he had committed. Because Brown had cheated him, Agaguk considered his act of retaliation as just. However, as time passed, and with Iriook's persistent appeals, he began to develop a morality foreign to Eskimo tradition, which is symbolized by the white wolf.

Le loup blanc n'était pas un animal de la toundra.
 Il n'était pas une bête de la nature. Il était
 quelque mauvais esprit, un agioftok, venu harceler
 Agaguk.

Pour quelque mal qu'aurait commis l'Inuk?
 Mais quel mal?⁵¹

Although Agaguk succeeded in slaying the great white wolf, he bore the marks of the battle for the remainder of his life. The death of the animal signifies that rather than remaining a slave to a morality that was foreign to him, the Eskimo incorporated the aspects of it relevant to his way of life into his own system of values. In the process, however, Agaguk was transformed into a different human being. The scars of battle rendered

⁵⁰Richard, Neuf jours de haine, pp. 100-101.

⁵¹Thériault, Agaguk, p. 178.

him unrecognizable to anyone who had known him before, including his own father, Ramook. Only Iriook his wife, who had been responsible for his moral and physical rehabilitation, was certain of the disfigured Eskimo's original identity. Agaguk's only hope for personal survival depended upon his new identity. As Iriook remarks to her husband after the team of investigators leave:

"Ces gens-là sont venus ici. Ils cherchaient Agaguk. Ils cherchaient l'autre, celui qui vivait dans le village... Il n'existe plus, l'autre Agaguk... Toi, tu portes son nom, mais tu pourrais en porter un autre et ce serait juste, car tu n'es plus le même..."

Agaguk la fixait, une inquiétude dans les yeux.

"Celui que j'aime, dit Iriook soudain, c'est l'Agaguk d'aujourd'hui, celui qui pourrait s'appeler autrement... Ils t'auraient mis en prison, et ensuite ils t'auraient pendu... Je ne voulais pas qu'ils t'emmenent, même si tu as tué les deux Blancs." 52

As intimated in Agaguk, hope is present whenever one undertakes to rethink and perhaps restructure one's philosophy of life. So, even though many of the rebellious individuals examined become introspective after engaging in acts of violence, they do not necessarily deny the notion of hope in revolt. Rather, they rely upon the personal insight to be gained from their experiences to guide them in the future.

The hope that is inherent in the act of revolt can be attributed to different factors. Often, the oppressive social conditions breeds intense hatred, and acts of

52 Thériault, Agaguk, p. 246.

aggression provide idealistic rebels with the expectation that this divisive emotion can be successfully overcome. Sometimes, hope is disguised in the form of a violent act initiated to rectify an undesirable situation. Frequently, the desire for future good manifests itself in the form of a prolonged state of revolt which can produce a hiatus in one's normal rhythm of living. Many of the French-Canadian idealists during the 1940's found that the Second World War presented them with a socially acceptable vehicle for giving vent to their frustrations. Paradoxically, a keener awareness of others, as well as of oneself, is a frequent by-product of violence. Because of the innocent victims of acts of aggression, the state of revolt does not preclude a sense of remorse. This feeling is often interpreted as a sign of hope for the future. In conclusion, it is worth noting that the characters examined in this chapter forecasted the violence that appears to dominate the literature of Quebec of the past fifteen years. Prophetically, these works foretold of the decade of violence in Quebec society which culminated with the 1970 October Crisis.

CHAPTER IX

HOPE IN EVOLUTION

Many authors writing during the two decades preceding 1960 present hope in evolution as an alternative to the expectations many impatient idealists attempted to satisfy through revolt. The non-violent majority in the society of French Canada feels that the drastic measures proposed by those who place their trust in revolt constitute dangerous and unacceptable methods of unchaining Prometheus from his rock. Some authors contend that the only significant difference between revolution and evolution is the time during which the changes are allowed to take place. They see the evolution of society in terms of tradition versus progress with the element of time as the dominant factor in the equation. However, the notion of time is seen differently, depending upon whether one is an avid believer in the status quo or a devoted proponent of progress and change.

A majority of the authors writing during the time period under consideration regard evolution as a natural process of development and growth which is measurable in eras rather than years. Time is a fulcrum upon which tradition and progress exert equal influence, thereby assuring that the balance will not be tipped in

favor of either one or the other extreme position. According to this proposition, hope for a better future is attainable only by future generations. Often, it is the children who will reap the rewards of the hardships that the generation of the 1940's had to endure. This point of view not only applies to individuals in a family setting. It is also examined in relation to a collectivity of people in novels like Dans le muskeg. In this novel, set in Northern Alberta, an examination of the diverse and changing attitudes of the villagers of Avenir regarding bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism is undertaken over a time span of two generations.

The proposition that change is good, but only for future generations, is counterbalanced by the emergence of individuals and groups in society who have undergone a remarkable evolution relative to the majority in society. This counterbalancing force often requires that there be some adjustment on the part of society, both in a collective and an individual sense. Therefore, social evolution also implies a change in one's personal position so that it might be in harmony with a definite plan, even though the transformation often does not conform with the individual's natural inclination. It has oftentimes been remarked that necessity is the mother of invention and change. Contrary to society's directives, some avant-guard individuals feel compelled to abandon the acceptable modes of behavior and pursue their own inner drives. Instead of following society's dictates, they

are serving as examples for others. In this group, one finds a significant number who are in quest of personal values.

Some authors believe that time, like the fermentation process, is good for progress since it can be an agent of change in traditional societies. Few display the keen historical insight of Ringuet. At the beginning of Trente arpents, the author introduces Euchariste Moisan who will take over the legal title and management of the farm that had belonged to his aging uncle, Ephrem. He immediately set to work making the necessary changes that would increase the farm's productivity.¹ Even after many years, Euchariste kept an open mind regarding progress. For example, he was the first farmer in the area to introduce chickens to his enterprise as a serious money-making project. When Athanase Giroux condemns the new agricultural inventions because of the serious injuries that sometimes result, Euchariste finds himself defending the changes that had occurred in agriculture:

"Voyons, son père, [...] faut être de son temps. Si on veut garder son monde sur la terre, faut aller de l'avant. Le temps d'la faucille est fini. Le temps aussi où on sumait seulement du foin et du grain. C'est pour ça que j'ai commencé mon affaire de poules. Si y en a un chez nous qui veut s'en occuper, y a gros à gagner. En tout cas, si y a un petit moyen, mes garçons, j'vâs les garder chez nous."²

However, with each passing year, his son Etienne suggested that the Moisan farm undergo the changes that the coming

¹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 28.

²Ibid., p. 115.

à titre de père, de grandes aventures épiques, le sauvetage de son fils peut-être, et il trouve minable que l'héroïsme consiste tout simplement, pour lui, à aller au bureau comme tout le monde. Ils sont loin les grands gestes qu'il avait souhaités le soir de la naissance du petit.¹⁰

However, Jean's strong sense of duty to his six-year-old son can be interpreted as a statement of hope in evolution. The relationship which unfolds between Claude and his father, who is dying of lung cancer, demonstrates in a symbolic way that the forty year old man is clinging to the generation of the future for hope.¹¹ The communion scene, where both Jean and his son Claude share the consecrated Host, demonstrates that there are strong spiritual bonds linking the dying generation (Jean) with the generation that is emerging (Claude).

[Jean] écrasé, amaigri, défait, et dont l'haleine sent l'urine, tend sa langue chargée. Le prêtre y dépose la moitié de l'hostie. L'homme incline la tête et s'appuie de tout son poids sur les bras et l'épaule de son enfant.

L'enfant tire une langue rose, crispée par l'effort des bras, de l'épaule et des jambes arc-boutées.

Les deux têtes se rejoignent. Les cheveux se mêlent.¹²

If hair symbolizes human strength in Giroux's novel, the intermingled chevelure of father and son signifies that the dying man gains in strength when he leans upon his son for support.

¹⁰ Giroux, Le Gouffre a toujours soif, pp. 41-42.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹² Ibid., p. 178.

"Quiens! encore une autre affaire! En as-tu encore ben de même?... Ecoute, mon gars, le progrès, moé, j'ai toujours été pour ça. Mais, m'a dire comme on dit, i'a toujours un mosus de bout'. Ma terre, elle a pas besoin d'affaires de même."⁴

At the end of the novel, Ringuet reminds the reader of the aphorism that the more things change, the more they remain the same:

Chaque année, le printemps revint...
 ... et chaque année la terre laurentienne [...] offrit aux hommes ses champs à labourer, herser, fumer, semer, moissonner...;
 ... à des hommes différents...
 ... une terre toujours la même.⁵

Each generation of farmers devises its own innovative ways of reaping all that the land has to offer. It is that process which is called progress. However, it is not the innovations but the land itself which is the farmer's most important commodity. And, despite the transformations it meant for the individual and community, the land alone remains unchanged.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the statement made by the traditional peasant regarding progress is the demise it spells for the older people and their cherished ways of doing things. Just as people die, so do eras with which they identify. As much as the death of his old friend, Canard Péloquin, it is the end of an era which old Didace Beauchemin mourns in Marie-Didace:

⁴Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 305.

⁵Ibid., p. 306.

Aux yeux de Didace Beauchemin, la mort de Péloquin représentait plus que la mort d'un homme, c'était le commencement de la fin, un signe des temps: l'effritement d'un pan de l'ancienne paroisse, le raisonnement imbécile de la jeunesse, les changements dans la migration des canards que la civilisation refoulait plus au nord, d'année en année, le poussaient au dos, comme pour le précipiter plus tôt dans la fosse.⁶

Yet, the senior citizens who are nearing the inevitable end of life are not alone in their fatalistic view of time. Marie-Amanda discloses to her friend, Angéline, that, along with her father's generation, she also believes time to be the agent responsible for personal crises, such as that experienced by her interlocutor, when the Survenant left her and Le Chenal du Moine behind for new adventures. In a similar way, Didace had succumbed to the effects of time when he married l'Acayenne.

Marie-Amanda s'arrêta dans le vent afin de respirer, puis reprit:

"C'est le temps. Le temps qui vient à bout de tout. T'as l'exemple de mon père. Il aimait ma mère. A sa façon, si tu veux. Mais il l'aimait gros. Et à c't'heure qu'elle est morte, il en a une autre."

La voix enrouée de chagrin, elle ajouta:
"Ma mère avait fait son temps."⁷

The fear of progress is linked by the traditionalists to the question of time. However, no-one really wants stagnation, preferring instead, "la tradition [qui] se tourne vers l'évolution."⁸ With reference to the sensitive question of education, it is stated in

⁶Guévremont, Marie-Didace, pp. 95-96.

⁷Ibid., p. 69.

⁸Lockquell, Les Elus que vous êtes, p. 190.

Les Elus que vous êtes: "Nous n'avons le droit ni de mépriser la tradition, ni d'étouffer les désirs de progrès."⁹ Perhaps more than any other single factor, it is the traditionalists' concession to modernism, accepting a very gradual transformation in society, that has given the proponents of change the hope they express in evolution as a kind of herculean deliverance.

The notion of progress, whether it is viewed in individual or collective terms, had special meaning for the young families that were starting out during the difficult decades following the Depression. For the parents of small children, hope in future prosperity was closely connected to the welfare and security of the offspring. Hard work and long hours were often necessary if the family was to be adequately looked after. In Le Gouffre a toujours soif, Jean Sirois explains that, despite his doctor's insistence, he cannot undergo a week-long battery of tests in the hospital.

"Docteur, je vous l'ai dit l'autre fois: impossible de m'absenter du bureau, surtout pendant une semaine. Ils pourraient me mettre à ma retraite. Et je n'ai pas les moyens d'être à ma retraite. [...]"

Vous comprenez, docteur, il n'y a pas moyen d'en sortir. Je pense que mon devoir de père, c'est de me cramponner, de tenir le coup. Chaque mois ajoute seize centièmes de un pour cent à ma pension."

Et, en faisant craquer les jointures de ses doigts:

"Il faut que je tienne, tant que je pourrai..."

Il a prononcé la dernière phrase comme s'il s'excusait de faire si peu. Comme s'il avait rêvé,

⁹Lockquell, Les Elus que vous êtes, p. 189.

à titre de père, de grandes aventures épiques, le sauvetage de son fils peut-être, et il trouve minable que l'héroïsme consiste tout simplement, pour lui, à aller au bureau comme tout le monde. Ils sont loin les grands gestes qu'il avait souhaités le soir de la naissance du petit.¹⁰

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¹¹ Ibid., p. 102.

¹² Ibid., p. 178.

Careful note of the element of time should be taken into account when hope in evolution is viewed in relation to the coming generation. In Time as History, George Grant remarks that:

the inscrutability and unpredictability of events must not be over-emphasized, in either the individual or the collective case. We can plan our lives so that within limits the future depends on what we have done and are doing. This is truer collectively than individually because of the greater ability of the collective to control the results of chance.¹³

Germaine Guèvremont takes this notion into account in developing the character of Marie-Didace. The Beauchemin offspring, as much awaited for by old Didace as by his daughter-in-law Alphonsine, is even examined in relation to the prenatal influences she undergoes.

L'image du Survenant, avec son grand rire et ses défauts, avec son verbe insolent et son obligeance, sillonna la pensée [d'Alphonsine]. Mais elle s'interdit de trop penser à lui, de peur que l'enfant ne finit par lui ressembler.¹⁴

Contrary to Alphonsine's fears, genetic law prevailed. Much to the dismay of Didace, the orphan was born with her natural father's frail constitution:

Ce petit paquet de chair, une fille, dire que c'était peut-être tout ce qui subsisterait d'Amable. Et pas longtemps, un jour ou deux. Les mains sur les yeux, blessé dans sa chair et blessé dans son orgueil, il eut la vision d'Amable étendu sur le quai, la tête fracassée, dans une mare de sang. Et ici, à la maison, son enfant, cette figure grotesque, perdue dans un bonnet, ce corps maigrelet enroulé dans de l'ouate. Le dernier rejeton: un coeur bleu. Si ce n'était pas pénible.¹⁵

¹³Grant, Time as History, p. 12.

¹⁴Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 11.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 139.

However, Marie-Didace eventually overcame her early physical handicaps. It is telling that by the age of six, she already displays characteristics of the Survenant, especially in her attraction for nature, her keen sensitivity, and her desire for independence.¹⁶ That Marie-Didace is a very unusual little girl is made evident by her reaction to her grand-father's fatal stroke. She went to the barn and brought back a newly-hatched duckling to keep Didace company during his last hours.¹⁷ The gift has significance not only because of Didace's life-long passion for duck hunting. The symbolic implications also extend to Marie-Didace, the bestower of the gift. Like Claude Sirois who supports his dying father, Didace's grand-daughter represents the coming generation who provides hope for evolution in the traditional society that her grand-father is leaving. Her gift of the duckling betokens her innocence and future liberation from the many restrictions that prevail in the authoritarian society of French Canada. However, unlike the Survenant whose passion for total freedom likens him to a "plongeur à grosse tête [...] toujours parés à repartir au vol,"¹⁸ Marie-Didace represents the kind of freedom found inside the structures of an organized society which is tolerant and respects the right of the individual to differing aspirations.

¹⁶Guèvremont, Marie-Didace, p. 148.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁸Guèvremont, Le Survenant, p. 42.

Because it is easier for a group of people with similar goals to control the results of chance, evolution in a collective sense is much more predictable and achievable than is the case for the individual acting independently. For example, the reader of Dans le muskeg expects that the social ideals and practices of the inhabitants of the small isolated Alberta village of Avenir will evolve during the four decades covered in the novel. Although Marguerite Primeau's work can be criticized for being a mediocre, quasi-historical account of the events leading up to the sacred union between Lucette Lormier and Tommy O'Malley, the first reading exposes one to a clear expression of hope on the part of everyone concerned, for better relations between the French and Anglo-Canadians of Northern Alberta.

The novel begins on an optimistic note in 1919, with the arrival from Montreal of the village's first teacher, Joseph Lormier. Cousineau, the Chairman of the School Board, expressed the ardent hope of all the inhabitants of Avenir at the official opening of the school:

"On va faire de not' mieux pour l'école d'Avenir. Faut pas qu'il soit dit que nous, le comité de l'école, on a été trop lâche pour aider not' maître qui est venu de si loin, ou qu'on n'a pas voulu s'occuper de l'instruction de nos enfants. Parce qu'on n'en a pas eu, nous autres, de l'instruction, faut leur en donner, et beaucoup! Comme ça, ils feront peut-être mieux que nous plus tard. Le maître l'a dit, ici, c'est le pays de l'avenir. Faut pas l'oublier."¹⁹

¹⁹Marguerite Primeau, Dans le muskeg (Montréal: Fides, 1960), p. 46.

For over a decade, Avenir resisted becoming like the surrounding communities: "un ramassis de toutes sortes de gens. Non! Avenir valait mieux que ça! Son nom même était une promesse: la promesse d'une vie bien française au coeur d'une province anglaise."²⁰ Joseph Lormier was at the vanguard of the isolationist-racist movement which emerged to protect the villagers from probable assimilation by the English majority of the province of Alberta. He had been persuaded by the bigoted Madamé Ducharme that his planned marriage to Antoinette Bolduc was ill-advised because of her Métis background. So, he travelled to Quebec, returning with a bride and four French-Canadian families who were seeking a new wilderness to colonize. Joseph's wife, Lucienne, did not share her husband's fears regarding assimilation. She expressed the sentiment that a mother always wants only the best for her children. Except for her daughter Lucette, none of her babies had survived because of the lack of proper medical care in the village.

"Mais ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est que si mes petits à moi avaient vécu, ils auraient appris le français et l'anglais, et pas rien qu'un peu non plus. Mes petits, ils auraient été bilingues, huit petits Canadiens bilingues, c'est ça qu'ils auraient été ... si le bon Dieu était pas venu les chercher."²¹

Often, it is the economic climate that determines which attitudes will prevail in a community.

²⁰Primeau, Dans le muskeg, p. 99.

²¹Ibid., p. 139.

The Depression affected the prosperity of Avenir to such a large degree that Tom, the sole merchant, was forced into bankruptcy. The vacuum was filled by Patrick O'Malley, an Irishman who was convinced that:

l'être humain est le même partout et que l'amour de la patrie lui-même s'incline devant l'argent. [...] Ce qui l'avait attiré à Avenir, c'était l'assurance que ce pays du Nord où tout était encore si neuf, où l'on pouvait s'enrichir même en temps de crise, lui permettrait à son tour de continuer à échafauder sa fortune. Et il ne voulait pas de maître d'école [Joseph Lormier] pour contrecarrer ses projets en revenant toujours sur les questions de langue et de nationalité.²²

During the decades that followed, O'Malley acquired effective control over much of the growing village's finances. But wealth was not the only tool he employed against his adversaries.

O'Malley avait obtenu sa première victoire le jour où il avait décidé que Tommy apprendrait le français. "Un homme dont le fils parle aussi bien français que nous ne peut pas être contre nous," disaient les Aveniérois.

Non! O'Malley n'était pas fanatique comme s'obstinait à le croire Lormier. La preuve, c'est qu'il avait insisté pour que Tommy qui terminait ses études en droit à Edmonton, fût bilingue. Mais ce que très peu de gens comprenaient, c'est que sa tolérance touchait de près ses affaires.²³

The outcome of Dans le muskeg, banal though it proves to be, nevertheless demonstrates that the future does provide the promise of a better life. Although Joseph Lormier and Patrick O'Malley remain cool towards each other, Lucette Lormier and Tommy O'Malley do get married, and

²²Primeau, Dans le muskeg, p. 161.

²³Ibid., pp. 178-179.

"un mariage entre Irlandais et Canadien français, voilà qui promettait bien."²⁴ It was inevitable that the village of Avenir renounce the isolationist direction that the nationalists, like Lormier, had given it. The more tolerant approach which stresses bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism was resisted at first, but economic conditions soon broke through the idealistic barriers that had been created to keep non-francophones out of Avenir.

It is significant that the hope expressed for the development of the individual, as represented by the young heroine of Marie-Didace, and the community, as seen with regard to Avenir in Dans le muskeg, is enunciated in terms that relate to the coming generation. As is the case with Jean Sirois, some parents become slaves to the system, having lost the freedom to effect change, even if they were so inclined. There are also the beneficiaries of the existing social system who are too comfortably settled to participate actively in the evolution that is changing the complexion of society. The actual transformations need hardly affect the proponents of the status quo. However, it is made manifest in works like Cul-de-sac that not all of the non-participants are adverse to developing along the lines indicated by society. Like Victor Debreux who had "depuis si longtemps [...] quitté ce monde,"²⁵ it is easy for one to

²⁴Primeau, Dans le muskeg, p. 219.

²⁵Thériault, Cul-de-sac, p. 165.

become a stranger to society and to the direction in which it is progressing. In fact, Victor was spellbound by Guérin, the young engineer whose conduct exemplified the extensive evolution that had taken place in Quebec during the twenty years Victor had spent working on dams in the developing countries. What impressed Debreux in particular was that when Guérin

parlait de sa famille, il n'était pas amer. Chacun des siens avait choisi sa voie, chacun vivait sa vie sans contraintes. [...] Il accomplissait quelque chose, parce que dès son enfance cela lui avait été permis. Il admirait son père mais ne souscrivait pas à toutes ses opinions. De ce que j'ai pu deviner, il lui avait été possible de discuter librement.

Qu'était-il donc arrivé en mon pays qu'un Guérin ait pu éclore sans que rien ni personne ne le retienne?²⁶

After spending a whole generation in a kind of forced exile, Victor Debreux found himself out of step with the changes that had occurred in his native province. Like the hapless slaves of society and the proponents of the established order, he had been left far behind. The onus is now on him either to adjust or remain out of the mainstream of society forever.

Whenever liberated individuals like Guérin in Cul-de-sac and Iriook in Agaguk appear in the novel, it is generally in the role of antagonist. They are seen as adversaries because of the evolution they had undergone in the past. Consequently, the developmental process is not seen entirely in terms of a future event. What is viewed in terms of the future is the change that is

²⁶Thériault, Cul-de-sac, p. 166.

necessary before the diehard conservative protagonists reach the level already attained by their adversaries. However, contrary to the view that hope for evolution resides with the coming generation, here a change of position takes place in the existing generation in response to the pressures for change that can no longer go ignored.

In Agaguk, Yves Thériault traces the evolution of the hero over a period of about three years. Agaguk and Iriook, the woman he had chosen for his wife, left their tribe, moving about three days to the south by the bank of a river. After he killed his first wolf at the new location, "Agaguk se sentait pleinement heureux. Il était homme. Il avait une femme à lui, cette hutte, deux fusils et des balles, la liberté de la toundra, une vie à vivre."²⁷ Although Agaguk had preferred complete freedom to the community life he had known, he still retained the traditional ways of his tribe, particularly with regard to the freedom of women. Especially in the area of sexual expression, "il y a des initiatives refusées aux femmes esquimaudes. La suprématie de l'homme et sa domination restreignent la femme à un rôle de complète passivité."²⁸

The primitiveness of the Eskimo culture creates an ideal setting in which Thériault can study the potential for sexual liberation in French-Canadian society. As well,

²⁷Thériault, Agaguk, p. 16.

²⁸Ibid., p. 125.

Agaguk is portrayed as a noble savage who, in response to his wife's pressures, evolves in a moral sense.

Before Iriook became an influential force in his life, an emotional bond had to be created between them. Early in his development, Agaguk recognized "que tout ce qui faisait mal à sa femme lui faisait mal en retour."²⁹

Iriook was an exceptional woman who, contrary to tradition, candidly discussed her feelings with her husband:

"Il est dit, par les Inuit, [...] qu'une femme n'a ni le droit de penser, ni le droit de parler. Il est possible que je ne sois pas comme les autres. J'ai des choses à dire, et si je pense, c'est que je ne puis m'en empêcher."³⁰

The turning point in their relationship came when Agaguk was left badly mutilated by the white wolf.

Après l'accident, la femme s'était de nouveau révélée à lui. Auparavant, elle avait été la femelle précieuse, dépendant de lui, mais à laquelle il tenait autant qu'il pouvait tenir à son fusil, à ses pièges, aux balles, au poêle de métal, à la lampe pendue dans l'igloo.

Quand l'accident se produisit, qu'Iriook prit de lui un soin patient, quand elle chassa pour lui, écorcha et dépeça, quand il la vit angoissée, dévouée, attentive à ses moindres gémissements, elle devint pour lui plus qu'une femelle. Il en ressentit un embarras inexplicable.³¹

One of the main recurring themes of the novel Agaguk, is that necessity is the mother of invention and change. Before Agaguk's serious injuries healed, Iriook

²⁹Thériault, Agaguk, p. 299.

³⁰Ibid., p. 245.

³¹Ibid., p. 299.

was forced into the role of hunter. Simultaneously, the Eskimo's role was temporarily transformed.

Contre toute tradition, mais parce que c'était la nécessité et qu'[Iriook] n'aurait su comment réussir autrement le projet qu'elle faisait, elle confia Tayaout à son père et les laissa seuls à l'igloo.³²

Furthermore, the reality of their situation dictated that changes had to be made in areas that extended beyond the social roles that each partner assumed. Concessions had to be made in their intimate relationship as well.³³

Iriook greatly benefited from her husband's evolution, for he now sees her as being "plus qu'une femelle, donc une femme."³⁴

The evolution in Agaguk's personality is symbolically manifested by the mutilation that resulted from his combat with the white wolf. The powerful alien animal represents the white man's consciousness. The fact that Agaguk is disfigured by it indicates that he has morally evolved from the primitive Inuit he had been before his marriage. Iriook explains to Scott, the R.C.M.P. investigator, that the Eskimo with whom she is living cannot be identified as Agaguk, because:

³²Thériault, Agaguk, p. 211.

³³"Avec des gestes tendres, Iriook retira la peau de caribou qui enveloppait [Agaguk]. Elle vit alors combien l'homme avait maigri. Elle se mit à nu elle aussi, puis elle enfourcha Agaguk et, lentement, pieusement presque, avec des soupirs et des geignements qui étaient presque des pleurs, elle tira de son homme d'abord l'avant-joie et ensuite l'accomplissement." Ibid., p. 218.

³⁴Ibid., p. 299.

"Agaguk n'existe plus, fit Iriook d'une voix sourde. Je ne sais ce qu'il est devenu, mais je sais qu'il n'existe plus. Il est parti de son village, et cela suffit pour qu'il ait cessé d'exister. Peux-tu comprendre une chose comme celle-là, toi?"

Elle fixait Scott d'un regard calme mais plein de défi.³⁵

When the search party departs, apparently satisfied with her explanation, Iriook turns to her husband and comments upon what his development has meant to her:

"Je n'ai pas menti, répéta Iriook. J'ai bien aimé Agaguk, lorsqu'il vivait dans son village. Il en est parti, m'emmenant avec lui. Depuis ce temps, il a changé. Il a fait Tayaout... Mais ce n'est pas seulement ça. Il a changé. Je ne peux dire comment, ni de quelle façon... Vois-tu, autrefois Agaguk n'aurait pas permis que je lui parle comme je te parle aujourd'hui. Il m'aurait battue, je crois..."³⁶

As a result of Agaguk's development, the relationship between him and his wife was transformed into a kind of partnership.

Il semblait à Agaguk que les relations entre eux n'étaient plus les mêmes. Quelque chose de nouveau s'était introduit dans leur vie de chaque jour. Était-ce un respect de la femme qu'il n'avait jamais cru posséder auparavant?³⁷

As might be expected, the new equality won by Iriook at first presented itself as a threat to Agaguk's masculinity.

Depuis la venue des policiers, il ne s'était pas emparé d'elle. Ce n'était ni par haine, ni par indifférence. Plutôt, il lui semblait difficile de se tenir près d'elle, une timidité gagnait ses gestes, il se sentait tout à coup dérouteré...³⁸

³⁵Thériault, Agaguk, p. 242.

³⁶Ibid., p. 246.

³⁷Ibid., p. 269.

³⁸Ibid.

Agaguk is still evolving at the close of the novel. He exemplifies the hope that several authors have for the personal evolution of the traditionalist.

It is perhaps more difficult to pursue personal development despite society's objections rather than in response to a call from the community. In Mathieu, Françoise Loranger examines the evolution that takes place in Mathieu's character as a result of his own initiative. His particular milieu was not conducive to personal improvement, so he removed himself physically from the harmful influence of Montreal. Until he was spiritually and physically strong enough to triumph over the opposition, he lived at a health spa in the Laurentians. The evolution which he underwent demonstrates that hope does exist for the individual who wishes to attain a high degree of personal development.

One must be highly motivated before the evolutionary process can be put into motion. Mathieu is one character who succeeds over the internal forces at work to dissuade him from his ambition: "'Je veux changer, voilà ce que je veux! J'en ai assez de l'intelligence, du raisonnement, de la littérature! Pour ce que ça m'a donné!... Je veux être heureux!'"³⁹ The protagonist of Mathieu quickly determined that the evolutionary process he is undergoing:

³⁹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 232.

C'est une lutte du matin au soir; lutte contre ma paresse, contre la crainte du ridicule, contre la vanité, l'envie, la colère... Lutte, lutte, lutte continuelle! Mais je remporte quelques victoires sur moi-même, et, si petites soient-elles, ça m'encourage. Etre méprisé par les autres est moins pénible que d'avoir à se mépriser soi-même.⁴⁰

Personal development is often depicted as an unremitting internal struggle where the rational and emotional aspects of the personality are under the influence of change.

After many months of disciplined training at Rochat's health camp, the rational side of Mathieu demonstrated that a change had indeed taken place in his personality. The protagonist recognized that what he had done during the months of struggle was to try to emulate Rochat "dans l'espoir d'être un jour aussi heureux que lui."⁴¹ However, what is most telling is the conclusion that he has sufficiently advanced in his personality development; that models such as Rochat are no longer useful as guides to be emulated. The time had come for him to try out his own wings, as it were.

"L'important est avant tout de chercher comment, moi, je pourrai atteindre la sagesse, ma sagesse. Je crois qu'il faut d'abord commencer par obtenir une parfaite coordination entre mes paroles, mes pensées et mes gestes. Tout ce que je dois faire, dire ou penser, doit être de moi, des centaines de personnes l'auraient-elles dit, fait, ou pensé avant moi. En un mot, tout recréer à mon usage."⁴²

⁴⁰ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 257.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 331.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 335-336.

Like the child who goes through an early developmental phase in which parental example is scrupulously followed, Mathieu used models to guide him while he was in the process of evolving into a rational, independent human being.

Simultaneously, the emotional side of Mathieu's personality was undergoing a similar change. Although he ascertained that happiness for him was rooted in his individuality, he also realized that, emotionally, a part of him could not be happy because he was seriously lacking in self-esteem.⁴³ However, he acquired a large measure of self-confidence when, five months after his training program began, he noticed that he was attracting the attention of Annette, a young woman who had accompanied her husband to the camp. Instead of repelling her advances, Mathieu eagerly submitted.

Une femme m'a choisi, une femme m'a préféré aux autres, une femme s'est donnée à moi...
 Qu'importe qu'elle ait l'habitude de ce don spontané puisqu'elle m'a révélé la seule chose que je voulais savoir: que j'ai changé, que j'ai cessé d'être répugnant, que je peux plaire, qu'on peut me désirer, moi; me désirer moi, Mathieu...⁴⁴

On the personal level, Mathieu's affair with Annette signifies that a major stride had been made in his sexual development. In a more general sense, Mathieu's experience demonstrates that sexual evolution is possible on a broader social scale.

A highly desirable state results when the rational and emotional facets of the personality evolve together.

⁴³Loranger, Mathieu, p. 330.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 290.

With reference to Mathieu, this state is reflected in the insight he gained into the relationship he enjoyed with the rest of creation.

Conscient, pour la première fois, d'être en harmonie avec la nature, avec la vie, il marche d'un pas léger, s'émerveillant de tout. N'est-il pas solidaire de ces milliers de vies cachées dans l'herbe, ne concourt-il pas à ce bruissement continu, à cette palpitation de la terre, ne contribue-t-il pas lui aussi à cette interminable symphonie de la création?

L'idée de faire partie de cette création, d'un tout auquel il participe, bien que d'une façon particulière, individuelle: l'idée d'être à la fois une partie et un tout; un monde par lui-même, mêlé au rythme de l'univers, le pénètre de joie.⁴⁵

Once he became aware of himself as a part of the universe, life ceased to be the oppressive force it had once been, threatening him with failure at every stage of development. Instead, with the dawn of each new day, life became "un acte de foi perpétuellement renouvelé."⁴⁶ However, inner peace cannot be maintained without a conscious effort, as Mathieu discovers:

Cette paix est sans cesse à reconquérir et ne peut jamais être considérée comme acquise. Et comment pourrait-il en être autrement? Dans un univers en perpétuel mouvement, en progression permanente, pourquoi l'homme aurait-il seul le droit de se figer dans l'immobilité? Il n'y a pas de véritable stagnation; le moindre arrêt est l'équivalent d'un recul. Une évolution aussi constante exige nécessairement un réajustement qui met en équilibre instable ma trop récente quiétude.⁴⁷

Evolution means a process of development. In the case of personal development it is a never ending process.

⁴⁵Loranger, Mathieu, p. 336.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 264.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 351.

The element of time is most important when examining hope in evolution. Often, the time-span of the novel covers several generations, and the hope that one generation expresses is realized by their offspring in a future era. Oftentimes, the traditionalists find it difficult to accept the innovations that are taking place in society. The difficulty that succeeding generations of farmers have in embracing the newest agricultural methods is examined by Ringuet in Trente arpents. For the urban families, the notion of progress meant a desperate struggle for security, especially during the decades following the Depression. Yet, evolution is not only examined from a materialistic point of view. In novels like Marie-Didace, the personality development of the heroine is closely examined, especially in relation to the traditional personalities of preceding generations. It is also possible for a group of people to evolve collectively over the years. The phenomenon of change regarding bi-culturalism and bi-lingualism that occurs in the attitudes of an entire village is examined in Dans le muskeg.

The notion of hope in evolution is also examined from the point of view of one who has been inadvertently left behind as the rest of society has evolved. Thériault examined this aspect of the question both in Cul-de-sac and Agaguk. More often, however, society displays hostility whenever an individual expresses a desire to pursue a program of personal development.

For this reason, only highly motivated people succeed in their quest. As indicated in Mathieu, the individual often has to escape to a different environment until he becomes strong enough to combat the forces that society sets up to oppose him. There is sufficient data to conclude that even during this period in Quebec literature which is generally acknowledged to be extremely pessimistic, a large body of literature expresses confidence that society will gradually evolve to the mutual benefit of the traditionalists and the impatient idealists who are in quest of personal values.

* * *

Escape, revolt, and evolution are the three principal means of dealing with the oppression confronting the Quebecker described in the novel. Escape from an undesirable milieu to one which is conducive to the development of the individual is prevalent. Although the time involved is often inconsequential, some characters created a considerable hiatus in their lives by removing themselves for many years from the milieu with which they had become identified. Revolt is an approach that many idealists experiment with because it provides an immediate outlet for the hatred that had been allowed to build up over a period of time. On the other hand, non-violent characters hold to the belief that, as a result of the process of evolution, their problems and those of society

can be satisfactorily resolved without violence. The three basic approaches examined above are more than hypothetical solutions to the problem of oppression. To the desperate idealist, escape, revolt, and evolution represent a final hope, a kind of herculean deliverance. They are also the practical instruments adopted by those in search of personal values to implement their quest, as the following pages will demonstrate.

PART IV
THE QUEST

The two decades which spanned the Second World War and the early sixties can best be characterized as a period of transition in the province of Quebec. The change is evident not only among individuals, but also with groups which are portrayed by novelists as possessing the essential Promethean qualities to endure the formidable opposition set in motion by society's traditionalists who aspired to maintain the status quo. These two decades transformed a whole generation of Quebecers from various socio-economic backgrounds into a loosely allied group of persons, markedly different from their predecessors; in aspirations, social attitudes, and values.

Those in quest of personal values do not come from a specific class nor represent a certain age, however, a majority of them are young adults. Along with those who can be identified with the peasant, proletarian, and bourgeois classes, a fourth category has been isolated which we have termed the alienated generation. This group consists of rebels who physically or mentally exist outside the bounds of society because they can no longer tolerate the traditional values which the community attempts to impose upon their way of life.

The quest which this heterogeneous group of people conducted for personal values consisted of more than an act of searching for something undefined. They were almost always definite about the traditional values they rejected. They were aware of the traditional values they wanted to

keep. Often, they had a clear idea of the kinds of values they wished to innovate and incorporate into their style of life. However, like hounds tracking game, they were frequently forced to go baying in pursuit of attitudinal innovations which they knew they wanted, but which kept eluding them. This quest, as it pertains to each of the aforementioned groups, will be examined in the four chapters which follow.

CHAPTER X

QUEST OF THE PEASANT

The Quebec peasant class evolved as a result of French Canada's struggle to survive as a distinct cultural entity in Anglo-Protestant North America. Some Canadians think that throughout the centuries, French Canadians have been paranoid about being assimilated into the English culture. However, history shows that it was the newly arrived English immigrants who showed signs of paranoia, the French Canadians harbouring legitimate fears of their conqueror. The English considered their institutions, customs and values to be superior to those held by the French of New France, and in 1764, when the civil government replaced Murray's military régime, "assimilation was [...] the order of the day."¹ Although Quebecers use Durham's Report (1839) to justify their anxieties about being absorbed into an English North America, the policy of assimilation dates back to the Conquest. Just as dangerous to the survival of the French-Canadian entity were the various immigration policies initiated by the Canadian Government which were highly favourable to the English minority of Lower Canada, especially the immigration of the United

¹Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967, Vol. I, p. 54.

Empire Loyalists. Chanoine Lionel Groulx observes that: "l'arrivée des Loyalistes a subitement dérangé les calculs démographiques. Lors de l'Acte de Québec [1775], la population anglophone représentait à peine un vingtième de la population de la province. D'un bond, elle vient de passer à un septième."² In the twentieth century, the conscription question emerged as a major problem between the two Canadian entities because it was interpreted by Quebecers as a means of undermining their social structure. Added to these worries was the emigration of French Canadians to the industrial centres of the Eastern United States in ever increasing numbers. During the eighty year period from 1871 to 1951 alone, it is estimated that 400,000 French Canadians emigrated from the province of Quebec.³

In order to keep the French Canadian in Quebec, the leaders conceived of and implemented the policy of agriculturalism. Its primary function was to isolate the population from all foreign influence. Responding to critics who claim that the Quebec clergy are largely responsible for the industrial underdevelopment in the province, William F. Ryan states in The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec (1896-1914): "If emigration was to be stopped and if the people were to be kept on the land, farming had to be made into a successful vocation and the people had

²Chanoine Lionel Groulx, Histoire du Canada français depuis la découverte (Montréal: Fides, 1960), Tome II, p. 69.

³Nathan Keyfitz, "Développements démographiques au Québec," la Société canadienne-française (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 238.

Dedicated to the past and traditional customs, institutions, and values, the agriculturalist policy was transfused into the novel form, the resulting product being the "roman de la fidelité". Roland Parenteau observes that:

The clergy, political leaders, journalists and men of letters, nearly all entirely agreed that rural depopulation should be resisted; they preached love of the soil and of the simple, frugal, rural life. These ideals were, moreover, part of a larger concept of French Canada's mission. The famous declaration of Mgr. Pâquet before the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Quebec in 1902 remains the most characteristic expression of this view;

"Our mission is not so concerned with the management of capital as the cultivation of ideas, not so much the lighting of factory furnaces as the illumination of the hearth of religion and ideas.

Let us not descend from the pedestal upon which God has placed us to march in the vulgar footsteps of generations thirsting for gold and pleasures. Let us leave to other, less civilized nations this commercial fever and this crude naturalism which debases them to the level of material things.

While our rivals assert their leadership in industry and finance, albeit in a well-mannered contest, we shall aspire above all to the honour of upholding the tenets of our faith."¹³

The mammoth agriculturalist campaign obtained the required results. Though it did not reverse the flow of peasants emigrating to urban centres, it succeeded in creating a distinct French-Canadian identity.

Many writers and journalists became aware of the false image of the peasant that emerged in the literature of the first few decades of the twentieth century. Some authors, like Germaine Guèvremont and Ringuet, remove much of the mystique that characterizes the farmer of the "roman

¹³Roland Parenteau, "The Impact of Industrialization in Quebec," The Canadian Economy: Selected Readings, (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd., 1962), pp. 508-509.

Il s'efforcera de faire aimer l'agriculture, d'en faire ressortir la noblesse, les avantages, la supériorité sur les diverses professions libérales et sur les différents métiers et industries; et cela à divers points de vue: au point de vue matériel, au point de vue de la famille, et au point de vue national.⁷

The "missionnaire agricole" was also instructed to teach the peasant the virtues of frugality:

Il s'appliquera tout spécialement à faire comprendre aux cultivateurs la nécessité de l'économie dans les habits, dans la table, dans les voitures, dans les maisons, etc., et à cette occasion il fera de solides instructions sur les trois grands fléaux qui ruinent notre peuple canadien: le luxe, le procès et l'intempérance. [...] Il encouragera les industries dans les familles afin d'éviter les achats chez le marchand.⁸

Bishop Bégin's apostles were also asked to become land promoters.⁹ However, the bishop did not have any illusions regarding his subordinates' qualifications. He was well aware that their expertise lay in the art of persuasion, not in their knowledge of the technicalities involved in agriculture.

[Donc, le missionnaire agricole] laissera aux conférenciers spéciaux la tâche d'expliquer aux cultivateurs l'enseignement technique des divers modes d'amélioration du sol, du choix des grains ou graines, du croisement des races d'animaux, des modes d'alimentation du bétail, de production et de conservation des fumiers et de leur emploi, du choix et de l'utilité des instruments aratoires, etc.¹⁰

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹"[Le missionnaire agricole] indiquera les endroits les plus propres à la colonisation et fournira tous les renseignements désirables à ce sujet." Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

The primary aim of the movement was not to upgrade the farmer's standard of living. It was to attract the Quebecker away from industry and into farming. However, Bishop Bégin was not against advancement in agricultural methods, as the final directive indicates:

[Le missionnaire] tâchera de trouver dans chaque paroisse un jeune homme qui puisse être envoyé à l'école d'agriculture et y étudier avec profit, de telle sorte que, revenu au milieu de ses coparocissiens, il leur serve de modèle à tous égards. Le gouvernement aidera, croyons-nous, à défrayer les dépenses de ces étudiants.¹¹

The agriculturalist movement was popularized by clerics who exalted the traditional peasant values and evangelized the mythical nobleness of being a French-Canadian peasant isolated in the remotest regions of the province.

Several historians, Michel Brunet among them, denounce the policy of agriculturalism, not only because it checked progress, but also because it proved to be a means of thought control.

L'agriculturalisme est avant tout une façon générale de penser, une philosophie de la vie qui idéalise le passé, condamne le présent et se méfie de l'ordre social moderne. C'est un refus de l'âge industriel contemporain qui s'inspire d'une conception statique de la société. Les agriculturalistes soutiennent que le monde occidental s'égare en s'engageant dans la voie de la technique et de la machine. Ils dénoncent le matérialisme de notre époque et prétendent que les générations précédentes vivaient dans un climat spiritualisé. Selon eux, l'âge d'or de l'humanité aurait été celui où l'immense majorité de la population s'occupait à la culture du sol.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., p. 190.

¹² Ryan, The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec (1896-1914), p. 247, quoting Michel Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée canadienne-française: l'agriculturalisme, l'anti-étatisme, et le messianisme. Essai d'histoire intellectuelle," Ecrits du Canada français, III (1957), 33-117.

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¹³Roland Parenteau, "The Impact of Industrialization in Quebec," The Canadian Economy: Selected Readings, (Toronto: The MacMillian Company of Canada Ltd., 1962), pp. 508-509.

de la fidélité", while remaining sympathetic to traditionalists like Didace Beauchemin and Euchariste Moisan. Others, like Claude-Henri Grignon, are less kind to the traditional farmer. Still, French Canada chose to make Grignon famous for his portrait of the miserly Séraphin Poudrier. Jean Filiatrault paints a grotesque portrait of Jean-Baptiste Patry, and Marie-Louise Aubin which closely resembles the recent exposés of unsympathetic paternal figures like Eudore Martin and Anselme Val. The traditional peasant and his values are depicted not only as obstacles to progress. They also interfere with the spiritual development and intellectual growth of the individual.

Two significant novels of the early twentieth century forecast the full-scale struggle which was to ensue in the 1950's between the traditional farmer and the contemporary peasant who was raised during the age of progress. One of the novels is María Chapdelaine. Though it was first published in 1916, the novel had little impact in Quebec before the fifties, perhaps because its author was not a Quebecker. The heroine's moment of awareness came after her mother's death. Maria contemplated the hardships that Laura had endured during her lifetime, and sees her own destiny following a similar path. She asked what her reward would be for the hardships foreseen for herself. A few words of praise after death, came the answer. "Est-ce que cela en valait la peine?"¹⁴ Although the narrator admits that,

¹⁴Hémon, María Chapdelaine, p. 232.

"la question ne se posait pas dans son esprit avec cette netteté", he affirms that "c'était bien à cela qu'elle songeait."¹⁵

Albert Laberge who wrote La Scouine between 1899 and 1917, feels that the price agriculturalists were willing to pay for the cause was too great. The peasants he describes in his novel are lacking in real human values. His exposé of the Deschamps, and especially of Paulima, nicknamed La Scouine, is cynical, satirical and falls just short of being scurrilous. His opposition to the peasant way of life is based upon the observation that the farmer is harmed physically and morally as a result of the hardships he is obliged to endure. Until very recently La Scouine was practically unknown, even in Québec, because the book was intended only for a select group, as the dedication implies: "A mon cher frère Alfred qui, près des grands peupliers verts, pointus comme des clochers d'église, laboure et ensemence de ses mains le champs paternel, je dédie ces pages..."¹⁶ Sixty copies of La Scouine were published in a private edition in 1918, and it has not been sold publicly since.¹⁷ Despite its limited circulation, La Scouine played a significant role because it forecast the tremendous opposition to the traditional peasant way of life which was to come with the novels of the fifties.

¹⁵Hémond, Maria Chapdelaine, p. 232.

¹⁶Laberge, La Scouine, Dedication Page.

¹⁷A recent edition has appeared of La Scouine (Montréal: l'Actuelle, 1972).

Although a number of rural characters in the novel do not appear to be actively engaged in a quest for personal values, a significant proportion of them attack the established customs espoused by the traditional peasant. In so doing, they define themselves in terms of what they reject instead of identifying with the personal values they endorse. Furthermore, it is often not recognized that the negative approach can constitute the initial phase of an active pursuit of the personal attitudes that will ultimately replace the repudiated conservatism of the agriculturalist movement, the "román de la fidelité", and the traditional peasant values. The peasant who rebels against paternalism, the large family, boring work, puritanical Catholicism, repression of natural feelings and sentiments, and the preoccupation with material gain, endorses the proposition that the human individual rather than a spiritual ideal is the most important reality. Emerging from this premise are the four personal values sanctioned by the rebellious peasant which include the pursuit of the integrated self, the uninhibited expression of feelings and sentiments, a keenness for excitement and adventure, and the quest for knowledge.

Of the four personal values examined in this chapter, the integrated self is pursued with the most vigor, perhaps because it is exceedingly difficult to acquire. The term "integrated self" denotes that the distinctive individual qualities of a person are in harmony with each other, with the total personality, and with nature. Several factors

are necessary before this state can be realized. Firstly, one must become aware of the environment and examine the effect it has upon one's personality. For example, Vincent Douaire in Nord-sud became aware of the drudgery involved in clearing enough land to farm effectively when he accompanied Maxime Auray, his fiancée's father, to the northern hinterlands. Only then did Vincent realize that the boredom associated with such an existence would be too much for him to bear. Likewise, Adèle Cardinal in Les Jours sont longs, who during the academic year studied in Quebec city, "détestait les vacances d'été, qui l'obligeaient à remonter dans le nord. [...] Elle ne savait plus vivre en forêt. Elle ne s'y sentait pas chez elle."¹⁸ The heroine of Marie-Louise des champs also became acutely aware of the deficiencies of her Laurentian environment and recognized that she was not "faite pour vivre à la compagnie."¹⁹ This insight leads to more than a vague malaise, as she explains to Georges Simon:

"Je ne suis pas heureuse ici; je veux connaître autre chose, et je sais qu'il y aura plus de bonheur pour moi dans l'existence que je choisis de prendre."²⁰

However, awareness of the environment and its effect upon the individual is not enough... One must also be ready to accept and act upon whatever decision is arrived

¹⁸ Harry Bernard, Les Jours sont longs (Montréal: Fides, 1951), p. 57.

¹⁹ Pierre de Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs (Montréal: Fides, 1948), p. 65.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

at by the various aspects of the personality which are adversely affected by the milieu. A majority of the characters we have studied, like Adèle Cardinal in Les Jours sont longs, "[qui] ressemblait à l'oiseau sur la branche, prêt à fuir,"²¹ moved to more amenable surroundings. The Survenant in Guèvremont's novel, Vincent Douaire in Nord-sud, Ephrem Moisan in Trente arpents, Alidor Larose in La Veuve, and Clair Martin in Les Brèves années all chose to emigrate from their milieu. It is also important that the peasant in quest of personal values accept that during crucial stages in his personality development, he has an obligation to serve his own personal self-interest. In Les Brèves années, Clair Martin demonstrates that happiness is not possible for him without Gladys and that it was in his best interest to abandon his family and friends to search for her. The situation is reversed in La Veuve. Louise's welfare was best served by guarding herself against Alidor's affection which was not enough "parce que moi, je veux changer de classe, vous comprenez!"²² Considering her determination never to return to the farming community, Louise made a wise decision in steering clear of amorous young farmers like Alidor Larose.

The individual who displays a high regard for the integrated self must also be prepared to brave a life-long challenge. Because it is constantly necessary to

²¹Bernard, Les Jours sont longs, p. 57.

²²Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 94.

readjust to the various complications that life brings, the inquiring peasant recognizes that instead of an attainable goal, the integrated personality is a continuing process that can never be fully realized until the moment of death. Therefore, contrary to the traditional peasant described in the novel whose aim was to emulate an established model, in the novels of the fifties, "[...] les personnages romanesques ne savent plus où ils vont et ils vont dans toutes les directions, à la recherche de leur, propre identité, d'un père, d'un homme, d'un substitut de Dieu, de raisons de vivre. Les univers dans lesquels ils circulent alternent comme les facettes d'un kaléidoscope."²³ Alidor Larose's conduct in La Veuve serves as an example of the progressive course of action that is followed during his quest for an integrated personality.

Alidor went through five distinct stages during a period of just over two years. Before his quest began, Alidor was entangled in an intrigue between his parents and a thirty-six year old neighbour, Orpha Lemire. The affluent widow desperately wanted to marry Alidor "qui était beau comme un jeune dieu."²⁴ After he consented to the proposal, Orpha sent him to Quebec city to purchase a wedding outfit. While in the provincial capital, he met a journalist with leftist ideas and Louise, the maid in

²³ Jean-Charles Falardeau, "L'Evolution du héros dans le roman québécois," Littérature canadienne-française, Conférences J.A. de Sève, 1-10 (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1969), p. 252.

²⁴ Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 14.

the boarding house where he was lodged. During the one short week spent away from the rural environment, Alidor realized that he had been stifled all of his life by his milieu. Louise's presence caused him to become aware of the sensitive aspects of his nature. He also realized that he soon would be forced to repress this newly acquired facet of his personality in order to follow the model of the ideal peasant husband which would be presented to him when he returned to the farm. So when Orpha joined him the following weekend, he returned the clothes he and Louise had bought, but which she had paid for, and announced that he was not returning to the farm. The arduous first stage of Alidor's quest began.

Because he did not have a skill and work was scarce, Alidor joined the multitude of proletarian job seekers of the Depression Years, living on the meagre wages he earned from doing odd jobs. Over a period of six months, he thought that he could win Louise's affection, but she also had escaped from an oppressive rural environment, and was intent upon not returning to it even if it meant abandoning Alidor for the physically less attractive Oscar Bideault. After Louise was gone, Alidor realized that "il ne s'habituaît pas à la ville et l'amour seul le retenait parmi ces pierres grises contre lesquelles il ne voyait qu'une mince bande de ciel virant du bleu au gris."²⁵ He left Quebec city, and the second phase of the continuing process began.

²⁵Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 141.

Alidor now desired complete independence, even from women. Armed with the notion of being a vagabond, he hopped a train bound for Abitibi with Auguste Normandin. "Il éprouvait un besoin de repos après cette période de lutte; il était content de n'être plus rien, après avoir tant bataillé pour devenir quelqu'un."²⁶ However, Alidor soon realized that his freedom was severely restricted because he lacked food and shelter. After his friend died, Alidor was convinced that his life of vagabondage had to come to an end. "Il était vaincu, après seize mois de lutte, seize mois pendant lesquels, pour demeurer libre, il avait eu faim, froid, il avait encaissé des refus, essuyé des mépris."²⁷ But like the characters examined in Chapter VII who find hope in escape, Alidor benefited greatly from the experience: "Il avait découvert l'amour, il avait connu l'amitié, il avait acquis l'expérience que donne le commerce des gens et des choses."²⁸ He also learned that freedom is a meaningless word if one must constantly battle to stave off starvation and the harsh Quebec elements.

The third stage of Alidor's pursuit demonstrates that self-preservation is a powerful motive behind most human decisions. "Au diable les idées... ce que je veux, c'est un toit, manger trois fois par jour, porter des habits et pas des guenilles et surtout ne pas crever, comme Auguste,

²⁶Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 161.

²⁷Ibid., p. 186.

²⁸Ibid.

au détour d'un chemin."²⁹ He needed calm "pour retrouver son équilibre."³⁰ He also had to reconcile the dichotomy between his new status as the husband of Orpha Lemire and his innate instinct to remain free. For a short time he was content with the role of gentleman farmer he had assumed.

However, the comfortable life was not enough to keep Alidor happy for more than a short while. With the new Buick Orpha had purchased for him, Alidor frequently visited Quebec city and the down-and-out friends he had made the previous year, "et [il] se dépouillât pour les aider."³¹ Some time later he met Louise in Montreal. When she revealed that she had not married Oscar Bideault, "un espoir stupide emplissait [Alidor]: elle était libre! Libre! Il oubliait qu'il ne l'était plus."³² Like Clair Martin in Les Brèves années, who abandoned his studies, his family, and his friend Jacques Plaisance to wander off into the forest in search of Gladys, his symbol of hope, Alidor Larose neglected his wife and his land for Louise. "Dans leur abandon, il n'y a rien de vraiment impur. Ils répondent tous deux à un long besoin, profond, immense: celui d'échanger leurs regrets pour un souvenir."³³ Alidor became so totally involved with his mistress that he drove Orpha and himself into bankruptcy. However, it was not until Orpha died of a stroke that he became aware of the

²⁹Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 188.

³⁰Ibid., p. 197.

³¹Ibid., p. 226.

³²Ibid., p. 242.

³³Ibid., p. 244.

desplicable person he had become. "Ce 'type' aux chaussures jaunes trop pointues, aux pantalons trop larges contrastant avec le veston trop pincé, c'était lui, vraiment lui, mais travesti, grotesque."³⁴

After his wife's funeral, Alidor began the fifth stage of his quest for an integrated personality. Financially back to where he was before he married Orpha, he decided, to travel and learn more about the world and mankind, and hopefully, in the process, acquire a deeper insight into himself. Before leaving, he tells his father: "'Je voudrais voir si les hommes sont plus heureux ailleurs ou si c'est chez nous qu'on est le mieux. Je reviendrai vous dire ça.'"³⁵ Because this phase of Alidor's search coincides with the conclusion of the novel, the reader does not know how he will fare with his regained freedom. By not revealing the final outcome, René Ouvrard reaffirms the basic principle that the search for the integrated self does not come to an end until one draws the final breath.

The total commitment required of the individual who strives for an integrated personality created an intolerable situation between many protagonists in the novels of the late-forties and the fifties, and the hero of the traditional novels:

³⁴Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 266.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 278-279.

Le héros du roman traditionnel, roman paysan ou roman historique, est un héros qui est ou se veut exemplaire. Il a une vision du monde qui lui est donnée et à laquelle il veut correspondre. Il a la préoccupation, souvent l'obsession de se conformer à un modèle idéal, abstrait, qui est posé à priori, en dehors et au-dessus de lui, avant toute expérience existentielle.³⁶

The peasant in quest of personal values neither wants to follow the established model nor become an example for others to follow. His aim is to develop as much individual potential as is necessary to become a personality fully integrated with the various elements of the inner self as well as with the environment. This aspiration runs counter to several traditional peasant values. Because of the emphasis placed upon authority, paternalism is the principal enemy of those who require the freedom to pursue their personal goals. The large family is restrictive because of the demands it places upon the individual and the subsequent material and spiritual poverty that is often the outcome. The traditional peasant's concept of security is rejected because material possessions tie one down, restricting movement both in the spiritual and temporal sense. For similar reasons, work that is not meaningful is also opposed. A great deal has been written about the hostility that developed during the forties between two generations of peasants as a result of the conflicting aims of each group. Due to the significant number of rural characters who define themselves by their opposition to a number of

³⁶Palardau, "L'Evolution du héros dans le roman québécois," Littérature canadienne-française, Conférences J.A. de Séve, 1-10, p. 243.

specific traditional values, it is important that this narrative approach to the quest for an integrated personality be examined along with the positive aspects of the question.

Because it restricts personal freedom, paternalism is forcefully opposed by many characters. Generally, the patron exercises control over his descendants by generating fear in them. The desire for vengeance is a frequent outcome of the oppressive situation that results. Because it creates a condition whereby there are persecutors and victims, the individual is not free to develop and grow.

Claire Martin succinctly reports upon one oppressor-victim relationship in the short story entitled: "Un peu de silence". The narrative is set in a badly constructed building where everything that occurs in one apartment can be overheard by others. Consequently, some residents become victims, hardly daring to breathe for fear that they might disturb their neighbours, while others oppress the other tenants, like the central character in the short story:

Toute la soirée, une partie de la nuit, tôt le matin, et toute la journée du samedi et du dimanche, il crie. Il crie, il tempête, il dispute comme dix femmes, pour tout et pour rien. Pour rien surtout. [...] Il gueule sans arrêt, d'un gosier indéfectible, pour le seul plaisir de faire trembler sa pauvre petite ombre de femme. Il faut la voir, la malheureuse, maigre, pâle, rasant les murs. Une pitié. Une petite chose grise que la terreur talonne du matin au soir. Et ça dure, ça dure.³⁷

As a result of the misuse of paternal power, similar kinds of oppressor-victim relationships appear in Un soir d'hiver, Les Brèves années, and Terres stériles.

³⁷Claire Martin, Avec ou sans amour (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1959), p. 178.

In Un soir d'hiver, Anselme Val terrorized his adopted daughter, Marion, until she submitted to his rigorous standards of morality. Were it not for the fear she had of being beaten by him for dating Firman, the tragic accident that took her life would not have occurred. At the inquest which examined the cause of her death, Anselme insisted that he never used excessive force with Marion, adding that he was grateful for the strict upbringing he had received from his father. However, Firman discloses that Anselme had gone beyond the accepted limits of paternal intimidation: "[Marion] en avait peur comme de la mort! [...] C'est à cause de lui qu'elle ne voulait pas revenir en ville... Elle avait peur qu'il la tue; c'est elle qui me l'a dit."³⁸ Marion's death was as much her father's fault as if he had assassinated her with his own hand.

Eudore Martin in Les Brèves années, like Anselme, was constantly browbeating his wife and children because they did not adhere closely enough to the stringent demands he made of them. The oppressive atmosphere at home was one factor which Clair considered before wandering off into the forest in search of Gladys. Because Eudore stubbornly refused to give Pierre permission to marry the daughter of an unworthy "troisième voisin"³⁹, the oldest

³⁸Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 104.

³⁹Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 124.

Martin boy left his family and moved to New Brunswick. Both Pierre and Clair Martin follow the Freudian archetype described by Bessette in Une littérature en ébullition.⁴⁰ They are forced into a kind of exile by their tyrannical father.

The strange behavior of Marie-Louise Aubin and her husband Fortunat at the beginning of Terres stériles is a direct outcome of the fear they shared of Marie-Louise's father. Rocking together on the front porch after their evening meal, they patiently waited while upstairs, Jean-Baptiste languished on his death-bed. Both Marie-Louise and her husband detested old Patry who died later that night "sans pouvoir se payer une dernière colère comme il se l'était juré."⁴¹ However, Jean-Baptiste was avenged, because the Aubin relationship changed drastically after his death. Marie-Louise reversed roles becoming the oppressor, and hence leaving Fortunat as the lone victim. Unlike her father who displayed a stormy temper, Marie-Louise persecuted her husband by being indifferent.

"[Fortunat] reconnaissait que tout avait changé autour de lui, mais il constatait en même temps combien tout était identique. [...] Plus de cris dans la maison [...], à la place une antipathie si constante qu'il désespérait de la vaincre."⁴² Marie-Louise's rancour not only generated

⁴⁰ See Gérard Bessette, Une littérature en ébullition (Montréal: Editions du jour, 1968), pp. 151-175.

⁴¹ Jean Filiatrault, Terres stériles (Québec: Institut Littéraire du Québec, 1953), p. 57.

⁴² Ibid., p. 77.

terror in Fortunat. It shattered the hope they had once shared for a peaceful life after the death of Jean-Baptiste. "Plongés l'un dans sa crainte, l'autre dans sa rancune, Fortunat et Marie-Louise ne tenaient aucun rapprochement et le fossé s'élargissait entre eux."⁴³ The desire for vengeance often emerges when love turns to hatred. For example, it was the need for retaliation that motivated Orpha Lemire of La Veuve, when she discovered that Alidor had squandered away everything they owned. "Leur mariage ayant tout mis en commun, quel recours, quelle vengeance pourrait-elle exercer?"⁴⁴ For the traditional character, justice means an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

Revenge can make an individual look like the conquered oppressor. Marie-Louise, whose feelings toward her father for forty-five years had been fear, indifference, and subliminal hatred, abruptly took on the role of oppressor after his death. She incorporated Jean-Baptiste's worst characteristics into her own personality and her husband bore the brunt of her cruelty, anger, and longing to be feared. Furthermore, she accused Fortunat of initiating in her the desire for old Patry's death. "Alors la faute de Fortunat lui paraissait énorme, et aucune punition ne lui semblait trop dure pour satisfaire à ce crime odieux."⁴⁵ Marie-Louise's metamorphosis was complete: "Ses yeux avaient changé; c'étaient des yeux de Patry, mauvais, impitoyables."⁴⁶

⁴³Filiatrault, Terres stériles, p. 97.

⁴⁴Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 261.

⁴⁵Filiatrault, Terres stériles, p. 91.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 70.

Fortunat immediately recognized the significance of the physical changes that his wife had undergone, for "les yeux de feu qu'elle avait hérités de son père,"⁴⁷ contrasted sharply with her usual "regard [qui] exhalait une tendresse et une soumission sans bornes."⁴⁸ The symbolic ending to Terres stériles demonstrates that the unchecked compulsion for revenge is often self-destructive. After flinging a petrol lamp against a wall, Marie-Louise continued to rock in her chair at the centre of the room while she watched the flames slowly encircle her. She was reigning "au centre de son enfer."⁴⁹ Compared to the hatred that was consuming her from within, the flames that threatened her from all sides were of little consequence, for,

avant même que les flammes ne la touchassent, elle brûlait. Le brasier intérieur qui la dévorait dépassait en force toutes les douleurs qu'elle avait connues jusqu'ici. [...] Elle était seule, face à ce père maudit, et pour la première fois elle exhalait sans contrainte la haine implacable qu'elle lui avait vouée jusque dans la mort.⁵⁰

Jean-Baptiste is depicted as a monster who ruined his daughter's life, and haunted her even after his death. When the sardonic image of Patry appeared in the flames, Marie-Louise finally became aware of the loathsome creature that she in turn had become. So, she allowed herself to be devoured by the purifying flames. "Marie-Louise acceptait enfin sa vérité, le monstre qui était en elle."⁵¹

The novels we have studied reveal that the peasant who is

⁴⁷ Filiatrault, Terres stériles, p. 88.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

⁵¹ Ibid.

striving to become an individual with a set of personal values cannot tolerate paternalism because it produces oppressor-victim relationships where fear, hatred, and a desire for vengeance are commonplace among the victims of tyranny.

Once it became established as a dominant rural French Canada, the large family served several functions. It satisfied the patron's need to procreate, fulfilled the requirements of a strict moral code, created a pool of dependent farmhands who were subservient to one patron, and assured the rapid growth and guaranteed the survival of the French-Canadian nation. However, the large family did not become an established traditional peasant value without prodding by society's leaders. Mason Wade observes that during the Ancien Régime, every means was tried to populate the colony of New France:

Colbert, through Talon, told the people of New France that "their prosperity, their subsistence, and all that is dear to them depend upon a general resolution, never to be departed from, to marry youths at eighteen or nineteen years and girls at fourteen or fifteen." Early marriage and large families were rewarded by the state, while bachelorhood was penalized, and a paternalistic king [Louis XIV] sent over shiploads of his poor or orphaned wards, the filles de roi, to provide wives for veterans of the Carignan-Salières Regiment, and for the older colonists who had remained single in a land where white women were still rare. Thus was established the French-Canadian tradition of early marriage and large families, a tradition which has been one of the strongest forces in the tenacious survival and remarkable increase of this ethnic group. Large families were, of course, assets in the expanding agricultural economy of New France, though liabilities in the mother country.⁵²

⁵²Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967, Vol. I, p. 18.

While recognizing that these may be noble aspirations for society to pursue, a significant number of characters who seek an integrated personality denounce the custom of producing large families because it does not acknowledge that each child has certain fundamental rights. As well, there are social reasons why the number of children in a family should be restricted. The most frequent argument relates to the state of poverty which is often the outcome of a lack of family planning. Needy circumstances often create a sense of rejection among the children, and the unsocial behavior that results places society in a vulnerable situation.

In Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, Marie-Claire Blais appears to be hostile to the notion of large families because of the poverty that it frequently breeds. While writing the novel, she drew heavily upon the circumstances surrounding her own upbringing. However, she did not restrict herself to autobiographical events, as she divulged in an interview: "J'ai vu la misère matérielle d'autres gens, et ça m'a frappée. Je l'ai montrée d'une manière symbolique et crue dans Une saison."⁵³ The reader is shown the plight of a large peasant family during one season, the first winter in the life of Emmanuel. "'C'est un bien mauvais temps pour naître [dit Grand-Mère Antoinette], nous n'avons jamais été aussi pauvres, une saison dure pour tout le monde, la guerre, la faim, et puis tu es le seizième..."⁵⁴

⁵³ Grandpré, Histoire de la littérature française du Québec, Tome IV, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Marie-Claire Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1965), p. 7.

Because of the large number of children she had to look after, Emmanuel's grandmother taught him that crying was a futile act, since "[...] personne ne t'écoute, tu pleures vainement, tu apprendras vite que tu es seul au monde."⁵⁵ Soon, Emmanuel "[...] n'osait plus se plaindre car il lui semblait soudain avoir une longue habitude du froid, de la faim, et peut-être même du désespoir."⁵⁶ Marie-Claire Blais' technique of endowing the infant with the ability to understand demonstrates that one can experience the effects of poverty before the faculty of comprehension as we commonly know it has begun to develop. To exist in a state of poverty is to understand it, regardless of the age. During his first season on earth, Emmanuel was made aware of his impoverished condition. Furthermore, "il a su que cette misère n'aurait pas de fin, mais il a consenti à vivre."⁵⁷

For many children, more difficult to accept than material poverty is the realization that they are not really wanted by their parents. The infant often sensed rejection because arrangements for receiving him into the already overcrowded family were incomplete. Jean-Le Maigre, Emmanuel's teen-age brother who will die of tuberculosis in a noviciat infirmary before the season is over, revealed in his autobiography that he had a fortunate beginning because "[...] heureusement, Pivoine [his brother, born the previous year] était mort la veille et me cédait la place, très

⁵⁵Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 9.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

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gentiment."⁵⁸ The curé comforted the bereaved parents at the funeral by suggesting that Jean-Le Maigre's timely arrival filled the void left by Pivoine. This kind of reasoning leads Jean-Le Maigre to observe wryly: "Combien on m'avait attendu! Combien on m'avait désiré! Comme on avait besoin de moi! J'arrivais juste à temps pour plaire à mes parents."⁵⁹ There was often disappointment when the child survived the first few hours of life, a situation which occurred when le Septième overcame infantile meningitis. "À la grande déception de ma grand-mère qui avait préparé les funérailles, choisi la robe de deuil pour l'enfant, le Septième ressuscita."⁶⁰ Marie-Claire Blais demonstrates in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel that the children of large, poor families are not conceived as a result of any conscious desire on the part of the parents to have more children. They are children of fate who are too often raised with indifference.

Because of material deprivation prevalent in many large rural families, children often find themselves alone at a very early age to fend for themselves. The stronger members of the family always got the largest portion of the little that was available to eat.

Il y avait peu à manger, mais le père et les fils aînés avaient un appétit brutal [...]. Assoupis autour de la table, protégeant leur assiette comme un trésor, les hommes et les jeunes gens mangeaient sans lever les yeux.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 50.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 21.

Jean-Le Maigre often resorted to begging.⁶² However, Antoinette's reaction to Jean-Le Maigre, "en haillons sous la table et qui levait vers elle un front sauvage pour mendier [...] avec sa main tendue vers elle, comme la patte d'un chien,"⁶³ demonstrates that she is one who long since has become accustomed to poverty, and has spiritually and emotionally immunized herself against its effects.

Often, the younger members of the family, because of their rebellious natures, fall prey to social transgressions in order to realize the ambitions which their impoverished condition denies them. For le Septième, misdemeanors often went beyond the act of begging. He is described as being, "sage et bon en-dedans, mais c'est un voleur. Il n'y a personne de plus voleur que lui."⁶⁴ Marie-Claire Blais suggests that childhood misdemeanors often become a normal part of a youngster's life, and that other interests and skills are channeled towards the more efficient performance of the unsocial act. Le Septième, for example, always received a good grade in mathematics: "C'était l'habitude d'avoir tant volé d'argent des autres, peut-être."⁶⁵ The author's thinly disguised warning is that all too often poverty leads to juvenile delinquency. And the juvenile delinquent rarely mends his ways, as

⁶² "Grand-Mère, suppliait Jean-Le Maigre, sous la table, un morceau, une miette..." Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 22.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 62.

Jean-Le Maigre notes in his autobiography. A few months after their release from a correctional institution where he and le Septième had been incarcerated for burning down the school house, "nous étions accusés de vol, et nous partions pour Notre Dame De La Miséricorde où poussait, là aussi, la délinquance en fleur."⁶⁶ At the end of Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, we are presented with a portrait of a delinquent who is quickly turning into a seasoned criminal.

Le Septième marchait en silence, préoccupé par des vols de bicyclettes et de phares de voitures. Il finirait sans doute en prison, comme lui avait dit son père, tant de fois. Il n'avait plus espoir de guérir de son besoin de voler. Il était allé trop loin.⁶⁷

The characters who seek personal values denounce the traditional peasant custom of raising large families because the individual members of the group are confined to a destiny with limited possibilities. The absence of family planning often creates conditions ruled by poverty where the offspring who feel rejected by their parents strike out on their own from an early age without any kind of guidance. A lack of hope for a bright future prevails wherever poverty is uncovered. Emmanuel's bleak future is summarized by Antoinette in the following remark: "'Tu feras comme les autres, tu seras ignorant, cruel et amer...'"⁶⁸

⁶⁶Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 71.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 127.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 8.

The kind of material security advocated by the traditional peasant conflicts with the aims of those who seek an integrated personality. It is unacceptable because it frequently results in a display of narrow individualism by the farmer who is determined to lead his life in his own way without regard for others. The preoccupation with acquiring material wealth, once it becomes established, governs most of life's activities, limiting further the freedom to act unselfishly. For these reasons, the peasant in quest of personal values does not endorse material security.

The pursuit of material gain controls the actions of many traditional peasants. Euchariste Moisan's drive to amass a fortune prohibits him from transferring the farm to his son until he is forced to by Etienne. Samuel Chapdelaine, like Séraphin Poudrier in Un homme et son péché, waited until the last moment before fetching a doctor to care for his ailing wife because he did not want to be burdened by unnecessary medical expenses. In both cases, medical attention arrived too late to save the lives of the women. It is this kind of narrow individualism that is attacked by contemporary authors like Claude Jasmin, Marie-Claire Blais, Adrien Thério, and Jean Pellerin.⁶⁹

⁶⁹For example, Jasmin paints a scurrilous picture of old man Achille "[avec] ses sales griffes de paysan calculateur," in La Corde au cou (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1961), p. 91. The father figure in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel is self-indulgent (p. 98), and totally insensitive to the wishes of others (pp. 13-16). Thério's description of Eudore Martin in Les Brèves années, and Pellerin's exposé of Anselme Val in Un soir d'hiver were discussed earlier.

The contemporary author is not alone in condemning the narrow individualism of the traditional peasant. Albert Laberge, at the beginning of the twentieth century, recognized this as one of the harmful effects of the pursuance of material security. The connecting thread binding together the episodes of La Scouine is Paulima Deschamps' individualism which was one outcome of the traditional peasant values symbolized throughout the work by "le pain sur et amer marqué d'une croix."⁷⁰ The bread which the Deschamps eat is sour, signifying an inferior existence which is based upon self-interest. Like their lives, their daily bread is bitter and harsh. The sign of the cross marked on every loaf creates the illusion that it is a virtuous way of life, but the Christian symbol of the cross does not permeate the crumb. The part of the loaf which sustains the Deschamps' way of life and their quest for material abundance lies beneath the hard crust through which the sign of the cross cannot penetrate.

The pursuit of material abundance motivates much of what Urgèle Deschamps does:

Le fermier Deschamps acharné à la tâche, et voulant acquérir de beaux deniers pour ses enfants, n'épargnait ni peine ni misères. Patient et opiniâtre, il était satisfait de travailler toute sa vie, pourvu qu'un jour, il pût réaliser son ambition. Apre au gain et peu scrupuleux, il avait parfois des difficultés avec ses voisins et alors, il cognait. A différents intervalles, il avait acheté à côté de la sienne, des terres pour Raclor et Tifa. Dernièrement enfin, il était devenu le propriétaire d'un troisième terrain qu'il convoitait depuis longtemps et qui serait le patrimoine de Charlot.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Laberge, La Scouine, p. 134.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 6.

We have already seen how Tifa and Raçlor thanked their father for the sacrifices he had made for them. Their ungrateful acts are not unexpected, however, because Urgèle did not only provide a farm for each of his sons. He also passed on to them his narrow individualism.

The tendency among traditional peasants to be more concerned with material than with spiritual values also pervades the attitudes many materialists have of death. For example, the pomp and ceremony of the funeral service celebrated in honour of her deceased twin sister, Caroline, was what most impressed la Scouine, as she reveals to her neighbour:

Et elle accumulait les détails, s'animant, bavardant, gonflée d'orgueilleuse satisfaction. [...] Toute glorieuse, la Scouine déclarait: "M'sieu l'curé a dit qu'il avait jamais vu d'aussi beau cercueil dans son église, jamais vu d'aussi beau cercueil."⁷³

However, it is not only the eccentric Paulima whose outlook on the value of life became distorted. Laberge gives a dramatic quality to this point in a moving description of two carts which meet on a muddy country road. One contains the corpse of Schno, the other a load of manure: "Deux tombereaux se rencontrèrent, un vendredi matin, sur la route boueuse [...]. Bagon le Coupeur, assis sur le devant de sa voiture [...] conduisait au champ voisin une charge de fumier, et Tofile s'en allait au cimetière enterrer le Schno."⁷⁴ Not content with the juxtaposition of a load

⁷²See Chapter I, pp. 21 and 22.

⁷³Laberge, La Scouine, p. 82.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 99.

of manure and a human corpse, the narrator wryly adds:
 "la terre allait être engraisée."⁷⁵

Current political observations regarding the voting patterns in rural Quebec appear to support the view expressed in the novels we have studied that the traditional peasant acts primarily out of self-interest, even in his voting habits. According to Robert Cliche, the leaders of the Parti Québécois expected significant support from the rural areas during the provincial election of 1969.

Because the Parti Québécois is a party which wants to protect the language, a way of living, a culture, the leaders of the Parti Québécois think that their votes should mainly come from the real French-Canadian regions of the province of Quebec. It does not.⁷⁶

Apparently, practical considerations prevailed over the farmer's nationalistic aspirations, as Cliche remarks:

Farmers are pragmatic [...]. They say: "Well, if we are going to break Canada in two different countries, what are we going to do for our grains, for wheat?" They know that most of the food for their animals, for their cows and chickens and pigs comes from Western Canada. They are afraid that it might have a bad or a poor result for them, strictly on this pragmatic base, which is important.⁷⁷

The reason for the peasant's lack of support of the separatist cause is significant because it demonstrates that in one important area of life, the contemporary farmer in Quebec resembles the traditional peasant described in the novel. Both display narrow self-interest, a by-product of the concern they have for their material security.

⁷⁵ Laberge, *La Scouine*, p. 99.

⁷⁶ Interview with Robert Cliche, "Ideas: Dimensions of Quebec Nationalism After the Events of October, 1970," C.B.C. Audio Tape Catalogue Number 676.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Though the individual who strives to attain an integrated personality manifests a degree of subjectivity in his approach towards reality, this practice should not be confused with the narrow self-interest displayed by many of the traditional peasants described in the novel. The type of excessive individualism they exhibit restricts their field of vision to what best serves them in a practical sense. Because a high regard for material security appears as the fountainhead for narrow self-interest, it is rejected by those farmers who seek personal values.

The traditional peasant's high regard for work is incompatible with the quest for the integrated self. The established work ethic is denounced by many young farmers, especially the aspect of it which glorifies laborious, backbreaking toil. Tasks which are boring and severely restrict personal freedom are also rejected. Nevertheless, work is sanctioned as a purposeful activity. It is the degree of approbation that is at issue, for unlike the traditional farmer, the peasant in quest of personal values would never allow this activity to become his "raison d'être".

Hard, physical work is glorified by most of the traditional peasants we have examined.⁷⁸ However, it has a deleterious effect upon some farmers. In her description of Amable unloading heavy potato sacks with his sexagenarian father and the Survenant, Germaine Guèvremont disputes the

⁷⁸See Chapter I, pp. 30-35.

notion that it is commendable for everyone to work hard: "Verdâtre de fatigue, [Amable] essuyait sur sa manche le sang qui lui coulait du nez."⁷⁹ Contrary to the propaganda of the agriculturalist movement which promoted Victor Hugo's "feste auguste du sémur,"⁸⁰ Laberge in La Scouine describes the physical deterioration that is one consequence of working too hard:

Les longues journées de labeur et la fatalité avaient courbé [l'homme], et il se déhanchait à chaque effort. Son andain fini, il s'arrêta pour aiguïser sa faux et jeta un regard indifférent sur les promeneurs qui passaient. [...] Le froid grincement ressemblait à une plainte douloureuse et jamais entendue...

C'était la Chanson de la Faux, une chanson qui disait le rude travail de tous les jours, les continuelles privations, les soucis pour conserver la terre ingrate, l'avenir incertain, la vieillesse lamentable, une vie de bête de somme; puis la fin, la mort, pauvre et nu comme en naissant, et le même lot de misères laissé en héritage aux enfants sortis de son sang, qui perpétueront la race des éternels exploités de la glèbe.⁸¹

More recent authors expose the spiritual as well as the physical harm that overwork produces. For example, because she had chores to do in the barn along with the usual amount of housework, the mother in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, "semblait toujours épuisée et sans regard. Son visage avait la couleur de la terre."⁸² Because of the physical, emotional and spiritual damage it causes, exhausting work is not condoned by the peasant who strives to become an integrated person.

⁷⁹ Guévremont, Le Survenant, pp. 42-43.

⁸⁰ Ryan, The Clergy and Economic Growth in Quebec (1896-1914), p. 247, quoting Michel Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée canadienne-française: l'agriculturalisme, l'anti-étatisme, et le messianisme. Essai d'histoire intellectuelle," Écrits du Canada français, III (1957), 33-117.

⁸¹ Laberge, La Scouine, p. 79.

Farm work is often rejected because it is wearisome compared to the stimulation offered by other occupations. Vincent Douaire, in Nord-sud abandoned the idea of settling on the land in Northern Quebec with Josephite because he realized that boredom would rapidly overtake him. Likewise, Alidor Larose in La Veuve became totally disenchanted shortly after he married Orpha Lemire: "Non seulement les travaux de la ferme l'ennuyaient, mais il souffrait de se sentir irrémédiablement lié à cette terre, à cette femme pour qui il ne sentait plus autant d'attrait."⁸³ The frustration of being tied down to his work and farm caused Alidor to react "comme un chien, il tirait sur sa chaîne."⁸⁴

The contemporary peasant who believes that the individual is fundamentally important dissociates himself from the established work ethic because it often leads to a form of narrow individualism which glorifies work at the expense of humanitarian considerations. Frequently, the desire for monetary rewards turns one into a compulsive worker. That is what happened to Raclor in La Scouine. He looked upon his father's impending death as unfortunate because it would mean the loss of one day's pay: "'Si l'vieux pouvait mourir vendredi, dit-il à sa femme, une fois revenu chez lui, on l'enterrerait dimanche, et y aurait pas de temps perdu."⁸⁵ Just as restricting is the notion that work is a manly activity.

⁸³Ouvrard, La Veuve, p. 210.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 211.

⁸⁵Laberge, La Scouine, p. 120.

Because he subscribed to this belief, Charlot Deschamps was unable to enjoy his retirement years. He lived in the past, in an era when "il était réellement un homme, le temps où il travaillait."⁸⁶ During his productive years, Charlot had allowed work to become his "raison d'être", so when he retired he lost his reason for living.

C'est que demain, il s'éveillera sans but, sans occupation, en se demandant comment il pourra bien tuer le temps. C'est qu'il en sera ainsi toujours et toujours. Il a renoncé à la terre pour aller goûter le repos, la vie facile, et il n'a trouvé que l'ennui, un ennui mortel, dévorant. Il ne vit pas; il attend la mort.⁸⁷

As a purposeful activity, work is endorsed by the young farmer who is preoccupied with the integrated self. It is the adverse effects of the work ethic which are condemned. For example, work which is physically injurious or which induces emotional ennui and spiritual weariness is rejected. Also, the excessive praise accorded the work ethic and the stress it places upon the manly virtues produces feelings of inadequacy and a sense of despondency whenever one loses the ability to continue being productive. For these reasons, the traditional peasant value of work is unacceptable to those in quest of personal values.

The peasant's drive to become an integrated person requires enormous dedication. Before his distinctive individual qualities can be incorporated into the

⁸⁶ Laberge, La Scouine, p. 131.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 133-134.

total personality, an awareness of his milieu and its effects upon the person are essential. It is also necessary to accept and therefore act upon the solutions initiated by the facets of the self that are affected adversely by the existing condition. Furthermore, it is a continuing process which requires persistent readjustment from the individual who seeks to integrate his distinctive qualities into the total personality. One outcome of the quest involves considerable conflict between two generations of farmers; the traditionalists, and the innovative peasants who reject some of the fundamental values of rural Quebec. Because it often results in oppressor-victim relationships where fear, hatred, and vengeance prevail, paternalism is denounced. The custom of raising large families is rejected because of the material and spiritual poverty which is often the outcome. The traditional peasant's search for material security is not condoned because it frequently produces excessive individualism. As well, the aspects of the traditional peasant value of work which sanction tasks that are physically or spiritually injurious or which extol the manly virtues are condemned. The element common to these four traditional values is the disregard shown for the individual. Since a quest for the integrated self is based upon the assumption that the individual is the most important reality, antagonism between the two generations of farmers appears to be unavoidable.

The non-traditionalist rural population emphasizes the freedom to express one's feelings and sentiments. More complex sentiments like love, often renew one's hope for the future by giving a new direction to life. This sense of hope applies to what is commonly called friendship, as well as to passionate love. Many of the characters we have examined support the free expression of one's feelings and sentiments by denouncing the traditional peasant values that are opposed to it. Their more vociferous condemnations are against the established custom of repressing human feelings and sentiments, and the puritanical aspects of traditional Catholicism.

Many of the young protagonists look forward to the possibility of experiencing love. The heroine of Marie-Louise des champs expresses her feelings thus:

"[...] je n'ai pas cessé de croire que ma vie sera transformée tout d'un coup par la venue d'un bonheur que j'attends et que j'espère de toutes mes forces. C'est pour lui que depuis des années, sans m'en être toujours rendu compte, je me prépare. Je crois que c'est l'amour, un vrai et grand amour, qui donnera à mon existence sa direction..."⁸⁸

Clair Martin is equally optimistic when he abandons his family and friends for an unknown route which he believes will lead to Gladys and, at the same time, afford him the opportunity to experience sensations that would otherwise be unavailable to him.⁸⁹ Alidor Larose reacted in a similar fashion after he met Louise at the beginning of La Veuve.

⁸⁸ Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs, p. 74.

⁸⁹ See Thériot, Les Brèves années, p. 210.

However, the passionate sentiments of youth are not limited to the amorous yearnings of the lovelorn. There is an element of exigency as well as of urgency in the interpersonal relationships of many young idealists.

For example, Marie-Louise Cordeau states:

"Moi, je n'appartiendrai qu'à l'homme que j'aurai choisi entre tous et de celui-là je serai l'amie totale: la confidente intellectuelle et morale; chacun fera à l'autre le don entier de sa personne et de sa vie. Je crois qu'un amour de cette qualité est possible même pour moi, petite provinciale."⁹⁰

Intense feelings also characterize some friendships.

Jacques Plaisance, the narrator of Les Brèves années was initially bewildered by his feelings for his friend, Clair.⁹¹

However, their amity grew stronger after Clair's appendectomy, and his brush with death. As Jacques freely admits:

[...] je ressentis la profondeur de mon amitié pour Clair. Non, je ne pouvais la définir, elle qui n'apporte aucun désir, mais remplit l'être tout entier. Pour la première fois, je la sentais là, toute en moi, présente jusque dans les pores de ma peau. Amitié d'enfant n'est pas toujours faite de puérité!⁹²

To suppress the free expression of one's natural feelings and the more complex sentiments such as love, is considered a folly by the rural youth who seek personal values. The traditional peasant customs which condone these practices are therefore condemned by several authors. The description of Emmanuel's mother shows that Marie-Claire

⁹⁰Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs, p. 74.

⁹¹"Profondément, en moi, je sentis [...] un sentiment que je ne savais pas définir et que j'appelai plus tard de l'amitié." Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 55.

⁹²Ibid., p. 70.

Blais objects to the reticence prevalent among traditional peasants. "[La mère d'Emmanuel] elle, ne dit rien, ne répond plus, calme, profonde, déserte, peut-être. Il est là, mais elle l'oublie. Il ne fait en elle aucun écho de joie ni de désir."⁹³ Because she is withdrawn and devoid of feelings, the mother in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel appears to have abdicated many of her maternal responsibilities, as Jean-Le Maigre observes: "Abandonnés par notre pauvre mère, qui, lorsqu'elle n'était pas aux champs ou à l'écurie à soigner sa jument atteinte de consommation [...], dialoguait avec ses morts."⁹⁴ The description of Mme. Laplante, Rose-Anna's elderly mother in Bonheur d'occasion, conforms with this reserve which is characteristic of the traditional peasant mother.

Mme Laplante avait élevé quinze enfants. Elle s'était levée la nuit pour les soigner [...] mais jamais elle ne s'était penchée sur aucun d'eux avec une flamme claire et joyeuse au fond de ses durs yeux gris fer. Jamais elle ne les avait pris sur ses genoux, sauf lorsqu'ils étaient au maillot. Jamais elle ne les avait embrassés, sauf, du bout des lèvres, après une longue absence, ou encore, au jour de l'an, et cela avec une sorte de gravité froide et en prononçant des souhaits usés et banals.⁹⁵

Like the younger children in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel who had been deprived of maternal affection, Rose-Anna Lacasse, in her fortieth year and expecting her eleventh child, was greatly affected by her mother's reticence:

⁹³Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, pp. 12-13.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 53.

⁹⁵Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 173.

Qu'était-elle venue chercher exactement? Elle ne le savait plus; car, à mesure qu'elle causait à voix basse avec la vieille, elle oubliait l'image qu'elle s'en était faite à la longue et à distance. Elle le découvrait telle qu'elle était, telle qu'elle avait toujours été, et se demandait comment elle avait pu se leurrer. Car de la vieille femme, il n'y avait à espérer aucun aveu de tendresse.⁹⁶

The strict morality taught by traditional Catholicism is viewed with disfavor because it interferes with the free expression of one's feelings and sentiments. As observed in Un soir d'hiver, individuals like Marion Val are placed in a confrontation position by traditionalists whenever they endeavor to express themselves:

"Il lui faut des yeux qui sourient... qui aiment... qui comprennent! Seulement, voilà: c'est bien malheureux! Mais on ne trouve pas ces yeux-là dans une... niche à principes! Non. Dans une niche à principes? Bah! on n'a que des yeux qui soupçonnent... qui enquêtent... qui reprochent! Dans une niche pareille, la petite fille a froid! Alors, elle sort... elle cherche ailleurs... elle finit par les trouver ces yeux qui ressemblent aux siens! Ces yeux qui sont tristes et qui ont soif d'un peu d'infini..."⁹⁷

Like the custom of repressing human feelings and sentiments, the aspects of the traditional peasant's religion which emphasize ideals and principles that conflict with the people's instinctive responses is denounced by the generation of rural youths who are striving to acquire a set of personal values.

The traditional peasant values mentioned above are rejected because they produce insensitive people with barren spirits who are often described amid the cold in a

⁹⁶ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 173.

⁹⁷ Pellerin, Un soir d'hiver, p. 96.

symbolic winter setting. For example, it was during a cold winter's night that Marion Val in Un soir d'hiver met her tragic end. In Terres stériles, Eva Aubin could not refrain from comparing her father's insensitivity and unproductive life to the frozen lands of late autumn.

A observer ce grand vieillard au dos voûté dont la silhouette se découpait sur les champs tondus, elle ne put se retenir de comparer la vie de son père à une terre stérile, déjà durcie par le froid et qui jamais plus ne porterait de fruits, que le printemps ne visiterait plus [...]. A ses yeux, Jean-Baptiste et Marie-Louise aussi, étaient des terres stériles [...], Marie-Louise surtout qui n'avait jamais connu la puissance du dévouement.⁹⁸

In Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, the presence of cold is used in a figurative sense to show that a severe lack of affection exists in Emmanuel's family. When Le Septième announced from his side of the bed that he was cold, he was seeking affection as well as the warmth of his brother's body. Jean-Le Maigre's response also abounds with images of winter.

"Tu peux me le demander à genoux, dit Jean-Le Maigre, je ne te réchaufferai pas. D'ailleurs je suis profondément endormi. Je rêve que je traverse la rivière en patins. La rivière est gelée, mais j'ai peur qu'elle s'ouvre tout à coup. J'ai de plus en plus peur. Je crie au secours! Mais toi, tu ne m'entends pas, petite brute, va!"⁹⁹

Using the physical sensation of cold as a symbol for an absence of human feelings and sentiments, several contemporary authors demonstrate that disastrous consequences often occur when warm relationships are not established due to the restrictions placed upon the individual by the established social values.

⁹⁸ Filiatrault, Terres stériles, pp. 143-144.

⁹⁹ Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 35.

Free of literary devices such as the symbol, straightforward examples also abound, demonstrating that a number of traditional peasant customs produce undesirable results for some impressionable young people. For example, Emmanuel's older sister, Héloïse, found it easy to practice self-denial while living in the impoverished surroundings described by Marie-Claire Blais in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel. However, she underwent a radical transformation after entering the convent.

Toutes ces émotions l'épuisèrent et elle n'eut plus la force de prier. Ses méditations se perdirent en réflexions païennes. Se maîtrisant de tout son courage pour ne pas bondir au réfectoire dix fois par jour, elle ne put se défendre de la tentation de la gourmandise, lorsque sonnait la cloche de midi. La nourriture délicate, les mets soignés; la blancheur des draps, et à son insu, la voix des religieuses, contribuèrent au réveil d'une sensualité fine et menaçante.¹⁰⁰

Héloïse became a very sensual person, a development which led to her dismissal from the convent for immoral conduct. Her transition from a religious institution to L'Auberge de la Rose is made to appear almost natural. So is the transformation which Lucinda Moisan underwent after she left Saint-Jacques to take "le chemin de la filature, comme tant d'autres."¹⁰¹ She soon changed her profession as well as her name and appearance, and as Violette, she was unrecognizable, even to her father.¹⁰² Marie-Claire

¹⁰⁰Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 29.

¹⁰¹Ringuet, Trente arpents, p. 167.

¹⁰²Ibid., See pages 247-248.

Blais observes that because they were deprived of parental affection, Jean-Le Maigre and Le Septième, along with their younger brothers Fomme and Alexis, sought the warmth of each other's bodies during the cold winter nights. Jean-Le Maigre reveals how he will justify his homosexual acts after his impending death. "'Je dirai que c'était pour avoir un peu de chaleur, que malheureusement, mon pitoyable frère m'a souvent induit en tentation, et que les poètes goûtent A LA DEBAUCHE.'"¹⁰³ Several contemporary authors regard the suppression of human instincts as well as the heavy emphasis which traditional farmers place upon moral principles as inappropriate responses in modern society because such behavior can lead to perversions that are less desirable than the free expression of one's feelings and sentiments.

Along with the quest for an integrated personality, the unrestricted expression of oneself is regarded very highly by the youth of rural Quebec who seek personal values. The complex sentiments of love and friendship are significant positive manifestations of this trend. However, examples that exploit the negative aspects of the traditional peasant values which call for restraint and extol the puritanical ethics of traditional Catholicism are more frequent. By examining the adverse effects of a lack of affection upon their maladjusted and sometimes perverted protagonists, several contemporary authors affirm their personal belief in the quest for personal values undertaken by their characters.

¹⁰³Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 38.

Partially in reaction to the sedentary life of farming, excitement and adventure are held in high esteem by the young peasant. In many instances the quest for excitement and adventure becomes a long-term goal because it is intimately connected with the pursuit of an integrated personality. This personal value can also act as a vehicle for awakening and gratifying the senses. Furthermore, it can provide one with a means whereby knowledge can be attained. Because the quest for excitement and adventure runs counter to the sedulous life style of the established peasant, it is opposed by farmers who endorse the traditional values.

As previously noted,¹⁰⁴ the act of escaping from a confining milieu is generally accompanied by a desire for adventure. The yearning for excitement prevails among young farmers throughout the year because of the conservative life style of rural people. However, this desire is particularly intense during the late autumn and winter, for as the heroine of Marie-Louise des champs observes, many illusions exist about country life.

"A la campagne, il n'y a pas seulement la belle saison. Aussitôt après les récoltes, le paysage se transforme ici. Tout ce qu'il y avait de gai, de vivant, d'animé, tout cela disparaît. Chacun se cabane chez soi, à l'approche du froid. Les champs noirs, récemment labourés, sont déserts. La campagne désolée, silencieuse, entre lentement dans la saison de l'ennui; croyez-vous qu'on ne s'y sente pas entraîné avec elle?... Vous ne connaissez pas cette impression de vide et de silence qui nous envahit et nous pénètre quand vient l'automne [...].¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter VII, pp. 348-350.

¹⁰⁵ Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs, pp. 68-69.

Because they depend heavily upon the farm and all of the factors affecting the land, the peasant segment of the population tends to be essentially more homogeneous than the other two social classes. This homogeneity could account for the lack of excitement which Marie-Louise Cordeau perceives among her peers.

"Et ce n'est pas dans les champs de par ici que je le trouverai, ce grand bonheur. Je connais ici une dizaine de braves garçons que je ne méprise pas... Ils sont simples, honnêtes... ils n'ont rien qui éloigne... rien qui attire non plus... Comment vous dire? il leur manque à tous quelque chose du côté de l'âme [...]. D'ailleurs, pendant que je suis jeune, j'aimerais sortir de mon coin, voyager un peu, voir des paysages nouveaux, des figures nouvelles..." 106

Young peasants who have been exposed to different surroundings appear to be particularly sensitive to the lack of excitement and adventure of rural Quebec. For example, Amédée noticed that his daughter Adèle no longer appeared to be content living with her family in the northern hinterlands.

- S'apercevait-il, aujourd'hui plus qu'hier, que le couvent et l'instruction, un nouveau milieu, le théâtre et la danse, le goût de la vie mondaine, des foules, le mouvement de la ville, déracinaient sa fille et qu'il ne pourrait, même d'autorité, l'empêcher un jour de s'enfuir? 107.

A lack of excitement and adventure can be attributed to a certain homogeneity present in the rural Quebec population described in the novel. This deficiency is particularly perceptible to characters like Adèle Cardinal who have ventured outside the rural environment and experienced life in another milieu.

106 Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs, p. 75.

107 Bernard, Les Jours sont longs, pp. 82-83.

Because it acts as an external reflection of the internal pursuit of the self, the quest for excitement and adventure often becomes a way of life for the pursuer.

Vincent Douaire in Nord-sud, and Alidor Larose in La Veuve, are typical adventurers because they have devoted themselves to a life of excitement and change. "A la recherche de

l'aventure,"¹⁰⁸ Clair Martin in Les Brèves années, conformed to the model of wanderer when he became haunted by "une route étrange comme les profondeurs d'une âme, celle de Clair peut-être, et qui conduisait dans la forêt, la grande forêt, gardienne de trésors fabuleux, inviolés des humains."¹⁰⁹

Jacques Plaisance remarked that Clair's obsession for the route in the forest that led to Gladys prompted him to lose sight of reality as we commonly know it:

S'imaginait-il qu'il pouvait ainsi partir un jour au lendemain avec mission de vivre son amour sans s'occuper d'autre chose. Non sûrement, [Clair] ne devait pas être si idiot. Il devait savoir en effet que l'amour n'est pas le compagnon du rêve. La réalité aussi a ses exigences. Délibérément, il semblait tout oublier, laissant encore au hasard le soin d'intervenir et de tout régler.¹¹⁰

By embarking upon an exciting search for Gladys, the symbol of his hope for the future, Clair, like a genuine adventurer, demonstrated that he was seeking a personal truth that was more real to him than reality itself.

¹⁰⁸Therio, Les Brèves années, p. 162.

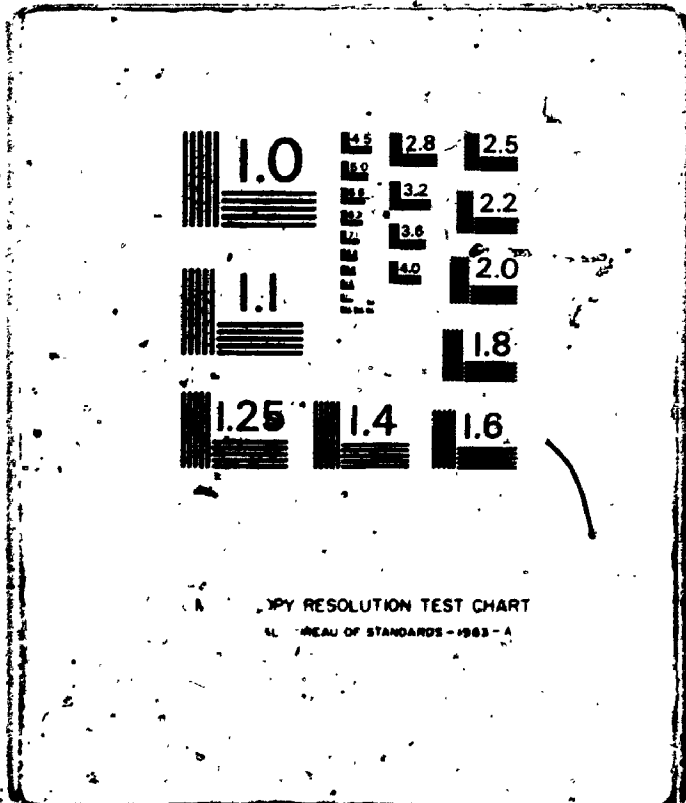
¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 164.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 203.

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Excitement and adventure are also important because they activate the senses which become vehicles for the free expression of feelings and sentiments. As the narrator postulates in Les Brèves années: "La route inconnue? Quels sont ceux qui n'ont jamais eu l'impression de s'y engager à un moment ou l'autre de leur vie? Quels sont ceux qui, pris à l'aventure, en sont revenus? Grisés par un appel inexplicable, on veut toujours pousser plus loin, vivre des sensations nouvelles."¹¹¹ In Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, the adventure associated with discovering her new environment prompted Héloïse to become acquainted with a number of her senses which had been deadened by the poverty-stricken surroundings in which she had been reared.

Surprise, Héloïse découvrit que la Règle du Couvent était douce, et elle s'y abandonna comme si, pour la première fois, elle avait découvert la joie de l'amour. Elle sortit de l'extase avec des sens renouvelés, un sentiment étrange de la vie. Les nuits lui parurent plus fraîches, l'aube, à peine voilée par le grillage de sa fenêtre, d'une intense beauté.¹¹²

The acquisition of knowledge is a natural by-product of the above mental process. For example, it was a thirst for adventure that led Jacques and Clair to explore the "route inconnue".

Je me souviens qu'un jour, avec Clair, nous nous étions même avancés plus d'un mille dans ce chemin où le foin poussait très haut dans l'ombre des arbres. [...] Nous étions revenus sur nos pas en nous demandant où cette route pouvait mener. Sûrement elle devait déboucher quelque part, car, quelle aurait été son utilité? Ce mystère qu'elle semblait garder jalousement nous hantait.¹¹³

¹¹¹Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 210.

¹¹²Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 29.

¹¹³Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 65.

Excitement and adventure provide a means whereby knowledge can be attained, especially for subjective individualists whose understanding of events is more meaningful when it is the outcome of personal experience.

Because the quest for excitement and adventure conflicts with the sedulity demanded of the established farmer, it is denounced by the supporters of paternalism, the large family, hard physical work and the high priority placed upon material security by the habitant. These traditional peasant values, in particular, are incompatible with the yearning of young people for a kind of excitement that the relative homogeneity of the Quebec rural milieu cannot provide. In many instances, adventure becomes a way of life, reflecting the character's pursuit of an integrated personality as well as the uninhibited expression of his feelings and sentiments. For several characters, the personal value of excitement and adventure also becomes a vehicle for the attainment of knowledge.

Art and the quest for knowledge are very important to the individual who is seeking an alternative to the traditional peasant values. Works of art or adventure stories, because they have the potential to captivate, enchant, or amuse, often function as means of escape for the reader, much like the other forms of withdrawal from reality examined above.¹¹⁴ Reading can also be used for exploratory purposes, resulting in significant discoveries

¹¹⁴ See Chapter VII above, especially pp. 362-369.

regarding one's innermost attitudes about oneself and society. For some people, it is the act of writing rather than reading which is necessary before the above-mentioned objectives can be realized. Since the individual in pursuit of knowledge often calls to question the traditional peasant values and life style, suspicion of education and erudition is prevalent among the traditionalists of rural Quebec.

Losing oneself in a good book can bring about a transformation in one's outlook on life. This proposition is presented in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel through the character of Jean-Le Maigre who appears more cheerful than the other members of the large family because he flees from the harsh realities of his home environment by withdrawing into a fantasy world found in works of fiction. While Grand-Mère Antoinette dwells upon "des saisons noires comme la mort," Jean-Le Maigre, "ravi comme un prince dans ses vêtements en lambeaux, se hâte de lire. 'Mon Dieu que c'est amusant, dit-il en riant aux éclats.'"¹¹⁵ In Les Brèves années, Clair Martin read books to forget his futile attempt to rejoin Gladys in the forest. "[Clair] préférait se plonger dans la lecture de longs romans pour oublier une vie qu'il croyait inutile."¹¹⁶ Reading generally serves a therapeutic function when it is used to escape from an unpleasant situation.

Books are often as valuable as real life experiences in teaching an individual about reality. For example, the

¹¹⁵Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 15.

¹¹⁶Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 188.

narrator of Les Brèves années observes that during their year in "Belles-Lettres", he and Clair "[firent] des découvertes étonnantes qui ne laissaient pas de déranger sensiblement des opinions qui [leurs] avaient semblé, auparavant inattaquables."¹¹⁷ The literature to which they were exposed meant as much to them as the mysterious "route inconnue" which had heretofore captured their imagination.

Une sorte de communication s'était établie entre nous et les oeuvres des génies, nous permettant de nous sentir comme participants d'un corps immense suspendu dans le temps et dont la formule n'existait que dans la pensée. Nous avons puisé à des sources nouvelles une matière infiniment précieuse; nous avons découvert nos possibilités d'être et un voile soudain s'était déchiré qui enveloppait auparavant notre conscience d'humain.¹¹⁸

Their ideas were not only altered by what they discovered,

Ce fut une transformation complète. Nous avons vécu jusque-là, nous semblait-il, un rêve où des tampons de brume s'enroulaient dans un vide affreux et s'en allaient mourir dans un horizon où la pensée s'était toujours noyée infailliblement; nous venions d'émerger soudainement de cette atmosphère imprécise dans une réalité qu'on pouvait palper des doigts, et qui laissait sur notre chair des empreintes éternelles.¹¹⁹

Though reading can often be a passive activity, in many circumstances it actively encourages the individual to seek alternatives to the traditional values that dominate rural life in Quebec.

The act of writing serves many of the same functions as reading. For example, in the "Gladys" poems

¹¹⁷Thério, Les Brèves années, pp. 148-149.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 156.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 149.

He wrote, Clair Martin revealed a great deal about himself, "avec ses désirs d'évasion, et ses poursuites de chimères, de rêves."¹²⁰ In the autobiography he wrote before dying, one could see,

[...] les lettres que Jean-Le Maigre avait tracées avec application, application et désespoir, car certains mots avaient perdu de leurs syllabes lorsqu'une main soudain languissante s'était interrompue au milieu d'une phrase, d'un paragraphe. Chaque cahier trahissait un moment de la maladie de Jean-Le Maigre, une ardeur heureuse et triste, sur le point de se tarir.¹²¹

The characters in the novels we have studied who keep diaries do so in order to study themselves vis-à-vis a milieu which generally has become intolerable to them. A significant number of these fictitious autobiographies act as vehicles for the dissection and study of the various facets of the personality of the central character, much like Cloutier's Les Témoins, which presents an analysis of the various aspects of François' psyche to the reader.

Some hostility exists between the traditionalists of rural Quebec and the education that some of their descendants are receiving. For example, in Les Jours sont longs, Amédée Cardinal maintains that schooling is not necessary for his daughter:

"[...] je r'viens à mon idée qu'l' instruction... c'est pas si nécessaire pour vivre comme on vit, dans l'bois. J'pense, des fois, que ça nuit plus que c'est serviable. Vous pensez pas? Si Adèle était moins capable, elle aurait pas dans la tête autant d'histoires qui tiennent pas debout..."¹²²

¹²⁰Thério, Les Brèves années, p. 194.

¹²¹Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 82.

¹²²Bernard, Les Jours sont longs, p. 130.

A similar statement is uttered by Mme. Cordeau in

Marie-Louise des champs:

"Y a pas besoin de tant d'instruction quand on est habitant: ça n'apporte que du malheur et de l'ennui... Du moment qu'une fille est pieuse, honnête et qu'elle n'a pas peur de la besogne, c'est tout ce qu'il faut!" 123

Amédée Cardinal was critical of the instruction his daughter received because it instilled in her desires which could not be realized in the remote forest clearing where the paternal home was located. Had she remained uneducated:

"[Adèle] s'rait pas toujours partie et alle penserait pas à partir. A connaîtrait pas mieux qu'nous autres et resterait avec nous autres. A penserait pas qu'ailleurs c'est mieux et plus beau qu'icitte. Si j'avais su ce que j'sais, j'aurais coupé ça court dans l'temps, l'histoire du couvent et des livres. [...]

Si alle avait pas plus d'instruction qu'son père, a vivrait la vie ordinaire et s'morfondrait pas pour avoir ce qu'alle a pas." 124

Marie-Louise's mother finds it very difficult to adjust to the transformation that her daughter underwent during her years in a convent school. She observes that:

"Quand les enfants vieillissent, on dirait qu'on les perd, qu'on ne les comprend plus. Ma petite Marie-Louise, elle a changé tout d'un coup. En mieux, bien sûr... Mais quand même... ça m'a toute r'virée!... Quand elle est revenue du couvent, j'osais quasiment pas lui parler... elle était comme une étrangère... On aurait dit une des filles de la ville qu'on voit l'été, à l'église..." 125

Parental fears regarding the education of their children are not entirely unfounded. As the narrator of Les Jours sont longs observes:

123 Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs, p. 91.

124 Bernard, Les Jours sont longs, p. 130.

125 Grandpré, Marie-Louise des champs, pp. 93-94.

Quand [Amédée] disait que les études déracinaient sa fille, il se trompait peu. Mais tel est le prix du progrès, de l'avancement. Le médecin qui soignait à la maison n'était-il pas le fils d'un homme du peuple, ignorant comme lui? Et le curé de la paroisse où il faisait ses Pâques, celui d'un cultivateur pauvre, sachant lire à peine, qui arrivait mal à mettre les deux bouts ensemble. Est-ce que l'Evêque du diocèse n'était pas sorti d'une famille d'ouvriers? Y réfléchissant, Cardinal finirait par admettre qu'il ne devait pas écraser les siens, paralyser chez eux l'initiative, l'ambition. En attendant, il n'acceptait pas qu'ils pussent désirer une existence différente de la sienne. Il se sentait logique et illogique, cherchait son équilibre. 126

Other members of the family as well as parents harbour mixed feelings regarding the education of one of their kin.

Adèle Cardinal remarks:

"Je suis étrangère, même dans ma famille. C'est curieux, mais c'est ainsi. Mes frères sont gênés avec moi et ils se retiennent de rire, si j'emploie un mot qu'ils entendent pour la première fois. Je parle de François et de Prosper, qui sont de vrais hommes de bois. [...]

On dirait, des fois, qu'ils se rient de moi. D'un autre côté, ils sont fiers de me savoir un peu d'instruction. Fiers et jaloux en même temps, comme si la science qu'ils m'attribuent les humiliait, accentuant la simplicité de leur existence." 127

Some of the parents who appear in the novels we have studied feel that schooling is not necessary for their children who are destined to remain in rural Quebec. They are particularly afraid that their offspring will be transformed into educated people who want more than peasant society can offer. Though antagonism is common between the uneducated farmers and their more fortunate counterparts, it is generally recognized on both sides that education and progress (both individual and collective) are closely allied in modern society.

126 Bernard, Les Jours sont longs, p. 132.

127 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Writers appear to fare even worse than other educated people, except among some tolerant sympathizers who share their vocation as well as their ideals.¹²⁸

Marie-Claire Blais, who was even obliged to leave home because of her father's hostility towards her chosen profession, recounted an amusing incident in Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel relating to the poems Jean-Le Maigre wrote to a little hunchbacked girl: "[...] Sa grand-mère les mit au feu, le soir même, s'écriant que cela était scandaleux, que Jean-Le Maigre irait en enfer, si choquée par le titre: A LA CHAUDE MAITRESSE... qu'elle n'avait pas eu le courage d'aller plus loin."¹²⁹ In an analysis of society's treatment of the French-Canadian writer, Claude Marceau, one of the two authors of the publication entitled, L'Écrivain canadien face à la réalité, remarked:

Ainsi, quel auteur n'a pas senti une certaine hostilité de la part des siens, hostilité plus ou moins marquée et souvent dictée soit par l'ignorance, soit par la jalousie. Les plus ignorants le considèrent comme "le fou de la famille". Ceux qui ont un peu plus d'éducation craignent pour la bonne renommée familiale. Ils croient par exemple, que tous les poètes sont des êtres perversis, des immoraux. Ils connaissent

¹²⁸ One such person is Pierre Perrault, who in a broadcast program entitled, "Ideas: Dimensions of Quebec Nationalism After the Events of October, 1970," C.B.C. Audio Tape Catalogue Number, 676, stated: "I think that the important people [in Quebec society] now, are the singers and the poets. They are not making the revolution. They are not telling the revolution. They are building a feeling towards a land."

¹²⁹ Blais, Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel, p. 25.

vaguement les aventures de Verlaine, de Rimbaud, de Jean-Paul Sartre et de Gide. Ils ont lu ici et là, la description des restaurants louches de la ville où se réunissent les pseudo-poètes et ils craignent alors que leur parent ou leur ami poète devienne inévitablement un dépravé.

D'autres membres de la famille parfaitement au courant des faits mais victimes d'une profonde jalousie, jugent que le meilleur moyen de décourager l'écrivain est d'ignorer totalement son travail en gardant un silence éloquent sur toutes ses activités littéraires. Les amis, les camarades, les confrères, les compagnons auront à peu près les mêmes réactions! Ils trouvent sans difficulté, les mots nécessaires pour l'humilier, le ridiculiser, le décourager, l'abattre et l'anéantir. 130

The pursuit of art and knowledge is an important attribute for the young peasant who strives to transcend beyond the established rural values. At times an invaluable form of temporary escape, books can also broaden the reader's horizon as well as open his eyes to reality. For some characters, the act of writing is an essential element in the process of discovery. Antipathetic feelings often characterize the relationship between the educated and untutored peasants, primarily as a result of the startling transformations that can take place among students. Among the farmers who seek personal values, some seem to suggest that the desire to know, the burning search for truth, might be the greatest human quality of all.

The traditional peasant begot a generation of young people who were greatly influenced by progress. Their quest for personal values reflects an intensely personal philosophy of life which is rooted in the self and reality

¹³⁰ Claude Marceau et Raymond Savard, L'Ecrivain canadien face à la réalité (Montréal: Les Editions Nocturne, 1962), pp. 30-31.

rather than upon a set of principles that originate from an external source. The integrated self that they seek, where one's distinctive individual qualities are in harmony with each other, the total personality, and nature, is a manifestation of this phenomenon. Their determination to express their feelings and sentiments is a form of rejection of the traditional peasant attitudes which impose restrictions upon one's personal conduct. Their yearning for excitement and adventure is an expression of more than a carefree youthful spirit. Considerable stimulation is frequently required before any attempts are made to overcome the flaws in one's personality. A devotion to art and the pursuit of knowledge is a further indication that young idealists believe in personal development rather than self-sacrifice. The traditional values espoused by the rural establishment were cast by the wayside by young farmers who sought to incorporate the intensely personal philosophy examined above into their life style. The conflict that ensued between the generations demonstrates that the peasant in quest of personal values is not in pursuit of a mystical shortcut to Utopia. He is on a life-long pilgrimage towards progress.

CHAPTER XI

QUEST OF THE PROLETARIAT

Unlike the first-generation workers who, because of their rural backgrounds found it difficult to adjust to city life, the young proletarian who was raised in an urban environment understood the practices of modern industrial society. He realized early in life that one could not advance to a position of prominence by adopting the traditional proletarian values embraced by the preceding generation. To be successful, the young worker recognized that he had to become an individual and pursue a set of personal values that would elevate him above the mediocre norm. In an article entitled: "Une tradition à inventer," G.-André Vachon remarks that French-Canadian society has succeeded in becoming a modern society, "tant au point de vue de niveau de vie que de la socialisation."¹ Furthermore, he maintains that "la modernité est essentiellement le règne de l'individu, de la conscience, de la liberté; les hommes n'y accèdent pas autrement qu'un à un, et encore, à certains moments privilégiés, toujours très courts, de leur existence."²

¹G.-André Vachon, "Une tradition à inventer," Littérature canadienne-française, Conférences J.A. de Sève, 1-10 (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1969), p. 269

²Ibid., p. 277.

Unlike the traditional proletarian values which were established facts in working-class neighbourhoods, the personal values endorsed by young workers originated from within each developing individual. In the process of acquiring a set of personal values, the individual came into conflict with the traditionalists.

Hostility between the two generations of workers is a recurring theme in the French-Canadian novel. It is the subject of Yves Thériault's Aaron. Although the author chose Moishe, an Orthodox Jew, and his grandson, Aaron, as the main protagonists of the novel, the evident similarities between them and any poor Montreal working-class family suggest that Thériault's aim was to symbolize the conflict that existed at the time between "deux générations, deux mondes..."³ In the chapter devoted to Aaron, Pierre de Grandpré in Dix ans de vie littéraire au Canada français cautiously remarks:

Je ne puis assurer qu'en choisissant un sujet aussi original [...], Thériault n'ait pas eu l'idée, ou l'espoir, que le lecteur y découvre la figure et le symbole des contradictions pathétiques auxquelles se heurte le traditionnalisme canadien-français lui-même. Mais ce que j'observe, c'est que, même parti d'un projet critique, tel est le tempérament du romancier... et tel fut le bain des réalités montréalaises concrètes d'où l'oeuvre est née [...].⁴

Particularly significant is how Moishe's attitude towards modern industrial society compares with the views of the

³Pierre de Grandpré, Dix ans de vie littéraire au Canada français (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1966), p. 136. This is the title of his chapter on Yves Thériault's Aaron.

⁴Ibid., p. 136.

traditional French-Canadian worker. Both find it extremely difficult to participate actively in the vibrant industrial society with the traditional values they hold:

"C'est tellement compliqué, dit Moishe, d'être Juif orthodoxe, et d'avoir tout de même à suivre le rythme de la vie moderne. Certains Juifs ont préféré accommoder la religion à leur travail, à leur soif de richesse. D'autres, comme moi, croient que la fidélité aux Lois vaut mieux que toute ambition, et reste le choix le plus méritoire. Pour préserver la Foi, le moyen des anciennes générations est encore le plus sûr: préservons la continuité du travail. [...] Dans le coeur: le Père et le respect que nous lui devons. Dans les doigts: l'habileté transmise, et le fils qui suit les traces de ses aînés.. Voilà exactement le moyen de survie, pournous."⁵

It is a difference of approach to modern industrial society that produces conflict between the generations in the Quebec working class. The dissatisfied young Quebec workers clashed with traditionalists over their refusal to adopt the established values that had permitted their parents to come to terms with inadequate living and working conditions. If they were to achieve success, the idealistic workers felt obliged to innovate their own set of personal values. Ambition, self-esteem, and hope are three fundamental personal values required before the determined worker can achieve success in the industrial society of Quebec.

The personal value of greatest significance is ambition. It is important because it produces the eager and sometimes inordinate desire for advancement, honour, power, fame, and wealth. It became the motivating force

⁵Yves Thériault, Aaron (Québec: Institut Littéraire du Québec, 1954; Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1965), p. 58.

in the working-class milieu. This aspiration can be realized only by a sustained personal struggle. As Florentine Lacasse realized, "s'échapper, elle seule, de leur vie, c'était déjà beaucoup, c'était déjà très difficile."³¹ Unattractive parental models and the impoverished conditions of their class motivated young workers to abandon the traditional proletarian values and seek material, cultural and spiritual enrichment.

As Vallières observes in Nègres blancs d'Amérique, the working-class adolescent "cherchera souvent, par la réussite individuelle, à se faire admettre dans la classe bourgeoise, et cela au risque de trahir les siens."³² The priesthood was the traditional port of entry into the bourgeoisie for underprivileged French-Canadian boys. If the seminarian became aware at any stage of his studies that he did not have a religious vocation, he could generally transfer into one of the liberal professions, such as law. Careers in engineering or finance became popular among working-class adolescents who held a regular job during the day and attended evening classes. Some individualists of proletarian background even chose to become writers.

In his study, "Aspects of Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel," Shek notes that "Lemelin's novels are all set in Quebec City and deal with one major theme: the unsuccessful attempt by gifted youth from the city's working-class families to carve out for themselves a creative

³¹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 109.

³²Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, p. 111.

outstanding characters in "La Comédie humaine": "'Va, nouveau Rastignac [dit l'abbé Voltaire], à toi Québec. Tu vaincras.'"¹²

Material, cultural and spiritual impoverishment were the ills that the vast majority of young workers attempted to overcome. However, not all young people are as impatient nor as ambitious as Pierre Boisjoly. The principal desire of most of the young ladies is to avoid the fate of many poor working-class mothers. This desire arose as a result of the dismal portrait of motherhood they received at home. From behind the lunch counter where she worked as a waitress, Florentine Lacasse frequently thought of her mother, Rosa-Anna. What she saw "la plongeait dans la détresse quotidienne."¹³

[...] Elle apercevait la vie de sa mère comme un long voyage gris, terne, que jamais, elle, Florentine, n'accomplirait; et c'était comme si, aujourd'hui, elles eussent en quelque sorte à se faire des adieux. Peut-être ici même leurs routes étaient-elles en train de se séparer. Florentine, en tout cas, entrevoyait un écart inévitable. A certains êtres la menace de l'éloignement est nécessaire pour les rendre attentifs à leurs propres sentiments; ainsi elle s'aperçut au même moment qu'elle aimait sa mère.¹⁴

Florentine resolved that she would not endure the hardships that her mother accepted with resignation. "'Moi,' she exclaimed, 'j'aurai pas de misère comme sa mère.'"¹⁵ Jacqueline Malo who longed to become someone other than "une fille des factories de cotons, comme les soeurs de

¹² Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, pp. 59-60.

¹³ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 20.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

ses amies,"¹⁶ was not as definite as Florentine about her future. Although she admired her mother for her courage and perseverance, Jacqueline was as revolted as her counterpart in Bonheur d'occasion by the image of motherhood she represented:

Jamais [Aurélie Malo] ne se plaignait, jamais elle n'élevait la voix. Elle revenait chez elle fatiguée de sa journée pour se remettre aussitôt à l'ouvrage, souvent jusqu'à minuit. Le lendemain, tout était à recommencer, et le surlendemain de même. Jacqueline admirait sa mère, mais elle se révoltait à la pensée qu'elle avait peut-être là l'image de sa vie.¹⁷

Although she did not verbalize her intention, "[en] redoublant alors d'efforts dans ses études,"¹⁸ Jacqueline demonstrated that she and Florentine shared similar goals.

Though the proletarian male was not confronted with the prospect of following in his mother's footsteps, he was as affected as his female counterpart by the kind of life his mother led. For example, in Pierre le magnifique, the hero became angry when he realized that his mother "n'avait jamais eu le temps d'être heureuse, excepté à ces parties de bingo où elle trouvait une furtive détente à l'angoisse du lendemain."¹⁹ He rebelled against her lack of vision and the resignation with which she accepted her fate.

C'était sa mère, cette femme de cinquante ans, bornée, ne comprenant rien à l'idéal, heureuse devant un plancher luisant à cause d'elle, dont la seule ambition apparente était d'être assurée jusqu'à sa mort de trois repas par jour et de quelques dollars qui lui permettaient, deux soirs par semaine, de se joindre à de bavardes commères aux parties de bingo paroissiales.²⁰

¹⁶Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 31.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 54-55.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁹Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 37.

²⁰Ibid., p. 33.

Gisèle Lafrenière in La Bagarre experienced similar feelings regarding her parents.

Ses parents, eux, ne connaissaient pas autre chose. Bill avait quitté l'école après sa quatrième année. Et Mme. Lafrenière avait habité la campagne jusqu'à l'âge de quinze ans. Mais elle, Gisèle, savait que tout le monde ne vivait pas de cette façon. Il y avait des adolescents comme elle qui n'étaient pas obligées d'acheter à crédit, de transformer une robe quatre ou cinq fois et d'avaler les insultes d'une Madame Turgeon.²¹

She was determined that "d'une façon ou d'une autre, elle s'évaderait de ce milieu."²² As well as being revolted by the portrait of motherhood her mother presented, Jacqueline Malo was also influenced by the hopelessness and mediocrity that characterized her family's existence.

La vie morne des siens, vie sans but, sans espoir, ne pouvait être la sienne. Jeannette, elle, était née pour moisir entre ces murs humides, ces meubles délabrés. Sa mère pouvait se résigner à cette triste existence sans chercher à savoir si elle était heureuse. Ses frères étaient satisfaits s'ils avaient donné plus de taloches qu'ils n'en avaient reçu. Elle-même n'était pas faite pour cette médiocrité.²³

Traditional parental roles were often rejected by ambitious members of the proletariat because they symbolize the misery and poverty that is the destiny of many in the working class.

Workers who subscribe to the personal value of ambition do not always condemn their parents. Often, it is realized that they are probably doing their best in a hopeless situation. Instead, the idealist blames the drab

²¹Bessette, La Bagarre, p. 82. Madame Turgeon is the confectionary store operator where Gisèle is often asked by her parents to purchase groceries on credit.

²²Ibid., p. 82.

²³Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 286.

house or the poor surroundings in which he lives. Elise Velder, for example, was determined that she would not remain a maid in her mother's boardinghouse. "Il la lui fallait, cette évasion. Elle n'en pouvait plus de respirer ainsi repliée sur elle-même."²⁴ Odette Marier in Le Feu dans l'amiante, after escaping from the clutches of her fanatic mother, revealed that it had always been her desire to flee "le trou noir de la maison."²⁵ Florentine Lacasse often displayed her aversion for the material poverty surrounding her. "[Florentine] s'ennuyait dans cette pièce silencieuse. Et plus que l'ennui encore, la haine de ce pauvre logis, comme un clos où venait mourir toutes leur tentatives d'évasion, la tourmentait."²⁶ Ambitious workers hate the material poverty of their milieu because it breeds despair.

Working-class people can also suffer from cultural impoverishment. Denis Boucher in Au pied de la pente douce, perhaps because of his ambition to become a writer, was acutely aware of the cultural mediocrity of his class. He could not contain his revulsion on one occasion during an amateur presentation at the parish hall. "[Denis] désira se trouver ailleurs, dans un éden où il ne connaîtrait personne, où il n'aurait qu'à se plaindre lui-même, ou plutôt à plaindre son passé."²⁷ Angered by the actors and

²⁴Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 59.

²⁵Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 131.

²⁶roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 147.

²⁷Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 71.

spectators alike, he marched out of the hall. "Cette médiocrité qu'il venait de biffer par sa fuite, ces bicoques étendues à ses pieds, moins laides à cause de l'obscurité, c'étaient des mauvais souvenirs, c'était la vie quotidienne avec ses petites choses."²⁸ The narrator continues:

Boucher se débattait en vain contre ce "quelque chose" qui le dénonçait au néant, d'en haut. Le passé se pressa devant ses yeux, significatif. La paroisse le trahissait d'une façon autre qu'il n'avait cru. Ce n'était pas par l'amour, mais par une sorte de séquestration. Boucher était la victime de la somnolence malheureuse d'une classe [...].²⁹

The cultural poverty of the working class which severely affects Denis Boucher has a detrimental effect upon other ambitious young people as well. Pierre Boisjoly in Pierre le magnifique was troubled by spiritual impoverishment. According to l'Abbé Lippé, Pierre's quest for greatness is misguided:

"Ne sens-tu pas que le Minotaure que tu cherches n'est pas le vrai? Tu le vois divers, ondoyant; il s'appelle amour et ambition. Mais non, Pierre, le vrai Minotaure, il est au sein du catholicisme-même, il le ronge comme un immense cancer, il s'appelle la tiédeur, la médiocrité."³⁰

Many young workers examined in this chapter feel the effect of spiritual poverty, although not in a religious sense. Their quest for spiritual enrichment is manifested by an ardent desire for refinement in thought and feelings.

Ambition, the most important personal value, is always partially directed away from the poverty that exists

²⁸ Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 72.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 301.

³⁰ Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 59.

in the working-class milieu. This aspiration can be realized only by a sustained personal struggle. As Florentine Lacasse realized, "s'échapper, elle seule, de leur vie, c'était déjà beaucoup, c'était déjà très difficile."³¹ Unattractive parental models and the impoverished conditions of their class motivated young workers to abandon the traditional proletarian values and seek material, cultural and spiritual enrichment.

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³¹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 109.

³²Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, p. 111.

and successful career."³³ Ovide Plouffe, "habillé comme un comptable,"³⁴ often disguised the fact that he was a mere shoe-factory worker. Misunderstood by his co-workers, he was a snob who had little patience for people who displayed a proletarian mentality, especially with regard to music and literature.

Toutes ces incompréhensions des belles choses inspiraient à Ovide un dégoût si profond pour le monde d'aujourd'hui. qu'il songeait, depuis quelques mois, à se retirer au monastère des Pères Blancs d'Afrique, où il se voyait sans déplaisir, vêtu de la robe immaculée, convertissant, baptisant, absolvant les nègres, et jouissant du respect et des égards dus au noble état de la prêtrise.³⁵

Unlike Ovide, who in his adult years considered the priesthood as a means of escaping from the mediocrity of his working-class neighbourhood, for the hero of Pierre le magnifique: "l'idée d'être prêtre l'avait possédé, absolument, pendant des années et, au delà des oeillères de son projet d'apostolat, il n'avait rien vu, rien senti."³⁶ An opportunity to make a great deal of money came his way when Noiraud offered to make him a full partner in the lumber company he was establishing.

A cette proposition, toute l'âme de Pierre se détourna. Que lui importaient ces sortes de projets, auxquels tant d'hommes donnent toute leur vie, qui est si courte. Une seule ambition comptait à ses yeux, une ambition indéfinissable qui l'avait d'abord poussé à se diriger vers la prêtrise et qui en un jour s'était transformée en une rage féroce contre un monde méchant et qu'il s'était juré de battre sur son propre terrain.³⁷

³³Shek, "Aspects of Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel (1944-1964)," p. 203.

³⁴Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 7.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 8-9.

³⁶Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 39.

³⁷Ibid., p. 86.

However, he failed in his bid to become magnificent.

"Pierre also fails to achieve sexual love, and in the end is reabsorbed into the bosom of Mother Church, which has inculcated in him feelings of guilt that come violently to the fore when Fernande utters a reminder about the sacrament of marriage."³⁸ The novel ends with a description of Pierre's return to the city and his ideal, Fernande, and his gaze focused upon the large door of the seminary. "It is as if Lemelin were saying ironically that this is the only road to power for the poor, who must abandon all dreams of finding happiness and social justice."³⁹ Like Pierre's failure to succeed in the secular world, Ovide Plouffe's endeavor to seek the respect of his fellow man by joining a missionary order came to nothing. He married Rita Toulouse, and a few years after, he was "malheureux, car le mariage n'avait rien résolu."⁴⁰

The priesthood does not hold the same fascination for the ambitious Montrealer as for Lemelin's Quebec city heroes. Most proletarian adolescents from Montréal opt for the liberal professions. Frédéric Gagnon in Elise Velder, explained to Elise that he will become a lawyer. "Il expliqua d'abord que, de toute façon, cet avenir ne serait pas celui qu'avait ambitionné sa mère, qui le voulait prêtre. A défaut, il avait opté pour le droit."⁴¹ Though

³⁸Shek, "Aspects of Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel (1944-1964)," pp. 277-278.

³⁹Ibid., p. 284.

⁴⁰Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 460.

⁴¹Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 39.

still a student, Frédéric was confident that he would succeed in becoming a first-rate lawyer, capable of competing with Montreal's best legal minds.

A venir jusqu'à ces derniers temps son ambition se bornait à ouvrir un bureau dans sa ville natale. Mais aujourd'hui, --et ses yeux brillèrent d'une douce émotion--aujourd'hui qu'il connaissait un peu mieux la métropole, il se demandait s'il ne préférerait pas ouvrir un bureau à Montréal, bien que des avocats, on en comptât déjà tout plein la rue Saint-Jacques.⁴²

Gagnon was not only interested in money. He also sought recognition from the other members of his profession.

Having a penchant for mechanics, Jean Lévesque in Bonheur d'occasion studied at night to become an engineer. He was not only driven by the assurance of a well-paid position after graduation:

Quelques années encore, et il aurait son diplôme d'ingénieur. Et alors, le monde trop bête pour reconnaître déjà son mérite en aurait plein les yeux. On verrait alors qui c'était Jean Lévesque. Lui-même, plus tard, lorsqu'il se retournerait vers cette période présente de sa vie, il saurait qu'elle avait contenu en germe tous les éléments puissants de son succès et qu'elle n'avait pas été, comme cela pouvait le paraître, misérable et inutile.⁴³

Jean's aspirations resemble those of Yves Thériault's young hero in Aaron. Although he has not yet decided upon a specific profession, Aaron limited his choice to "une condition d'existence, un moyen d'être, de devenir, mais sans que cela se nomme banquier ou roi, savant ou dictateur."⁴⁴ After he became a clerk in a stockbroker's office, his aims

⁴²Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 39.

⁴³Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 24.

⁴⁴Thériault, Aaron, pp. 84-85.

defined themselves more sharply, as his disappointed grandfather discovered: "'J'ai un but. Mon travail me plaît. J'y apprends comment devenir riche. Un jour, peut-être que je serai le maître du monde.'"⁴⁵ Monetary aspirations and the desire for recognition and power go together because it is possible for a successful person of proletarian background to be denied entry into the bourgeoisie.⁴⁶ Pierre Vallières notes that: "[...] la bourgeoisie ne peut admettre dans son sein qu'un nombre infime de 'parvenues', car autrement elle risquerait de perdre le contrôle de l'exploitation des masses de travailleurs."⁴⁷ Aaron remarked that even if the successful workers fail to realize all their goals, they are better off rich than poor. "'Pauvre et opprimé, c'est un bien dur destin. Riche et opprimé... Tu vois, la richesse achète les compensations..."⁴⁸

Two of the workers studied aspire to become writers: Jules Lebeuf of La Bagarre, and Denis Boucher who appears in Lemelin's three novels. Their aspirations are similar to those of the ambitious workers just examined. They want money, prestige, and power. While still a teen-ager, Denis in Au pied de la pente douce never imagined that after becoming a writer he would have financial worries. In fact, it was precisely during moments of anxiety that he imagined himself

⁴⁵Thériault, Aaron, p. 131.

⁴⁶Robert Choquette made this point one of the central themes of Elise Velder.

⁴⁷Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, p. 111.

⁴⁸Thériault, Aaron, p. 103.

in his chosen profession. "Cette pensée d'écrire un jour dissipa toutes ses inquiétudes."⁴⁹ However, money was not the principal reason behind his decision to become a writer. He wanted to guide French-Canadian society out of the nineteenth century:

"Je crierai la faiblesse de notre jeunesse, la culture sentimentale et bornée dont on la gâve. Nous sommes bourrés de trucs romantiques de l'autre siècle pour affronter la vie. Et l'on est bon qu'à faire pâmer la première blanchisseuse venue."⁵⁰

However, to realize this goal, he had to acquire power. In his imagination, "Denis [...] rêvait d'une révolution dont il serait chef."⁵¹ Jules Lebeuf's ambitions are less grandiose than Denis Boucher's desire to become a revolutionary leader. "Ecrire des romans lisibles, capables de captiver le lecteur pendant une soirée, Lebeuf n'en demandait pas davantage pour l'instant. Ce serait au moins un commencement."⁵² On the long term, however, Lebeuf's "rêves littéraires," include a "vague désir d'aider ses compatriotes, de réveiller l'âme montréalaise."⁵³

Workers who subscribe to the personal value of ambition do so for two reasons. Firstly, they long to escape

⁴⁹Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 153.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 195-196.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 175.

⁵²Bessette, La Bagarre, p. 25.

⁵³Ibid., p. 231.

from the poverty of their milieu. Secondly, they strive for wealth, power and a position of prestige. The ambitious male worker is confident of becoming successful if he acquires an education, remains single, and renounces his impoverished background. The most ambitious go so far as to repudiate their French-Canadian identity.

Study was the principal means employed by the ambitious worker to achieve success. For example, Jean Lévesque in Bonheur d'occasion was proud to be more than what his friends imagined; a carefree playboy:

Le vrai Jean Lévesque était tout autre. C'était un silencieux, un têtù, un travailleur surtout. C'était celui-là qui lui plaisait davantage au fond, cet être pratique qui aimait le travail, non pas pour lui-même, mais pour l'ambition qu'il décuple, pour les succès qu'il prépare, ce jeune homme sans rêve qui s'était donné au travail comme à une revanche.⁵⁴

Jean wanted to be an engineer. During the day he was employed as a machinist at the Montreal Metal Works, and at night he studied, allowing himself only one evening of leisure per week. "[...] Une chose lui paraissait vraiment importante: l'emploi judicieux de son temps. Et jusqu'ici il l'avait consacré sans sacrifices pénibles, sans regret même, à l'étude opiniâtre et acharnée."⁵⁵ Frédéric Gagnon, the law student in Elise Velder, was very concerned with achieving good grades, even to the neglect of his health.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁶"Il sortait d'une grippe qui l'avait forcé à garder la chambre, [...] et d'autant plus longue à guérir, qu'à cause des examens prochains il s'était obstiné à ne pas fermer ses livres." Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 136.

After he abandoned formal schooling for full-time employment in a stockbrokerage firm, the hero of Aaron registered in an evening business course.

Le jeune homme s'était inscrit à des cours du soir. Il étudiait les secrets bancaires, les méthodes plus poussées de la finance. Bien résolu à devenir grand en ce labeur qu'il avait choisi, il appliquait tous ses instants à parfaire ses connaissances, à s'établir solidement par ce monde qu'il devrait fréquenter toute sa vie.⁵⁷

Like Jean Lévesque, Aaron always put his time to judicious use. "Ceux des soirs qui restaient libres, il les passait à la maison, à lire ou à étudier."⁵⁸ Proletarians who aspire after a middle-class profession regard education as the most efficacious method of realizing their goal. In the mid-fifties, the authors of The Tremblay Report regarded this trend towards professional training as detrimental to the Quebec educational system, stating that:

the objective of education has become efficiency. The accent has to be put on those dispositions of mind and character which success, as understood in our time, requires; these include the ambition to succeed, a spirit of initiative, resourcefulness and cleverness. But forgotten and even considered detrimental are the Christian virtues [...]; the accent is laid on professional training to the detriment of culture. Thus arises conflict between education of a Christian and human inspiration as taught in families and in schools, and of the requirements of the social milieu and of the culture which is lived.⁵⁹

Although working-class girls generally are not career-minded, many of them work very hard at school

⁵⁷Thériault, Aaron, p. 149.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Kwávnick, (ed.), The Tremblay Report, p. 60.

because they know that education can mean escape from poverty. Jacqueline Malo was particularly diligent towards the end of each academic year. "[...] Jacqueline se plongea avec frénésie dans la préparation des examens. [...] Elle avait déjà résolu de se tirer par l'étude de sa condition présente."⁶⁰ She is also aware that if she was to avoid the fate of becoming a textile worker, that:

[...] il lui faudrait sans doute continuer ses études après son cours primaire, mais elle avait confiance, si elle réussissait exceptionnellement en classe, de se voir offrir, par les religieuses, une bourse lui permettant d'entreprendre un cours avancé.⁶¹

Cisèle Lafrenière in La Bagarre shared Jacqueline's aspirations:

Elle voulait continuer ses études après sa neuvième année. Elle voulait sortir de ce milieu misérable où l'on parlait constamment de comptes à régler, de prochaine paye et d'augmentation des prix. Deux de ses compagnes devaient aller au pensionnat l'an prochain. Elle avait décidé qu'elle y entrerait aussi, coûte que coûte. La perspective d'aller travailler à la manufacture de boîtes de conserve comme ses compagnes moins fortunées, l'horripilait.⁶²

Whereas working-class males expect to work in their chosen profession after successfully completing the educational requirements, ambitious proletarian girls do not share this confidence. Nevertheless, education is regarded as a means of escaping from the poverty of their environment.

The notion of personal freedom is a contentious point which divides the young men from the ambitious women. The aspiring male is constantly on his guard against obstacles

⁶⁰ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 31.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Pessette, La Bagarre, p. 79.

that might impede his professional and social advancement.

Women of proletarian background are considered risks because

a majority of them want marriage, a state regarded as

restricting by the male. Jean Lévesque recognized that

Florentine Lacasse cherished this ambition from the very

beginning of their relationship. "'Ces petites filles-là,

quand ça s'accroche, ça s'accroche bien,'"⁶³ he states

contemptuously, angry at himself for having weakened, and

asked her for a date. His plans for the immediate future

did not include marriage, as his reaction to Florentine's

avowal of love reveals: "'Je suis pas ton ami de garçon.

C'est pas parce que je t'ai fait de la façon au magasin

que t'es allée te mettre des idées dans la tête. Parce que

moi, le mariage, tu sais... "'⁶⁴ Denis Boucher in Au pied

de la pente douce held similar views regarding marriage:

Lui, il ne voulait pas se faire embobiner. [Les jeunes filles] lui étaient devenues des ennemies, des menaces pour son but d'indéfini. Convaincu que le mariage serait la geôle de sa haute destinée, il considérerait un visage de femme comme une épitaphe promenée au hasard des fréquentations. Et Denis prônait la liberté, rejoignait les chefs-d'oeuvre, s'y incorporait, et ignorait la savoureuse spontanéité de ses propres ressources.⁶⁵

Jean Lévesque shared Denis' desire to remain totally free

to pursue his goal. Shortly after having intimate relations

with Florentine, "[...] Jean Lévesque marcha au hasard, saisi

de haine contre lui-même. Non à cause du visage de souffrance

⁶³Poy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 23.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 167.

⁶⁵Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 54.

de Florentine, qui flottait devant son regard, mais parce qu'il éprouvait le sentiment très net d'avoir irrémédiablement engagé sa liberté."⁶⁶ Jean's concern is not restricted to the possibility that Florentine might become pregnant. "Ce dont il voulait maintenant se dégager, plus encore que du souvenir de cette soirée, c'était du sentiment exaspérant qu'il était aimé de Florentine."⁶⁷ To safeguard his freedom, Jean vowed that he would never see Florentine again. He remained true to his promise. The extent to which emotional attachments can adversely affect career-minded individuals can be observed in La Bagarre, especially in the character of Jules Lebeuf. He blamed his common-law wife for impeding his progress as a creative writer.

"C'est Margot qui est responsable de cette situation." C'était elle qui, par ses constantes récriminations, le forçait à noctambuler. Autrement, il aurait écrit. "J'ai toujours mieux travaillé le soir." Maintenant toutes ses soirées étaient perdues. Marguerite était là, comme une sangsue, qui lui suçait son énergie, sa tranquillité d'esprit. "Il faut que je la plaque. Ça fait trop longtemps que ça dure." Il se répétait ça au moins une fois par semaine depuis cinq mois.⁶⁸

The question of remaining single reflects not only an intense desire on the part of the worker to remain unattached until he achieves success. It also demonstrates strong individualistic tendencies, not unlike those experienced by the peasants who pursue personal values. Jean Lévesque manifests his individuality best when he is entirely alone.

⁶⁶Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 184.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 187.

⁶⁸Bessette, La Bagarre, p. 23.

Il revenait vers les brumes du faubourg, léger, sifflotant, heureux, comme s'il eût reçu confirmation de ses ambitions secrètes. Jamais comme en ces moments-là il ne se félicitait aussi chaudement d'être seul, libre, entièrement libre, sans famille et sans amitié trop exigeante qui eût pu l'entraîner hors de son plan tout tracé.⁶⁹

Egocentric tendencies sometimes forewarn of an impending revolt against society and the established values. Denis Boucher in Les Plouffe shows this temperament in his dealings with the workers of "L'Action Chrétienne", who were disloyal to him during the strike. The only reward he received for leading the strikers was the scar he carried. When Father Folbèche sought his support during the campaign to discourage young French Canadians from enlisting in the army, Denis refused:

"Regardez! Regardez!" cried Denis, showing his scar. "C'est pour la race que j'ai attrapé ça. Non seulement les nationalistes ne m'ont pas défendu, mais ils m'ont dénoncé, les lâches. 'L'Action Chrétienne' m'a mis à la porte, et vous m'avez reproché mon audace quand vous la pensiez inutile. Et bien! c'est fini. Mon parti politique, maintenant, c'est moi. Ce qui m'intéresse, c'est de me tailler un avenir. Un monde nouveau commence et je serai avec les forts. [...] J'ai vu trop de sacrifices aveugles et inutiles faits au nom d'un idéal truqué."⁷⁰

Denis Boucher's rebellion is more than a momentary outburst. During the conscription crisis, he approached Ovide Plouffe with a scheme to make easy money:

"Je te parlais de faire de l'argent. T'as remarqué qu'avec nos idées de nationalistes, on est toujours resté pauvre. Et l'éducation qu'on a reçu dans la paroisse nous jette un tas de remords dans les jambes. [...] Sais-tu à quoi j'ai pensé? Si, tous les deux, on formait une agence de service secret, une sorte d'Intelligence Service? [...] Oui, un service secret. On pourrait s'offrir de travailler pour le Ministère.

⁶⁹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 24-25.

⁷⁰Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 300.

de la Défense. Ça paie. Il s'agirait de tenir les autorités au courant de tous les mouvements subversifs qui ont pour but de saper l'effort de guerre. Il s'agirait de se mêler aux nationalistes, aux fascistes, si tu aimes mieux, et de se tenir au courant de leurs activités et de leurs projets. C'est bien moins compliqué que de s'enrôler."⁷¹

Denis' self-centered aspirations differ only in degree from the egocentricity of other ambitious workers. Some achieved success by renouncing their French-Canadian background.

Robert Choquette examines the rejection of one's origins in an important incident in Elise Velder. Madame Régina, a high-fashion designer, asked Elise to model her dresses at a fashion show and, without the model's permission or knowledge, introduced her as Elise Van Velder, a Belgian visitor belonging to the élite of Brussels society. "Ce succès qu'[Elise] avait attribué à l'élégance des créations Régina et aussi, sans doute, à la bienveillance des spectateurs à son égard, elle le comprenait, maintenant! C'était grâce à une personnalité usurpée qu'elle avait conquis ses lauriers! Et il était trop tard pour protester."⁷² That Elise have a foreign identity foisted upon her is contrary to the usual pattern of novels dealing with ambitious workers who seek advancement. Roland Parenteau, a political economist, comments upon one of the pragmatic reasons for this trend: "Large enterprises, whether American or British in origin, brought with them not only foreign capital and techniques, but also foreign managerial and technical personnel"⁷³

⁷¹Lemelin, Les Plouffe, pp. 396-397.

⁷²Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 86.

⁷³Parenteau, "The Impact of Industrialization in Quebec," The Canadian Economy: Selected Readings, p. 516.

Although successive generations of foreigners frequently carried on in the managerial ranks, some French Canadians sometimes succeeded in taking over **these** positions. The price of success was that they identify with the foreign employer, subscribing to his values as well as his goals. Jean Lévesque identified with the patrons of Montreal Metal Works even in his manner of dress.

Le vêtement d'étoffe anglaise ne rappelait pas les magasins du faubourg. Il lui apparut que ce seul vêtement indiquait un caractère, un genre d'existence comme privilégiés. Non que le jeune homme fût vêtu avec recherche; au contraire, il affectait une certaine nonchalance; sa cravate était à peine nouée, ses mains quelque peu tachées de cambouis [...].⁷⁴

The way Jean wore his clothes reflected attitudes which were foreign to the people of Saint-Henri.

Mais justement, ce manque de soin dans les petites détails donnait plus d'importance aux choses coûteuses qu'il portait: la montre-bracelet dont le cadran miroitait à chacun de ses gestes, le foulard de riche soie enroulé négligemment autour de son cou, les gants de fine peau sortant un peu de la poche de son complet.⁷⁵

Unlike Elise Velder who, for a time, was not conscious of the foreign identity she had acquired, Jean Lévesque worked at changing his image, because he wanted to become more closely identifiable with the foreign interests who controlled the Quebec economy.

Because much of the industry in Quebec is owned and controlled by English-speaking interests, the English language was given special status until passage of Bill 22.

⁷⁴Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 18.

⁷⁵Ibid.

This fact influenced ambitious individuals like Aaron, who at the age of eleven resented conversing with his grandfather in Yiddish, the language spoken in their home:

"Why do you speak Yiddish to me? Isn't English good enough? Why don't you speak white, like everybody else around here?"⁷⁶

When he wrote to his friend Emmanuel, Jean Lévesque demonstrated that he had a high regard for the English language: "D'ailleurs Jean lui avait écrit un court billet pour l'avertir qu'il quittait définitivement le faubourg et acceptait un emploi à Saint-Paul-l'Ermité. Il avait ajouté en guise de post-scriptum: 'Out for the big things.'"⁷⁷ Once the ambitious proletarian renounced his language, he was almost entirely assimilated.

Assimilation into the culture of the employer was often the price that the worker paid for success. The dramatic personality changes that frequently occurred are described in Aaron. For example, Moishe remarks: "'Aaron est mort [...]. Je retourne à la maison, dit [Moishe]. Il y a un étranger qui habite là. Il dit se nommer Aaron. Je l'ai peut-être déjà connu. Je ne le connais plus..."⁷⁸ The final stage in renouncing one's background is the repudiation of one's name. Without the background, the traditional proletarian values, and the name to hold one back, it is felt that one can compete well with contenders from more privileged backgrounds for society's few prestigious

⁷⁶Thériault, Aaron, p. 28.

⁷⁷Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 261.

⁷⁸Thériault, Aaron, p. 148.

jobs. "Aaron a changé de nom... il est allé travailler ailleurs... Comme on ne sait pas quel est son nouveau nom... alors on ne peut le trouver..."⁷⁹ Although Gabrielle Roy did not describe Jean's outcome quite so graphically, he too advanced to a more promising position and was not heard of again by his friends.

The ambitious worker relied upon diligent study, personal freedom and often a renunciation of the past to achieve success. The workingwoman disagreed with the worker's desire to remain single and emotionally unattached. Although some proletarian girls showed promise at school, a majority of these were forced to interrupt their schooling during the Depression to help provide for their families. The only path remaining open to them was to be courted by a distinguished young man who showed great promise of succeeding.

Some girls of proletarian background, like Florentine Lacasse, never received much formal education. A lunch-counter waitress in a department store, Florentine longed for an escape from the poverty that surrounded her, if only for an evening. Jean Lévesque attracted her because he was "si différent des jeunes gens qu'elle servait au magasin, des petits commis ennuyeux [...] et même beaucoup mieux que les jeunes gens rencontrés dans les cafés du quartier. [...] Oui, il était bien différent de tous ceux-là qu'elle entrevoyait au hasard de sa vie frémissante et vide."⁸⁰ Jean became a symbol for Florentine, representing

⁷⁹Thériault, Aaron, p. 157.

⁸⁰Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 13.

the superior living conditions she could realize in the future:

Jean... il était peut-être entré dans sa vie afin qu'elle vît bien, le premier tourbillon apaisé, toute la laideur, toute la misère qui l'entouraient. Ainsi, jamais elle n'avait remarqué comme aujourd'hui la dolente résignation écrite sur les visages des pauvres attablés. Jamais d'ailleurs elle ne s'était sentie si près d'eux et si furieuse de cette ressemblance! Jamais toutes ces odeurs de graisse chaude, de vanille, ne l'avaient autant écoeurée! Et Jean s'en allait comme si son oeuvre était accomplie, et qu'il ne lui restait plus rien à faire ici... Mais Jean, c'était celui qu'il fallait suivre, jusqu'au bout, pour toujours. Jamais elle ne le laisserait s'échapper.⁸¹

However, Florentine did not succeed in winning Jean's affection. Though other suitors, like Emmanuel Létourneau, could assure her of a middle-class standard of living, they did not measure up to the ambitious Jean Lévesque in her eyes. At first, "chaque délicatesse qu'[Emmanuel] avait pour elle lui était motif de rancune. Elle ne prisait plus ses attentions. Encore un peu et elle les détesterait franchement, elle les repousserait comme une chose nuisible qui l'éloignait davantage de Jean."⁸² However, as a result of her sexual encounter with Lévesque, she became pregnant, and resigned herself to an uneventful life with Emmanuel.

Several ambitious working-class girls in the novels we have studied share Florentine's aspirations regarding the future. Lise Lévesque in Au pied de la pente douce was attracted to Denis Boucher because of the superior

⁸¹Poy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 101-102.

⁸²Ibid., p. 124.

qualities he displayed.

C'est Denis qui l'intriguait avec son air hautain. Les autres, maintenant qu'ils étaient propres et bien peignés, n'avaient plus l'originalité qui l'avait frappée. Pour une âme romantique comme la sienne, des héros qui avaient le souci de s'améliorer dès qu'ils se sentaient observés perdaient forcément de leur valeur. [...] Lise trouva cela médiocre, un vagabond endimanché.⁸³

The heroine of Elise Velder became very interested in the young student who boarded at the Velder home, because "[il] devenait un être supérieur aux autres, dans cette pension si vide de préoccupations intellectuelles."⁸⁴ What impressed Elise about Frédéric Gagnon, "c'était son désir **d'évasion** vers l'étude."⁸⁵ However, after she met the wealthy Marcel Latour, Elise realized that it was not Frédéric she had loved, but the attributes that distinguished him from the other young men she knew: "Chose incroyable, inouïe: elle ne comprenait plus comment elle avait pu aimer ce garçon: Non, ce n'était pas lui qui avait charmé son cœur; ç'avait été, sous les traits de Frédéric Gagnon, n'importe quel jeune homme sensible et bien élevé."⁸⁶ From the novels she read, Gisèle Lafrenière in La Bagarre discovered that young men existed who could fulfill her romantic notions: "Elle savait qu'il était possible pour une jeune fille comme elle de rencontrer un beau jeune homme riche, courageux et distingué et de lui inspirer un amour profond. Car elle

⁸³ Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 61.

⁸⁴ Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 37.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 38.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

était belle, elle le savait."⁸⁷ Gisèle learned from novels what Florentine Lacasse and Elise Velder discovered from life.

Many working-class girls, like the heroine of Elise Velder entertained romantic fantasies. "Et puis, Marcel était venu... Ce bonheur dont elle avait dit qu'il était trop romanesque pour être vrai, rien en ce moment ne lui semblait plus vrai; il était la seule réalité possible, la texture même de la vie."⁸⁸ Before she met Gilbert Sergent, Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne, imagined participating in the gay activities at the Mount Royal Hotel.

Jacqueline fixait de ses grands yeux ces gens riches. Ne se retrouverait-elle jamais derrière le décor fascinant où ces gens pénétraient? Elle rêvait. Elle se voyait aux côtés d'un garçon en habit de soirée gravissant les marches du temple. Vivement, elle secouait la tête pour s'arracher à ses illusions insensées.⁸⁹

However, her dreams became reality the evening Gilbert invited her to a ball at the hotel of her dreams.

Quand elle revivrait cette soirée, elle ne serait pas tentée de s'écrier: "Viande, que j'ai eu du fun!" Elle penserait: "Pour un soir, j'ai été pleinement heureuse, loin de la réalité." Qu'elle était loin des siens. Loin de l'Est. Loin de tout ce qu'elle connaissait.⁹⁰

In La Bagarre, Gisèle Lafrenière found that the man who came closest to her ideal was Augustin Sillery.

⁸⁷ Bessette, La Bagarre, pp. 79-80.

⁸⁸ Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 137.

⁸⁹ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 58.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 195-196.

Ambition is the most significant value to which young workers subscribe. The men are confident that they will succeed if they study diligently, remain free from emotional attachments, and steer clear of marriage. Frequently, some workers feel compelled to divest themselves of their proletarian background or their French-Canadian identity. Girls from working-class neighbourhoods, on the other hand, find deliverance from their impoverished condition in marriage. Their success or failure is dependent upon the willingness of the man to share the achievements of his pursuit of a better life.

A sense of one's own worth is essential for success, especially when one has been reared in a milieu where resignation is regarded as a virtue. Unlike the traditional proletarian value of pride where the aim is to achieve the same measure of success as one's equally underprivileged neighbour, the self-esteem of the aspiring young worker requires that he feel superior to his peers. The accomplishments of working-class youths, especially those realized in a school setting, often serve as a source of encouragement, motivating the student to pursue goals which his parents would never think of undertaking. In this context, society's efforts to impede individual progress is generally accompanied by a large measure of contempt for the poor and underprivileged. Society's disdain appears to be directly proportional to the degree of self-esteem the worker possesses, and his determination to succeed.

Gilbert lui avait révélé ce qu'il appelait la curiosité intellectuelle, curiosité innée chez elle et qui, sans lui, serait demeurée à l'état latent, car son milieu immédiat ne lui aurait jamais permis de découvrir les besoins de l'esprit. Gilbert lui avait montré le monde au-dessus du monde, le monde des idées.⁹³

Discerning young men often guided working-class girls towards new spiritual, intellectual, and emotional horizons.

Change is an inevitable by-product of education, as Jacqueline Malo discovered: "Gilbert avait transformé sa vie. Elle ne s'adaptait plus à n'importe quel milieu."⁹⁴ As a result, she began to think seriously of marriage.⁹⁵

The author of Au milieu la montagne remarks:

En plus de l'amour, la femme recherche toujours un avenir assuré. Sa passion sera un atout pour défendre sa sécurité acquise par le mariage. L'homme, au contraire, cherche encore plus un lit qu'un toit. Il se cramponnera moins que la femme à son toit, si le lit manque d'agrément. La femme trompée souffrira, mais souvent l'atteinte portée à sa sécurité la tourmentera tout autant que la trahison de son mari.⁹⁶

Like the ambitious man of working-class background who seeks his niche in a middle-class profession, proletarian girls aspire to the security they can realize in marriage.

Like the ambitious male, the female also wants to be accepted into the middle class. For example, it was the desire for the approval of the Latour family that impeded Marcel's engagement to Elise, as he explained to his mother:

⁹³viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 248.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 249.

⁹⁵Ibid., see p. 236.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 284.

"La grande preuve de la beauté d'âme [d'Elise], de son honnêteté, de sa valeur, c'est cette hésitation malgré les avantages matériels qu'elle s'assurerait en m'épousant. Une jeune fille moins sincère dirait: 'Tant pis! Si la mère s'objecte, tant pis pour elle!' Or, c'est tout le contraire qui arrive. (Les Velder mettent de côté les considérations matérielles et veulent d'abord s'assurer qu'Elise serait ici la bienvenue." 97

There is a great disparity in the opportunities that are presented to aspiring young workers, and those which exist for their female counterparts. The ambitious male can pursue a career, and his chances of success are excellent. However, to achieve the same good fortune, the working-class girl is dependent upon her ability to conquer the heart of the man who can turn her dreams into reality. Jacqueline Malo, Gisèle Lafrenière and Florentine Lacasse, all experienced bitter disappointment. When Jacqueline discovered that Gilbert had spurned her for a girl of his social class, she even contemplated suicide because, "elle allait retomber isolée dans la grande misère des siens." 98

Qu'allait-elle devenir sans Gilbert... Il lui avait fait entrevoir le monde intellectuel pour la rejeter dans son milieu terre-à-terre. Il lui avait appris l'amour charnel, pour l'abandonner aux bras d'un autre. Il lui avait entr'ouvert la porte d'un monde féerique pour la refermer sur elle. Des contes de fées et des châteaux. 99

It is interesting to note that many of the novels which describe the experiences of girls who endeavor to rise above their working-class condition by attempting an advantageous marriage end on a pessimistic note.

97 Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 265.

98 Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 249.

99 Ibid., p. 328.

Ambition is the most significant value to which young workers subscribe. The men are confident that they will succeed if they study diligently, remain free from emotional attachments, and steer clear of marriage. Frequently, some workers feel compelled to divest themselves of their proletarian background or their French-Canadian identity. Girls from working-class neighbourhoods, on the other hand, find deliverance from their impoverished condition in marriage. Their success or failure is dependent upon the willingness of the man to share the achievements of his pursuit of a better life.

A sense of one's own worth is essential for success, especially when one has been reared in a milieu where resignation is regarded as a virtue. Unlike the traditional proletarian value of pride where the aim is to achieve the same measure of success as one's equally underprivileged neighbour, the self-esteem of the aspiring young worker requires that he feel superior to his peers. The accomplishments of working-class youths, especially those realized in a school setting, often serve as a source of encouragement, motivating the student to pursue goals which his parents would never think of undertaking. In this context, society's efforts to impede individual progress is generally accompanied by a large measure of contempt for the poor and underprivileged. Society's disdain appears to be directly proportional to the degree of self-esteem the worker possesses, and his determination to succeed.

Often, it is youthful optimism that makes one proud of one's performance and self-confident about the future. During his adolescence, the attention that Denis received from the girls in his neighbourhood nourished his vanity, especially when the boys in his gang could witness it:

[...] Denis se mettait en évidence sur le bord du trottoir pour qu'elles l'aperçussent dans tous ses avantages, lui qui en avait un suprême: celui de ne pas s'occuper d'elles. Quelques-unes faisait glisser vers lui des clins d'oeil, tandis qu'il prenait un air avantageux, se retournait vers ses amis et leur disait: "As-tu vu?"¹⁰⁰

Ovide Plouffe's interest in opera made him feel superior to the working-class masses. He frequently apologized for his refined manners, thereby drawing attention to them: "Des types comme moi, Mademoiselle Toulouse, ça s'est trop occupé de choses intellectuelles, artistiques, comme la musique, la littérature, pour abandonner d'un seul coup la galanterie française, qui en est le résultat."¹⁰¹ In Bonheur d'occasion,

Jean Lévesque often relied upon the ignorance of the group at Emma Philibert's to reaffirm his own self-worth. "Une lassitude le gagnait, et il désira se mêler aux hommes, les écouter parler, saisir leurs contradictions, leur soumission et arriver ainsi à reconnaître encore une fois sa supériorité."¹⁰²

Likewise, Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne was gratified whenever she could boast about her boyfriend from Outremont: "Si Jacqueline s'amusa à rendre les autres jalouses, ce n'était pas méchanceté de sa part. Elle agissait

¹⁰⁰Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 58.

¹⁰¹Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 37.

¹⁰²Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 36.

ainsi pour se prouver à elle-même, inconsciemment, qu'elle jouissait de certains avantages que d'autres pouvaient envier."¹⁰³

In one of the frequent sociological observations of Au milieu la montagne, Roger Viau remarks: "L'être humain est ainsi fait qu'il ne tire pas une satisfaction complète de ses seuls talents, il lui faut l'estime de ses semblables, et l'estime ne se manifesterá jamais aussi sincèrement que par l'envie."¹⁰⁴

Pride also includes a sense of personal dignity and self-respect, sentiments often experienced as a result of one's accomplishments. In the novels we have examined, these feelings are often examined in the context of the school, where, as a result of diligent study, an under-privileged student has succeeded in distinguishing himself from his classmates. In Au milieu la montagne, Jacqueline "[qui] souffrait de ne jamais posséder rien de neuf,"¹⁰⁵ was gratified when Mother Superior told her that she had obtained highest honours in the seventh grade.

Jacqueline lève la tête encore plus haut. Elle a un sourire qui ajoute à son air de défi. Toutes ses craintes sont dissipées d'un coup. C'est une joie orgueilleuse qui monte en elle. [...] Elle aura ce prix tant convoité de la septième année. Elle voit déjà sa mère assise au premier rang à la distribution des prix, comme le sont toujours les parents des enfants à l'honneur. Ce qu'elle était heureuse!¹⁰⁶

The prize meant a great deal because it gave Jacqueline

¹⁰³ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 191.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

the self-confidence and determination to pursue her ambitions more vigorously than before.

There are many examples where hard-working proletarians are put down because they are successful. In the case just cited, Mother Superior intentionally humiliated Jacqueline by condescendingly offering her a silk dress that had been donated by an ex-student, "pour nos enfants pauvres."¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Mother Superior decided to teach Jacqueline some principles of humility, since she refused to accept charity:

"Vous êtes seulement une ingrante. Il y a des gens charitables qui daignent s'occuper de vous, et au lieu d'être reconnaissante, vous vous rendez détestable au possible. Vous n'avez pas les moyens, ma fille, de refuser ce qu'on vous offre. Jacqueline, si vous persistez dans votre attitude orgueilleuse, je vous enlèverai le prix. Je saurai bien vous dompter, mon enfant."¹⁰⁸

Jacqueline's reputation was made. She was condemned by her teachers for feeling justly proud of her accomplishments:

Jacqueline remporta les premiers prix de la huitième année, mais on ne lui offrit pas de lire l'adresse comme le veut la coutume. Elle n'en fut pas trop surprise: toute l'année elle avait eu à faire face à l'animosité des religieuses.¹⁰⁹

The treatment which Jacqueline received is not an uncommon experience for the intelligent, self-confident proletarian student. Jean Lévesque in Bonheur d'occasion suffered similar humiliations during his years at school. "Au collège, sa réputation était faite: un orgueilleux. Pour lui donner

¹⁰⁷Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 49.

une leçon d'humilité, ses professeurs, à la fin d'une année scolaire, lui avaient supprimé tous les premiers prix auxquels il avait droit."¹¹⁰ In Pierre le magnifique,

Mme. Letellier, who employed Eva Boisjoly as a charwoman, maliciously prevented Pierre from enjoying his scholastic success by requiring that his mother work the day the prizes were distributed, "pour l'empêcher d'aller à la distribution des prix."¹¹¹ Eva insists that she would not have attended the ceremony in any case, (because the women for whom she worked would have thought that she was flouting them.¹¹²

In Au milieu la montagne, Roger Viau observes that one person is rarely at fault for the abasement of the proletariat, but that society as a whole is to blame. "[Jacqueline] est vaincue, non par la Mère Supérieure, mais par la vie. Non, elle n'a pas les moyens d'être fière. Dans sa condition on ne doit pas savoir ce qu'est un affront. On n'a pas droit à la honte. Il faut apprendre à se plier."¹¹³ Before an ambitious member of the working class can gather enough self-confidence to strive towards bettering his condition by competing with the élite for society's employment opportunities, he must be aware of his own self-worth. At the same time,

¹¹⁰Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 181.

¹¹¹Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 34.

¹¹²Ibid. "D'abord j'serais pas allée, à la distribution des prix. C'est comme si j'aurais eu honte pour toi. Plusieurs de mes pratiques étaient là, vois-tu, et elles aussi auraient peut-être pensé que je les narquais. Ça fait que ça me faisait rien de travailler pareil, au fond. J'aurais dû y aller, à c'te heure que je suis pas plus avancée."

¹¹³Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 37.

he must tread very softly, and even feign humility from time to time if he is to avoid arousing the ire of his superiors.

Unlike the first-generation workers who were resigned to their needy circumstances, proletarians in quest of personal values were hopeful that their situation would improve. Self-confidence, and a willingness to work hard were often the only elements required to make idealistic young people optimistic about their prospects. Whereas the kind of employment sought frequently reflected a worker's optimistic outlook, workingwomen often demonstrated by the kind of men they chose to pursue that they possessed a comparable measure of hope in the future.

The traditional proletarian value of resignation was rejected by youthful workers because it generally meant acceptance of poverty, and resulted in people becoming impervious to the suffering it produced. For example, Rose-Anna Lacasse appears to be unaware of the abject poverty that has besieged her family. It took an exceptional event--their Sunday trip into the country to visit her family, the first in seven years--to alert her to the meaning of poverty:

[Rose-Anna] silencieuse, songeait que la pauvreté est comme un mal qu'on endort en soi et qui ne donne pas trop de douleur, à condition de ne point trop bouger. On s'y habitue, on finit par ne plus y prendre garde tant qu'on reste avec elle tapie dans l'obscurité; mais qu'on s'avise de la sortir au grand jour, et on s'effraie d'elle, on la voit enfin, si sordide qu'on hésite à l'exposer au soleil. 114

Over the years, her husband Azarius, had also become complacent

114 Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 153.

about his family's pitiful living conditions. Shortly after enlisting in the army, he joined Rose-Anna, who had just given birth to their twelfth child, and begged her to forgive him for his past negligence:

"Mais vois-tu, Rose-Anna, c'est parce que je pouvais pas m'imaginer qu'on en était rendu à ça. Je pouvais pas voir. [...] Je la voyais pas notre misère. Je la voyais de temps en temps, par petits moments, quand j'avais la tête claire, je voyais la tienne, mais quand même je pouvais pas croire que c'était vrai. [...] Qu'est-ce que tu veux, Rose-Anna, acheva-t-il en une plainte, ça m'a ben pris dix ans pour m'apercevoir qu'on y était au boutte des bouttes..."¹¹⁵

Instead of accepting their plight, ambitious workers developed a kind of bitter hope, consisting of an inarticulated threat that destiny had better grant them their due. For example, in Bonheur d'occasion, Jean Lévesque, "les dents serrées, rageur,"¹¹⁶ often became defiantly aggressive after successfully solving a particularly difficult algebra problem: "'On verra bien un jour jusqu'où je peux aller!'"¹¹⁷ In Au pied de la pente douce, Denis Boucher rebelled against the cultural mediocrity of his milieu by retreating into himself: "Soudain sa jeunesse rétive donnait un coup de bélier. Il pourfendait la bêtise, se plongeait dans le silence, y devenait aérien, le maître de sa destinée supérieure."¹¹⁸ In Lemelin's last novel, Pierre Boisjoly compares his aspirations with Denis Boucher's aimless revolt against society.

¹¹⁵Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 332.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, pp. 72-73.

"Peut-être [Denis] est-il fort. Mais sa révolte est négative. Moi je gagnerai, je réussirai à être magnifique!"¹¹⁹

Throughout Aaron, the hero displays the confidence of a rebel who is aware of his great strength: "Aaron ne se connaissait plus de faiblesses, rien n'était impossible. Il serait grand; il dominerait."¹²⁰ An expression of revolt against the obstructions hindering proletarian success constitutes one aspect of the ambitious worker's personal value of hope.

Along with a desire to overcome the oppression created by poverty, a large measure of self-confidence is required before one's aspirations can be realized. Imagining himself "différent et marqué d'un signe de prédestination," Jean Lévesque "se vouait à des années de lutte et de misère au bout desquelles il n'aurait qu'à étendre la main pour saisir le fruit de son travail et de son renoncement."¹²¹ The world crisis which culminated in the Second World War inspired ambitious individuals like Jean to reach for the stars.

Quelque chose l'attendait dans ce monde bouleversé par la guerre, dont il ne prévoyait pas encore l'exacte nature, sinon que cela le vengerait de son piétinement, ici, dans Saint-Henri. Une minute, il fut ébloui de se sentir emporté vers l'inconnu et avec une telle confiance, une telle légèreté, comme s'il eût à ce moment jeté du lest.¹²²

¹¹⁹Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 72.

¹²⁰Thériault, Aaron, p. 67.

¹²¹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 181.

¹²²Ibid., p. 191.

Likewise, Lemelin's Quebec city heroes were confident about the future. In Au pied de la pente douce, Denis Boucher felt certain that he would succeed as a creative writer: "Cette assurance, c'était le paradis. Maintenant, il était tranquille, l'argent allait venir."¹²³ Pierre Boisjoly was as optimistic, especially after his decision to renounce his vocation: "'Maman: Ne t'inquiète plus pour l'avenir. Je ne serai pas prêtre:'"¹²⁴ Even after several disappointments, his self-confidence was not shaken, as he displays in statements like: "'Je réussirai à être magnifique:'"¹²⁵

Workingwomen do not appear to be as optimistic as their male counterparts. Like Jacqueline Malo, many of them were more cautious when expressing their enthusiasm about the future. "La vie n'était pas si méchante. Ses ambitions les plus absurdes pouvaient un jour devenir des réalités."¹²⁶ That is not to say that working-class girls are lacking in self-confidence. Some displayed considerable boldness when their romantic aspirations were involved. For example, in Le Feu dans l'amiante, Odette Marier revealed in the presence of her suitors Gilles and Marcel, that she knew "très bien que je peux choisir entre vous deux."¹²⁷ Florentine Lacasse was as confident as her counterpart from

¹²³Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 153.

¹²⁴Lemelin, Pierre le magnifique, p. 35.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 72.

¹²⁶Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 193.

¹²⁷Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 132.

Asbestos, Quebec, in her ability to charm Jean Lévesque.

Malgré [Jean], qu'il le voulût ou non, il serait son ami de garçon, son vrai, son steady! Ensemble, ils iraient au cinéma tous les samedis soir, peut-être deux fois la semaine. Oh, la belle vie s'ouvrirait devant elle, si seulement elle se montrait assez tenace et pas trop fière pour l'instant! Plus tard, elle saurait bien mener les choses à sa guise. 128

Although she did not succeed in winning Jean's affection, she married Emmanuel, and at the end of the novel continued to be optimistic about the future.

"Enfin, nous allons bien vivre," ne cessait-elle de se répéter avec une satisfaction étonnée, une vanité qui la remplissait d'aise. "Maman, songeait-elle, maman ne peut se consoler, mais papa a bien fait, il a bien fait, papa, de s'enrôler. C'est la plus belle chose qu'il a faite dans sa vie. [...] C'est drôle quand même qu'elle prenne ça si mal... Pourtant jamais elle a eu tant d'argent!" 129

Although ambitious, proletarian girls appear to be more cautious in their statements regarding future success than workingmen, in matters over which they can exercise some control, they frequently manifest as much self-assurance as their male counterparts.

Generally, working-class girls were obliged to settle for less than they expected. This was especially true for those who sought a career. One example involves Gisèle Lafrenière in La Bagarre, whose forte in mathematics could evolve best in an anglophone university, like Sir George Williams. However, her parents feared that she would compromise her French-Canadian values if she attended the

128. Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 165.

129. Ibid., p. 344.

institution. So, they registered her in a convent school. Jules Lebeuf remarked that the arrangement did not constitute a total surrender: "Elle ne s'esquintait pas à la manufacture, c'était déjà quelque chose. Les cours qu'elle suivait étaient sûrement mal adaptés à ses aptitudes, mais qu'y faire? Un autre talent de perdu, comme tant d'autres..."¹³⁰ Jacqueline's future appears very dismal after Gilbert Sergent spurned her for a girl of his own social class.

[Jacqueline], elle était faite pour la petite vie qui avait toujours été la sienne. Une vie avec Pierre Larose. Il était l'homme pour elle, petit, inculte, machant de la gomme, chauffeur de troisième ou quatrième classe. N'était-elle pas de cette classe dont elle avait cru s'échapper? La Mère Supérieure de l'école avait été la première à lui enseigner ce qu'elle était. Elle n'avait qu'à accepter ce qu'on lui offrait, et en remerciant, la tête courbée.¹³¹

Jacqueline's temporary depression will pass, and, like her counterpart in Bonheur d'occasion, she will undoubtedly regain her self-confidence as well as her aspirations for future success. Because Florentine was pregnant, she was obliged to seize upon any reasonable offer that came her way. Though she did not love him, Emmanuel Létourneau's proposal of marriage represented Florentine's hope for salvation. He rescued her from the prospect of being an unwed mother, as well as from the impoverished milieu she had known;

Si elle perdait Emmanuel maintenant, tout serait fini entre eux. Tout. Elle serait perdue cette fois complètement. Et, étrangement, elle sentait que cette perte lui serait dure de plus d'une façon. C'était plus que sa sécurité, son salut qui étaient

¹³⁰ Bessette, La Bagarre, pp. 227-228.

¹³¹ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, pp. 328-329.

en jeu. Emmanuel, il lui semblait, arriverait peut-être à lui donner le goût de vivre, un nouvel orgueil, de la joie encore à être bien mise, coquette et irrésistible. Par lui, elle avait recommencé de se trouver jolie, ardente.¹³²

Although he could never compare with Jean Lévesque, Emmanuel was a very acceptable candidate for marriage: "Toute la vie [de Florentine] était réglée enfin, une fois pour toutes. Ce ne serait pas ce qu'elle avait imaginé. Mais c'était mille fois mieux que ce qui aurait pu lui arriver."¹³³ Most working-class girls, whether in the choice of career or husband, were frequently forced to compromise. Although their future does not appear as bright as the workingman's, it represents an improvement over what could be expected were they to give up the struggle altogether. For the proletariat which is often hindered by society's opposition, hope is a very significant personal value because it regenerates self-confidence, the willingness to work hard to realize a specific goal, and the determination to overcome formidable adversaries.

The personal values of ambition, self-esteem, and hope transformed the emancipated offspring of the first-generation worker into individualists, many of whom defined themselves in relation to the traditions they rejected, rather than the personal values they espoused. Because their principal aim was to escape from the poverty of their milieu, they felt justified in attacking the traditional proletarian

¹³²Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 298.

¹³³Ibid., p. 308.

Odette Marier was dazzled by her first sexual encounter:

La force des membres de l'homme, l'effet bombé de sa poitrine, son ventre relevé et un genou pressant. C'est donc ça la vie? C'est donc ça le bonheur inimaginable. Ce n'est pas le vice, les dames, la poussière qui font la vie. C'est ça. Ce miracle qu'elle vient de découvrir.¹⁴⁵

In the novel just cited, it is also affirmed that Gilles and Marcel had shared intimate relations with each other in the past:

Au front, ils couchaient ensemble dans une tranchée si étroite que leurs jambes et leurs bras se mêlaient. Que leur corps n'en faisait qu'un, toute intimité permise. Cette intimité remontait d'ailleurs à leur enfance où ils s'étaient initiés réciproquement, faute de directive, aux premières jouissances du corps humain.¹⁴⁶

Richard notes that the experiences of the two young miners represent, "[...] un état généralisé par les conditions économiques qui exigent la promiscuité dans les familles et par les sermons où on aguichait sans cesse la curiosité des voluptés et où on martelait cette psychose dans les jeunes imaginations."¹⁴⁷ Emancipated working-class youngsters do not share their parents' devotion of traditional Catholicism. Rarely do they seek consolation in prayer. They reject the notion that one should repress one's emotions. By their actions, they also demonstrate that they object to the traditional constraints on love imposed by the Church.

The quest for the personal value of hope is in direct conflict with the traditional proletarian value of

¹⁴⁵Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 36.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

"Elle ne l'aimait pas encore, cet enfant qui la ferait souffrir, sans doute ne l'aimerait-elle jamais, elle le redoutait même encore, mais elle s'habituerait peu à peu à le détacher de son péché à elle, de sa grave erreur."¹³⁴

Ambitious individualists look upon the large family as one of the root causes of abject poverty. It is rejected as well, because it imposes limits upon the personal value of ambition.

The traditional proletarian value of work differs from the ambitious worker's notions regarding an occupation. For the first-generation worker who is generally responsible for the well-being of a large family, the fear of being unemployed motivates him to seek job security, regardless how routine or demeaning the task. The young worker does not value work for itself, but as a means of accomplishing what is necessary to attain his goal. Generally, the ambitious worker's most important activity revolves around the part-time studies which improve his chances for advancement in his occupation. Unlike the previous generation, the young worker of the forties and fifties often did not seek security in the job he held. He wanted to advance, and he was willing to sacrifice a great deal to realize his ambitions.

The self-esteem of the young worker differs from the traditional proletarian's value of pride. Though frequently put down for it, the young proletarian often felt superior to his peers because he had surpassed them, either in an intellectual or a material sense. The "pride of the poor",

¹³⁴Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 343.

on the other hand, consists of a desire to be regarded only as an equal to one's fellow workers. It is therefore rejected by the aspiring descendants of the first-generation worker.

Unlike their parents, these self-reliant individuals did not seek solace in prayer or religious ceremonies.

On the rare occasion when the emancipated worker makes a spiritual appeal, it generally involves the mundane requests of the lovelorn, rather than a genuine spiritual communion with God, The Virgin Mary or the saints. For example,

Jacqueline Malo in Au milieu la montagne, concluded Mass with a prayer, "demandant à la Vierge de lui faire retrouver Gilbert."¹³⁵ Florentine Lacasse in Bonheur d'occasion made a similar plea after Jean Lévesque rejected her:

Elle ferait encore d'autres choses plus pénibles, s'il le fallait, pour gagner l'intercession de la Vierge. Elle assisterait à la messe tous les matins. Et même, --oh! cela lui coûterait beaucoup, --elle n'irait pas aux vœux pendant six mois, peut-être davantage... Que ne ferait-elle pas? Elle irait à l'Oratoire sur la montagne, elle grimperait les marches sur ses genoux comme un gueux qui demande sa guérison, mais elle, ce qu'elle demanderait, ce serait de rester enivrée d'un mauvais rêve et de donner ce rêve à un autre, de le lui communiquer, tel un mal contagieux. Elle fixait les cierges allumés de ses prunelles qui, à cette flamme, paraissaient résolues et durcies, ne songeant pas une minute que le désir qu'elle avait des baisers de Jean pût être un obstacle entre elle et les pâles statues qui se dégageaient dans l'ombre de l'abside. "Aujourd'hui même, si je le vois, bonne Sainte-Vierge, je commencerai une neuvaine." Et ce fut sa prière jusqu'à la fin de la messe.¹³⁶

The children of the proletariat also found great difficulty in attempting to explain their parents' apparent lack of feelings and sentiments. Though not always articulated, a

¹³⁵ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 218.

¹³⁶ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 125-126.

frequent question is: "Pourquoi nos parents ont-ils si honte de leur coeur?"¹³⁷ In Autour de toi Tristan,

Marie-Marthe had great difficulty in reconciling her parents' demonstrable indifference to each other during the day, and the large family that was the outcome of their intimacy at night. "'Etranges parents,'" she thought to herself.

"'Toujours si lointains l'un pour l'autre en notre présence, que leur apporte la nuit?' Tant d'enfants, tant d'intimités."¹³⁸

Armand Depeyre was especially troubled by his father's apparent insensitivity. Unlike Marie-Marthe however, he remembered one occasion when his father had displayed his feelings. Armand's younger sister Raymonde died of meningitis when he was five years old. Almost twenty years later, Armand could still see "la silhouette de son père, debout près d'un lit vide avec sur son visage de lourdes larmes pressées."¹³⁹ Like Marie-Marthe, "Armand

n'a jamais réussi à harmoniser ce souvenir avec ce que, depuis, il a connu de son père. Mais souvent, prêt à juger l'homme insensible et brutal, il a évoqué cette scène."¹⁴⁰ Due to the repression of their emotional life, a contradiction appears to exist between the beliefs and actions of traditional workers, a situation which causes their offspring to doubt and frequently challenge the established system of values.

¹³⁷ France, Autour de toi Tristan, p. 205.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 164.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Traditional constraints imposed by the Church, the parents, and society upon adolescent exuberance regarding the sentiment of love, are also denounced by working-class youth. Using the demolished parish church as a symbol of Denis Boucher's past struggle against the mediocre ideals of his milieu,¹⁴¹ Roger Lemelin in Au pied de la pente douce appears to suggest that despite his anti-feminist notions, Denis is justified in allowing his natural instincts to guide his conduct when he is alone with Lise Lévesque:

[Denis] excusait son aventure, sa faiblesse, en la faisant commencer sur les ruines de l'ancienne église, qui représentait son passé. Il aimerait Lise sur les débris de l'esprit de paroisse détesté, et son baiser serait comme un cri de victoire.¹⁴²

In Au milieu la montagne, Jacqueline Malo did not feel any remorse after being intimate with Gilbert Sergent:

Elle se refusait d'admettre qu'il y eût faute de sa part, l'abandon d'elle-même était l'aboutissement fatal de son amour. Que son geste ressemblait peu à celui de toutes ces filles menées par leur instinct. Ses scrupules d'autrefois, évanouis.¹⁴³

Florentine Lacasse rejected the notion that her relationship with Jean Lévesque had been wrong, even though she emerged from it pregnant: "D'ailleurs, il n'y avait pas de péché, pas de faute, pas de passé: tout cela était fini. Il n'y avait plus que l'avenir."¹⁴⁴ In Le Feu dans l'amiante,

¹⁴¹ "[Denis] repoussait du pied les plus petites pierres qui formaient l'ancienne église, représentaient l'esprit de paroisse vaincu. "Avec l'église, je me reconstruis sur mes ruines [...]." Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce, p. 221.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 218.

¹⁴³ Viau, Au milieu la montagne, pp. 260-261.

¹⁴⁴ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 344.

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¹⁴⁵ Richard, Le Feu dans l'amiante, p. 35.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

resignation. Because the Depression lasted a full decade, workers resigned themselves to sub-standard living and working conditions. Armed with a great deal of ambition and pride, their offspring were confident about the future. The imminent world conflict combined with their yearning for self-improvement, providing them with a measure of confidence about the future, that their parents would never experience. Resignation was therefore one of the first traditional proletarian values rejected by ambitious working-class individualists.

Because they are optimistic about the future, workers who are in quest of personal values have little need for the kind of ideals held by their fathers. They are willing to forego the luxury of dreaming of a better world because they have definite goals to pursue. Instead of relying upon visions that can delude one, ambitious workers are generally very practical and realistic. The anglophobia of the first-generation proletariat does not concern them. Some are even willing to adopt Anglo-Saxon habits and values if that is a requirement for success. The Second World War is regarded as a desirable event because it meant greater opportunities for the ambitious hero. Many of the characters we have studied including Denis Boucher, Pierre Boisjoly, Marcel Gingras, Gilles Morency, and Jules Lebeuf are willing to fight for the cause of organized trade unionism. However, their motives for doing so are far from altruistic, for they realize that their participation in the cause could lead to opportunities

for personal advancement. In their youth, several experienced idealists like Denis Boucher had made sacrifices "au nom d'un idéal truqué."¹⁴⁸ Jules Lebeuf, who had served overseas during the Second World War, had also aspired to fight for the ideals of the working class when he returned to Canada:

Mais que faisait-il depuis son retour? Aidait-il ses compatriotes? S'était-il affilié à un mouvement politique? S'occupait-il d'action sociale? Songeait-il seulement à fonder un foyer? à avoir des enfants? --Non, toujours non. Au fond, toutes ces choses ne l'intéressaient pas. Du moins, pas directement, pas en soi.¹⁴⁹

Working-class individualists, often at the expense of the traditional value of idealism, struggle to attain a position of prominence for themselves in the society of French Canada.

The Quebec worker had great difficulty in creating a place for himself in the industrialized society of post-war Quebec. To achieve success, his first task involved escaping from the abject poverty of his milieu. It also involved divesting himself of the traditional values that kept the proletariat on the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder. Finally, a set of personal values that would assure success had to be innovated by each individual. Ambition, self-esteem, and hope became a foundation upon which specific personal values could be erected. The quest for these personal values is a manifestation of an extremely

¹⁴⁸ Lemelin, Les Plouffe, p. 300.

¹⁴⁹ Bessette, La Bagarre, pp. 143-144.

individual approach to modern industrial society. This approach appears to be essential if one is to triumph. As Vachon observed,¹⁵⁰ to be successful, the ambitious worker had to become a solitary being because only one man at a time could be elevated to a position of prominence in contemporary society, and even then, only during certain privileged moments of his lifetime.

¹⁵⁰ See the introduction to this chapter, p. 484.

CHAPTER XII

QUEST OF THE BOURGEOISIE

It is commonly assumed that middle-class children should not have anything to complain of because their parents have provided them with all of the amenities of life one could desire. This attitude is prevalent in Quebec. Until 1960, only a small minority of Quebeckers enjoyed a relatively high standard of living, and the majority who did not strove to acquire it. The generation which worked and struggled to gain entry into the middle class not only appreciated its privileged position, but assumed that its descendants should be content with the comfortable upbringing they received. However, this is not the case. The children of the affluent class who have never experienced material deprivation approach life with a different philosophy. They share values which are foreign to the traditional bourgeoisie. Furthermore, they rebel against their parents' values as the young generation of the other two classes do. Ironically, the conflict that exists between the affluent youth and the preceding generation is even greater than that which exists between the parents and children of the less privileged socio-economic groups.

It is because they have been spared the worry of fending for themselves that the youth of the middle class

concern themselves with the moral dilemmas and social issues of the day. Their attempt to change their way of life and help to bring about social change frequently causes conflict between them and their parents. The result is a breakdown in communication between the two generations. Robert Bouchard in Le Député describes the situation that exists between himself and his parents' generation thus:

Ils ne parlent pas la même langue, les mots des uns sont dépourvus de sens pour les autres. Pas même ennemis, ou si peu, mais séparés. C'est cela, séparés par l'abîme ouvert entre deux générations, deux mondes: l'un qui s'est perdu, l'autre qui se cherche. Robert Bouchard a compris que ses parents et lui n'habitent plus la même planète, cette vieille terre à bout de course et que chacun d'entre eux voudrait refaire à son image, l'inaltérable image de sa faim.¹

Even those who are not actively engaged in social causes find reason to be less than impressed with the example that their parents set. One example concerns the passive Lucille Bouchard, Robert's sister. She tells her aunt, Louise, that one cannot expect her to know what love is:

"A moins d'avoir vu ce que j'ai vu à la maison, partout! Mon père et Nicole, oui, sa secrétaire, et avant, c'était d'autres femmes. Ma mère et ses artistes, ses auteurs dramatiques... Ne me forcez pas à dire tout ce que j'ai vu."²

It is the ethical and moral standards set by the traditional bourgeoisie that impel their idealistic descendants to search for their own values. The rules of conduct which are transmitted from one generation to the other are either too lax (as is the case in the Bouchard

¹Savary, Le Député, p. 51.

²Ibid., pp. 95-96.

family), or too strict. In either situation, a degree of damage results. The established bourgeoisie is often unaware of the harm it does. For example, Ruth Villemure in Le Mauvais pain unconsciously ruined the childhood years of her two children because she lamented too long over her husband's death. Alain reproaches his mother for her conduct.

Le jeune homme songea avec amertume aux années d'isolement et d'incompréhension vécues dans cette maison en deuil. Ces longs mois de révolte et d'ennui, il en revivait brusquement la douloureuse attente. Ils avaient creusé entre sa mère et lui un fossé que rien ne parviendrait à combler désormais et qui, ce soir, le faisait souffrir. Un moment, Alain retrouva en lui le visage chagrin de l'adolescent des anciens étés, tous plus mornes les uns que les autres. Il en vouait à sa mère de la tristesse de ces jours perdus dans les prés crépitants du chant des cigales, dans le silence de la demeure tassée contre la terre en feu. Que la voix de cette femme, soudain devenue si proche, presque tendre, eût alors été douce, apaisante!... Mais à quoi servait-il de réveiller le passé? Les mauvais souvenirs n'arrangent rien. Le jeune homme tenta d'oublier son enfance.³

Also, it was because of her mother's impassiveness that Marthe depended upon her brother Alain for the warmth and affection that Ruth could not give her. When Mme. Villemure finally realized that her relationship with Marthe lacked normal maternal affection, she was too late to regain her daughter's confidence.

Cette explosion de tendresse tardive n'avait eu pour effet que d'éloigner d'elle l'adolescente dont le drame la remuait à un point qu'il eût été difficile d'imaginer chez cet être dur et cassant. Révoltée par l'odieux d'une affection qu'elle croyait feinte, Marthe s'était faite plus distante d'abord, puis réfugiée dans le mutisme, tandis qu'une irritation mal dissimulée naissait en madame Villemure.⁴

³Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, pp. 30-31.

⁴Ibid., p. 10.

To compensate for a lack of maternal affection, Marthe sought the companionship of her brother, and when he was absent, she withdrew into herself. A similar situation exists in Maryse. The first-person narrator and heroine, Maryse, enjoyed the independence she acquired by withdrawing into herself. However, it affected her ability to communicate with her parents. For example, her family wanted her to become engaged to Gérard who was ten years her elder. Although she was revolted by her parents' meddling, her rage was never externalized.

Maman me regardait et souriait. Des phrases idiotes, gonflées de révolte, s'arrêtaient juste à temps sur mes lèvres--"Je ne t'ai pas demandé la vie, tu me l'as donnée. Alors, elle est à moi, elle m'appartient." Mère souriait toujours.⁵

The breakdown in communication between parents and children is one outcome of the hostility that characterizes many family relationships.

Because the antagonism which arises between family members of the other socio-economic groups can be traced to readily identifiable causes, it is less destructive than is the case for the middle class. For example, young proletarian girls, because they acquired a certain state in life through their own efforts, felt justified in conducting themselves as they saw fit without interference from their parents. Affluent young people were unable to be as defiant without experiencing guilt because they rarely had to fight for anything in life. Parental requests were often interpreted as demands of reimbursement for the amenities they

⁵Doran, Maryse, pp. 22-23.

had been given. The heroine of Maryse withdrew into her own world of reverie whenever demands were placed upon her, especially when the topic of conversation centered on Gérard.

Derrière les barreaux de ma solitude, je regardais avec ironie les inconscients qui essayaient d'attraper des étoiles filantes. Je me sentis confortable dans mon éternel isolement; je m'y plaisais presque. Tout m'apparaissait sot et vain et j'avais l'impression d'être coupable. Coupable de quoi? D'être née, d'avoir tout reçu de la vie, et surtout d'avoir habitué en moi un état d'esprit heureux et calme. Ces choses dont on m'avait gratifiée, on m'en demandait le prix aujourd'hui. C'était plus qu'une injustice. Peut-être parce que j'étais entrée comme une intruse dans cette famille, et qu'en plus il avait fallu tout me donner, me faire crédit sans aucune autre garantie que ma faiblesse. S'ils avaient misé sur ma force, ils avaient eu tort. J'étais incapable de faire un plan, le fil de mes idées cassait en plein milieu d'une réflexion [...]. Moi, si on m'avait chargée de trouver une fille pour ma mère, une fiancée pour Gérard, c'eût été justement le contraire de cela que j'eusse cherché.⁶

Middle-class youths often blame themselves because they cannot live up to their parents' expectations. In Maryse's case, the guilt feelings were exacerbated by the fact that she managed to remain relatively happy with the knowledge that she could not do what was expected of her. Like Maryse, many affluent young people are unable to respond to their parents' wishes because they live by a set of values which inhibit them from conforming to traditional middle-class norms.

One of the traditional bourgeois values which clashes most often with the aspirations of middle-class youth is power, especially the aspect of it associated

⁶Doran, Maryse, pp. 52-53.

with the accumulation of wealth. The son of a millionaire, Robert Bouchard in Le Député, was aware of the tremendous influence that one acquired along with money.

Un jour, [Robert] avait seize ans, il s'est ouvert à son père de ces singulières pensées. De quel rire a été accueillie sa timide confidence. L'adolescent désarmé, auquel on a répondu par un ricanement, s'est tu. L'homme s'est rassuré qui a jeté: "Tu parles comme un gosse de riche qui n'a jamais manqué d'argent!"⁷

Robert's father was not interested in his son's ideals. Had there been real communication, Antoine Bouchard would have realized that:

[...] Robert Bouchard ne méprise pas l'argent. A quoi bon négliger l'outil qui permet d'achever rapidement un travail? Non, il ne le méprise pas, mais il ne peut admettre la place qu'il occupe dans le coeur des siens. Une place de choix puisqu'en lui se résument l'amour et l'ambition.⁸

Others, like Emmanuel Létourneau of Bonheur d'occasion, are convinced that money is the root of all evil. Emmanuel tries to convince his working-class friends that:

"[...] c'est l'argent qui nous tient tous au cirque derrière les barreaux. Les gars qui ont de l'argent, c'est eux autres qui décident si vous allez travailler, vous autres, oui ou non, selon que ça fait leur affaire ou bien qu'ils s'en fichent."⁹

Instead of regarding money as an instrument that can be useful in accomplishing works of social significance, Emmanuel finds only one remedy for the oppression that money has created: its total destruction. He visualizes that the Second World War will accomplish this feat.

⁷Savary, Le Député, pp. 51-52.

⁸Ibid., p. 51.

⁹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 54.

"Mais la guerre, c'telle-ci, va te le détruire le maudit pouvoir de l'argent. Vous les entendez dire à tous les jours que les pays peuvent pas tenir du train qu'ils vont à dépenser je sais pas combien de millions pour des bateaux qui se font couler, pour des avions qui prennent en feu, pour des tanks qui durent pas trois jours. L'argent s'en va pour la destruction pis a se détruit elle-même. Et ben, tant mieux! Parce que l'argent, c'est pas la richesse. La richesse, c'est le travail, c'est nos bras, c'est nos têtes à nous autres, la grande masse. Et c'est c'te richesse-là qui va rester après la guerre. Et c'est c'telle-là qui va faire vivre le monde, tous les hommes dans la justice."¹⁰

Emmanuel's desire for social justice leads him to reject the capitalist system. Subliminally, he feels that the existing system should be replaced by socialism.

Many of the middle-class individuals described in the novel feel that the capitalist system has let the majority of people in Quebec society down. Their social conscience prohibits them from supporting an economic system in which all of the means of production and distribution are privately owned and operated solely for the profit of the owner. However, few are willing to admit, even to themselves, that they are socialists. In a discussion on the subject with his nephew, the generally open-minded Jean-Pierre Pouchard tells Robert exactly what he thinks of socialists-- especially "le socialiste canadien": "'C'est... C'est un révolté, un ouvrier, un gagne-petit mécontent... ou les membres du pire parti politique... Des gens qui jouent sur la misère du peuple... Tu ne peux pas être socialiste."¹¹ Like the majority of young people of his generation, Robert

¹⁰ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, pp. 54-55.

¹¹ Savary, Le Député, p. 77.

does not claim to be a socialist. However, he knows that he cannot live with most of the ideals of capitalism.

As his reply to his uncle indicates, Robert is merely seeking an answer to the social injustices that exist. "Vous n'en savez rien, mon oncle, et moi non plus... Mais, je cherche..."¹²

Socialist ideas were prevalent during the 1940's and 1950's. However, they did not pose a serious threat for the establishment, probably because the young people who professed them were not taken seriously. For example, Robert's father, Antoine, is not very disturbed by Victor's allegation that Robert has friends who show socialist tendencies. "Si tu veux me faire peur, tu perds ton temps, mon bon Victor.

La jeunesse d'aujourd'hui donne volontiers dans les idées sociales, c'est un vice qui lui passera avec l'âge."¹³ It is thus important to distinguish between characters who display a lack of confidence in the capitalist system and those who actively support socialism, i.e. a system of ownership and operation of the means of production and distribution by society as a whole, or the community, rather than by a private individual. Because the aspirations of middle-class youth frequently run counter to traditional attitudes regarding money and power, they are frequently unjustly branded as socialists or communists by their opponents.

The subject of marriage can also create antagonism between the different factions of the bourgeoisie. In several novels, it is shown that the younger generation

¹² Savary, Le Député, p. 77.

¹³ Ibid., p. 129.

cannot tolerate their parents' attitudes regarding matrimony. For example, Maryse and her family differ over her proposed engagement to Gérard because she did not regard married life from the point of view of security as they did. "J'admire votre dévouement, [...] mais ne vous occupez plus de mon avenir. Nous ne sommes pas du même siècle, et vous pourriez vous tromper."¹⁴ Unlike Maryse who did not want to get married, Marcel Latour desperately wanted Elise for his bride. He did everything possible to get his ambitious mother to accept her in the family. Not only did he tolerate his mother's ruses--including attending the dinner party which she hosted to match him with a young lady of good social background,¹⁵--but he also kept a constant watch over his temper in an attempt to avoid aggravating the situation even more:

[Marcel] se félicita d'avoir résisté au mouvement de briser le vase de Venise, tantôt. En restant maître de lui-même, il avait à la fois respecté Elise et son amour pour Elise, et respecté sa mère, pour laquelle il éprouvait maintenant un mouvement de pitié, à voir comme elle était désemparée.¹⁶

However, when it became apparent that one's parents would not be convinced, open defiance of their wishes was the only course of action remaining. In Elise Velder, Marcel Latour found himself challenging his mother.

¹⁴Doran, Maryse, p. 18.

¹⁵Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 177.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 181.

"C'est pourquoi, intervint Marcel désireux de dominer la situation; c'est pourquoi, maman, tu fais aussi bien d'accepter Elise de bonne grâce. La dernière fois où il en a été question entre nous trois, papa m'a conseillé de faire d'abord connaissance avec la famille Velder, au cas où ça changerait mes idées. Eh bien, papa: depuis le soir de Noël j'ai vu Mme. Velder plusieurs fois, et trois ou quatre fois le frère d'Elise. C'est une famille honnête et respectable, --et présentable, maman. A ton dîner de ce soir, Mme. Velder n'aurait pas été la moins brillante, et avec naturel. Et c'est le point final: enchaîna-t-il sans lui donner la chance de protester. A toi de changer d'idée." 17

Antagonism between the two generations came out of the incompatibility of their different systems of values. One stresses the use of reason in choosing a marriage partner. The other forsakes all for the sentiment of love. The traditional bourgeoisie does not recognize that love and the intellect have little in common and that appeals to reason are therefore useless.

Due to a lack of communication and the conflicts that often exist within the family, several affluent young people seek understanding from people of less privileged socio-economic groups. However, a stranger is not readily accepted into another milieu, as Micheline Giraud in Evadé de la nuit discovered.

Depuis un an qu'elle s'obligeait à fréquenter d'autres couches sociales--encore une expression de son père-- elle avait connu d'autres valeurs humaines, elle avait appris à apprécier différemment les êtres. Cela n'avait pas été facile. Et encore aujourd'hui on ne l'acceptait pas sans réserve. Quelle humilité devait-elle montrer pour qu'un malheureux consentit à recevoir son secours: Jean leur appartenait. Lui aussi ne l'acceptait pas vraiment, lui rappelait à chaque instant qui elle était. 18

17 Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 182.

18 Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 124.

in the historical sense of past, present, and future is important because it can often act as a determining factor in the decision-making process. It has often been stated that it is the truth that sets people free. This notion, as it pertains to the individual who strives to know himself and remain true to his self-image, can contribute to the individual's sense of personal liberation. Solitude is a necessary ingredient of freedom, for most people need to be alone during certain periods. However, solitude can also become oppressive and it is often the sentiment of love that liberates one from this oppression. When seen in the context of the new Quebec nationalism, the value of freedom takes on political overtones as well.

Before embarking upon the search for personal freedom, one needs to be convinced that such a state is attainable. Though Mathieu Normand is skeptical about his own chances of experiencing freedom, his interest in people who appear liberated does not wane. He could not help but wonder why Danielle and Bruno Cinq-Mars had given up the splendour of their mother's luxurious Westmount home for the small apartment they were sharing.

"Comment en sont-ils arrivés là? A quoi tient le charme de cette pièce? Il n'y a ici rien de luxueux et pourtant tout cela dégage une impression d'élégance et de raffinement qui relègue au dernier plan la valeur matérielle des choses. Comme si d'autres valeurs étaient en jeu..."²⁹

Mathieu concluded that a change of environment was essential before his attitudes could be modified. "Ces valeurs, il

²⁹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 34.

situation becomes known, affluent idealists are often shocked. For example, when he discovered the truth about Jacqueline Malo's home environment, "Gilbert [Sergent] se sentait presque coupable de n'avoir jamais souffert."²¹

Elle venait de lui révéler un monde inconnu, son monde à elle, où il faut combattre sans relâche pour obtenir la moindre chose. Il s'imagina son grand malheur, et elle lui apparut plus sympathique.²²

Gilbert pitied Jacqueline and her counterparts in the proletariat who had to struggle constantly just to remain alive:

A mesure qu'elle parlait, Gilbert était effaré par la révélation de la vie de ces individus aux prises chaque jour avec le problème de la simple survivance. Habitué à ne manquer de rien, ignorant le prix de l'essentiel, il s'émouvait pour ce monde que les gens de sa classe côtoient sans jamais tenter d'en pénétrer le sens.²³

The compassion felt by some affluent young people for the underprivileged classes is often translated into action. Individuals like Micheline Giraud in Evadé de la nuit, Robert Bouchard in Le Député, and Etienne Beaulieu in Mathieu incorporated the act of helpfulness into their system of personal values, for unlike Gilbert Sergent, they were compelled to do more than merely sympathize with the desperate plight of the poor masses.

However, due to a failure⁴ in communication between the two groups, the goodwill of middle-class individuals is often rejected by the poor. Also, there are

²¹Viau, Au milieu la montagne, p. 197.

²²Ibid., p. 166.

²³Ibid., p. 197

distinctive approaches towards life which are characteristic of one's social background. They are differences which cannot be reconciled except over a long period of time. Even major international catastrophes are viewed differently by the various groups in society. For example, Emmanuel Létourneau in Bonheur d'occasion discovered that the Quebec working class displayed little concern for the misery that the war was spewing over the countries of Europe.

Ici même, [Emmanuel] avait bien devant lui, songeait-il, la troublante indifférence du coeur humain à l'universalité du malheur; une indifférence qui n'était pas calcul, ni même égoïste, qui n'était peut-être pas autre chose que l'instinct du conservation, oreilles bouchées, yeux fermés, de survivre dans sa pauvreté quotidienne.²⁴

Abject poverty protected the working poor from the shock that overwhelmed many privileged people when they learned about the horrors of war. How the proletarians of Saint-Henri viewed the conflict in Europe is revealed by Florentine Lacasse in her reply to Emmanuel's question as to why so many young men in the neighbourhood enlist in the armed services:

"Ben, moi, je vois qu'une chose, dit [Florentine] posément. C'est parce que ça faisait votre affaire de vous mettre dans l'armée."

[Emmanuel] la considéra longuement en silence. Oui, il aurait dû y penser plus tôt. Elle était plus près du peuple que lui; elle connaissait mieux le peuple que lui. C'était elle qui possédait les vraies réponses. Il leva son regard jusqu'à la foule. Et cette réponse que Florentine venait de lui donner, il lui sembla l'entendre à travers des milliers de soupirs allégés.²⁵

²⁴Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 49.

²⁵Ibid., p. 338.

Underprivileged young people during the forties could not afford to be idealistic like their middle-class counterparts. Their concern for personal survival left them neither time nor inclination to worry about the safety of those who were under the scourge of war in Europe. Divergent views concerning important topical subjects contributed to the antagonism that became apparent between young people of the different social classes.

However, some working-class heroes succeeded in breaking the chains that had bound them to their background. Louis Jeanteau in Le Député is one such individual. He rejected money and ambition, preferring to join those who supported the cause of social justice. However, because he knew what poverty was like, Jeanteau harboured concerns which did not trouble his friend Bouchard:

Jeanteau a payé très cher sa liberté, sa place au soleil si médiocre soit-elle. Ce qu'il est devenu, sa réussite, il l'a arrachée à la vie, lambeau par lambeau. Le fils du contremaître de la "Wolfe Brothers" devait lutter ou accepter un sort semblable à celui de son père. Il s'est élevé au-dessus de sa condition, grâce à un combat acharné. Non par la force des poignets, mais par celle de l'esprit. Seulement, aujourd'hui, Jeanteau n'est pas sûr de son choix, il est peut-être la dupe de son ambition. Qu'importe la culture sans la fortune; l'argent est une puissance supérieure à l'instruction. Surtout en cette terre d'Amérique vouée au plus hypocrite mais au plus ardent culte du veau d'or. Ce continent où tout se vend et s'achète depuis un savon en poudre jusqu'aux âmes.²⁶

Unlike Jeanteau, political activists of middle-class backgrounds who have not experienced material deprivation are not troubled by mundane concerns. They belong to a

²⁶Savary, Le Député, pp. 164-165.

generation and an era where "la sécurité, c'est inutile, elle nous a abandonnés la première."²⁷ Security was an illusion during the forties because the economic and political situation in Quebec and elsewhere in the world was in total chaos. "Que veux-tu qu'on fasse de la sécurité à l'époque d'Hitler et de Staline? Nous irons peut-être dans la lune, mais avons-nous un magnifique avenir ou pas d'avenir du tout?"²⁸ The legitimate concerns of working-class activists like Louis Jeanteau are misunderstood by idealists who are brought up in affluence. Such differences are significant because they explain why a state of harmony is difficult to attain even when individuals of different backgrounds come together to work for the same cause.

The hostility that existed between the two generations in the middle class culminated in a repudiation of the traditional bourgeois values by dissatisfied idealists. Freedom is at the top of the list of personal values sought by affluent young people. It not only represented a desire to live as they saw fit, but also characterized the political aspirations of the province of Quebec. A high regard for the individual normally follows the desire to be free. In keeping with this trend, middle-class youth place a high value upon individualism, for they believe that one must remain true to oneself if peace of mind is to be realized. Because the society they are proposing consists of a

²⁷Savary, Le Député, p. 166.

²⁸Ibid.

multitude of individualists, each displaying a particular uniqueness, the necessity for tolerance and understanding becomes very important. Hence, the personal value of communication is highly significant. The generation produced by the traditional bourgeoisie realized that their parents' values did not bring contentment. Because they are individualists, they believe in self-fulfillment rather than self-sacrifice. Therefore, they have a high regard for personal happiness. Happiness is often realized when one falls in love. As well, a high degree of communication and mutual understanding is achieved. It is not surprising, therefore, that love should rank highly in their system of personal values. Because they realize that one cannot be truly happy when people born in less fortunate circumstances are forced to lead a life of misery, middle-class youth have accepted the act of helping others as one of their values. Ultimately, what the young bourgeoisie are proposing by their system of personal values is not so much an ideal "brave new world". They are searching for an alternative to the paternalistic jungle that the preceding generation helped to create.

Freedom is the principal value which characterizes the drive of middle-class idealists to acquire a set of personal values. Freedom is the opposite of paternalism, for it implies a liberation from the control of another person or an arbitrary force. Independence is therefore an ingredient of this value, for the free person must be allowed to act without hindrance or restraint. Time

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Mathieu concluded that a change of environment was essential before his attitudes could be modified. "Ces valeurs, il

²⁹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 34.

les soupçonnait depuis longtemps, mais toujours pour les rejeter, persistant à croire qu'il fallait, pour les atteindre, des dons qui ne pouvaient s'épanouir dans le cercle étouffant où il vivait."³⁰ Mathieu not only doubted that there were "[dés] êtres naturellement libres," he also wondered: "Y a-t-il seulement des êtres libres?"³¹ Bruno and Danielle's life style seemed to confirm that a state of personal freedom was attainable. This observation led him to inquire into the influences which his cousins had undergone in their quest for an alternative to the established attitudes which governed the bourgeoisie.

Pourtant, Bruno et Danielle n'appartenaient-ils pas au même milieu? N'avaient-ils pas reçu, comme Nicole et lui, une éducation fondée sur les préjugés sociaux, les conventions mondaines et une religion toute extérieure? Comment une femme, aussi soumise aux exigences de son clan que l'était Marie Cinq-Mars, avait-elle pu produire des êtres aussi différents d'elle-même? Il ne fallait pas parler de l'influence de leur père puisque Paul Cinq-Mars était mort quelques années après leur naissance. Mais alors, qui les avait dirigés? Qui leur avait appris qu'il y avait au monde d'autres valeurs que celles qu'ils tenaient de leur famille et des couvents et collèges où ils s'étaient instruits? Fallait-il croire qu'ils étaient parvenus seuls à sauter toutes les barrières et qu'ils avaient eu raison de chercher ailleurs leur véritable climat?³²

Unlike the protagonist in Mathieu, some characters are easily convinced that the state of freedom can be attained by individuals who follow the example set by others. For example, Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit was immediately

³⁰Loranger, Mathieu, p. 34.

³¹Ibid., p. 35.

³²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

vide que celui de son fils. Bernard calcule qu'il aura l'âge de son père dans trente ans et il "rissonne, car c'est vite fait de compter jusqu'à trente. L'avenir, ce n'est donc rien, une copie toujours plus pâle du passé."⁴³

Complete independence is attained only when one recognizes that "mieux vaut vivre pendant qu'il en est encore temps."⁴⁴

And, as Charles in Maryse manifested in his daily conduct:

"Le présent pour lui était le moment le plus précieux.

Il ne le détruisait pas par des craintes stupides."⁴⁵ The

individual who is free finds adventure in each moment of the day, like Madeleine Dubois in Poussière sur la ville.

[Madeleine] vit avec trop de hâte. Son intensité quand elle est heureuse inquiète comme une maladie. Je sais qu'elle n'hésitera jamais à tout jouer d'un coup. On ne peut la plier à sa guise; elle se brisera plutôt. Elle ne peut se défendre qu'en perdant ou en gagnant tout. Cette possibilité de désastre lui donne à la fois son prix et sa vulnérabilité.⁴⁶

However, Alain's insights into his wife's character are not always correct. For example, he wrongly attributed Madeleine's apparent recklessness to her proletarian background.

Madéleine vit plus intensément dans un restaurant comme celui de Kouri, ou dans la rue, parmi les mineurs, qu'à la maison; Elle a conservé de son milieu ouvrier un étonnant instinct d'imprudence, la liberté de jouer son va-tout à l'instant, parce que possédant peu ou rien. C'est un terrain où je ne peux la suivre avec naturel. D'une famille de petit bourgeois, je n'ai pas d'inclination pour les départs subits, les mains vides, et sans but. Le risque, pour moi, n'est pas nécessairement total. J'ai le sens de la mesure, une qualité qui ne séduit aucunement Madeleine, qui lui apparaît un peu comme de l'avarice. L'animal en liberté n'amasse pas, ne tient à rien qu'à sa nour-

⁴³Elie, La Fin des songes, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁴Savary, Le Député, p. 166.

⁴⁵Doran, Maryse, p. 31.

⁴⁶Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 132.

Il suffit d'un jour spent many of her adolescent years in boarding school, she still experienced the need to become independent from Dr. Boudeux and his sister, Jeanne.

[Elisabeth] se mit enfin à penser au présent et au proche avenir. Malgré tous ses efforts, elle ne put arrêter sa pensée sur ce qui avait occupé jusqu'ici le plus clair de son temps: les exercices du couvent, les bons soins de Jeanne et du docteur. Rien de cela n'existait plus et il lui apparaissait clairement, une fois de plus, que sa vie devait reprendre ailleurs. Cette rupture, qui s'était accomplie d'elle-même, lui faisait chercher une voie qui lui assurerait immédiatement la plus grande indépendance.³⁶

Becoming independent from those who have provided for one's every need throughout life is not easily accomplished.

Like Elisabeth, several characters have to prove that they are not simply running away from an undesirable situation.

"Il faut partir," se dit-elle. [Elisabeth] savait qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'une fuite, mais d'un départ volontaire vers quelque chose de lointain, d'indicible, mais d'aussi certain que la lumière du jour. Sa décision se confirmait, heure par heure; il devenait même inutile de penser à demain.³⁷

Elisabeth's flight led to the home of aunt Delphine, a tolerant spinster who was prepared to allow her the great amount of freedom necessary to conduct a search for personal values.

Et [Elisabeth] retrouvait comme un paradis cette maison aux ombres profondes, un vieux parc qui mourait de soif mais qui lui paraissait grand comme ses rêves d'enfant, et, surtout, une vieille femme intraitable et généreuse comme la vie. Il y avait eu l'étreinte de deux bras puissants, la chaleur d'un corps maternel et des mots délicieux: "Pauvre oiseau fou, petite fée noire..." Puis, l'étreinte se relâcha et deux mains se posèrent sur ses épaules, l'arrachant à la

³⁶Elle, Il suffit d'un jour, p. 129.

³⁷Ibid., p. 154.

bonne chaleur. Elisabeth ouvrit les yeux; tante Delphine la regardait avec une gravité qui était déjà exigence. Elle comprit plus tard ce que voulaient dire ces yeux que la vie n'avait jamais surpris: un enfant s'avance seul dans la vie, mon enfant qui est aussi une femme, et il faut bien lui donner la dure liberté.³⁸

Often, it is the element of uncertainty about what the future holds in store that is so attractive to young people. The heroine of Maryse found this aspect of the quest irresistible, as she indicates in the following monologue:

Il était question d'un grand chemin encore sombre, je ne pouvais voir où il conduisait. Il était question de nouveaux visages, de nouvelles rencontres; j'étais libre puisqu'ils m'avaient tous reniée. Mais il n'était pas question de mariage, comme Denise. Denise qui s'était mariée--il est vrai qu'elle avait trois ans de plus que tout le monde--Denise qui faisait l'envie de la classe. Pour quelques-unes, c'était la chanceuse qui en avait fini avec les retenues, les pensums. Pour d'autres, c'était l'héroïne d'un beau roman d'amour. Pour moi, c'était une fin banale. Pas question de fin banale non plus. J'avais même trouvé les mots pour le dire. "Gérard, je suis contente que vous soyez venu. Tenez, asseyez-vous là et écoutez-moi. Quand j'étais petite, vous me racontiez les histoires que je ne pouvais lire. Vous étiez dans ma vie un personnage très important, je vous admirais beaucoup. Mais ce temps-là est fini. Voyez, je suis presque une jeune fille et pour l'avenir j'ai déjà choisi."³⁹

Maryse's sentiments indicate that some young people desire more than independence from family ties. For example, Emmanuel Létourneau in Bonheur d'occasion felt oppressed by society's control over the masses. Merchandisers create demands among poor people who are unable to enjoy the material goods that advertising suggests they should possess.

³⁸Elie, Il suffit d'un jour, p. 216.

³⁹Doran, Maryse, pp. 12-13.

"T'as oublié la plus grosse des tentations...
 [...] La tentation, reprit Emmanuel, qu'ont les
 ours et les bêtes en cage et les naines aussi du
 cirque... La tentation de casser leurs barreaux pis
 de s'en aller dans la vie... Une tentation, mon vieux,
 que t'as oubliée: la tentation de se battre."⁴⁰

Oppression causes many men to feel emasculated. Because violence has historically been associated with masculinity, fighting is one means employed for regaining one's lost manhood. That was how Emmanuel accounted for his voluntary enlistment into the army: "'Parce que, continua Emmanuel, [...] c'est ta seule chance de redevenir un homme. Bon sang, vous voyez-t-y pas, poursuivit-il d'une voix violente, que c'est pour ça qu'il faut se battre."⁴¹ The desire for independence is often more than a longing to leave the paternal home. The longing to escape is often accompanied by a keenness for adventure which frequently involves an element of violence.

Time can be as overbearing for the individual as a restrictive family situation. As previously examined,⁴² one's personal history is often burdensome and limiting. Too much concern with the future can also restrict one's sense of freedom. For example, Bernard in La Fin des songes, realized that there was little hope for him in the future:

"Rien que l'avenir!" pensa-t-il. Mais, dans cet avenir, son père venait de lui montrer un chemin morne qui se perd à l'horizon. Patrice n'a plus que son passé et, pour être plus long, il n'est pas moins

⁴⁰Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 53.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 53-54.

⁴²See Chapter V, "Chained by Personal History", especially pp. 290-291, 293-294.

vide que celui de son fils. Bernard calcule qu'il aura l'âge de son père dans trente ans et il frissonne, car c'est vite fait de compter jusqu'à trente. L'avenir, ce n'est donc rien, une copie toujours plus pâle du passé.⁴³

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⁴³Elie, La Fin des songes, pp. 108-109.

⁴⁴Savary, Le Député, p. 166.

⁴⁵Doran, Maryse, p. 31.

⁴⁶Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 132.

riture du moment. Madeleine de même. Pour employer un mot qui amènerait un sourire dédaigneux sur ses lèvres, elle sera toujours prolétaire. C'est à l'instant même qu'il lui importe d'être satisfaite, non pas dans un avenir problématique. Je l'ai aimée à cause de cela surtout, dangereusement peut-être. Elle était pour moi tout l'exotisme. J'étais chez elle en pays étranger et nous n'avons, ni l'un ni l'autre, renoncé à nos moeurs particulières. Il y a peut-être en nous des forces contraires pouvant se heurter; notre jeunesse nous permet de rétablir rapidement l'équilibre.⁴⁷

Madeline solved the problem of time by refusing to be limited by it. Like others who pursue personal values, she lived her life as if the past and the future did not exist. While at Rochat's health camp, the hero of Mathieu became aware of the merit of renouncing introspection for the act of living in the present. Mathieu revealed in his third notebook:

Toutes ses anciennes préoccupations subissent le même sort. "Ne plus penser, renoncer à l'introspection qui a failli me conduire au suicide, sinon à la folie. Vivre; n'être que sensations. Ne plus rien attendre des autres; ne plus exiger, mais recevoir; n'être rien de plus qu'un corps harmonieux qui vibre à l'unisson de la nature, au rythme de la terre, comme un animal qui s'épanouit sans contrainte. Que puis-je demander de plus?"⁴⁸

Mathieu came to accept himself and his environment, thereby acquiring the personal freedom to develop as an individual. Unlike Madeleine Dubois, Mathieu was not from a proletarian background. Still, both characters were convinced that the past and future had to serve the present, since the latter is the liberated individual's only reality.

⁴⁷Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁸Loranger, Mathieu, p. 281.

The person who knows himself experiences more freedom of action than the individual who lacks self-awareness. In Maryse, Charles is contrasted with the heroine of the novel who is actively seeking personal freedom. Maryse observes that:

[Charles] pensait toujours juste du premier coup, et ne s'attardait pas comme moi à rechercher les obstacles que je créais au besoin. Charles faisait rarement des comparaisons, --deux en dix jours.-- Avec lui il n'y avait que deux couleurs: le blanc et le noir. Il n'acceptait aucune demi-teinte.⁴⁹

Charles always remained true to his personality. That is what made him free: The early Mathieu Normand, on the contrary, was completely ignorant of his inner being, as the concerned Etienne Beaulieu discovered when he read his diary.

Que les hommes ne puissent avoir entre eux aucun contact autre que superficiel, Etienne le savait de reste, lui qui avait sur cette conviction bâti toute sa vie, mais il s'étonnait qu'on put en être à ce point malheureux. Perplexe, il se remit à feuilleter les pages, pesant les mots, cherchant à lire entre les lignes. Plus il réfléchissait, plus il lui semblait que ce garçon était dans la position d'un prisonnier qui eût possédé sans le savoir les clés de sa propre geôle. Il savait d'avance comment il faudrait lui parler, devinant sans peine les mots que l'autre attendait et que personne sans doute ne lui dirait jamais.⁵⁰

And near the close of Et le septième jour, Pierre's advice to Catherine Williams, an echo of Polonius', captures the thought of many young people who are in pursuit of personal freedom: "Be true to yourself: You can never then be false to any man."⁵¹

⁴⁹Doran, Maryse, p. 59.

⁵⁰Loranger, Mathieu, p. 70.

⁵¹Claire France, Et le septième jour, (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1958), p. 235.

The truth about oneself is often realized in the tranquillity of solitude. Mathieu discovered while at Rochat's isolated health camp that a peaceful setting contributes to one's sense of freedom. However, this state can be realized almost anywhere, even in a cheap hotel room, as Bernard in La Fin des songes found out. "[Bernard] était seul dans cette chambre d'hôtel, c'est-à-dire nulle part ou partout au monde, absolument libre s'il le désirait, et il savait bien qu'il le désirait même s'il n'osait pas encore se l'avouer."⁵² One frequently experiences solitude when one is excluded from a particular group. In Et le septième jour, Pierre Desrochers at first felt apart from the group of young people on the "Ile-de-France".

[Les jeunes] s'éloignèrent. Pierre les suivit des yeux, vaguement intrigué par la diversité de cette jeunesse dont il s'étonnait de se sentir exclu. Il commençait à éprouver, par ailleurs, ce sentiment familier aux habitués des transatlantiques: l'impression d'une rupture sans inconvénient avec le reste du globe. Il aimait retrouver, en pleine mer, la liberté de sa solitude, l'impartialité d'un univers qui naissait en même temps que lui.⁵³

The heroine of Maryse is also described as a loner who feels liberated when she is alone, not only because solitude frees her from the demands that are placed upon her by adults, but also because it temporarily subdues feelings of worthlessness that teenagers often experience. "J'ai marché seule pendant des heures, j'étais délivrée de je ne sais au juste quoi; je me sentais presque heureuse. J'étais seule et libre, de cette liberté qui nous donne

⁵² Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 91.

⁵³ France, Et le septième jour, p. 9.

une certaine importance et nous fait croire que nous avons droit à une place ici-bas."⁵⁴ Solitude serves an important function for individuals who want to be free, for it is frequently in a setting of peace and tranquillity that one becomes aware of oneself and the environment.

The sentiment of love can set one free from the feeling of oppression that frequently accompanies solitude. Marcel Laroque in La Fin des songes serves as an illustration. After his discharge from overseas military service, he experienced difficulty in readjusting to civilian life. He withdrew into himself, but instead of finding peace, he became despondent. However, after he fell in love with his sister-in-law, Louise, his outlook on life became brighter, despite the rejection his wife, Jeanne, might experience.

"Et si moi-même je réussis à me tirer de mon sommeil, ne serait-ce pas heureux? Tu es ma femme, Louise est ta soeur, j'ai deux enfants, je sais! Je sais! mais que peut-on me reprocher si je vis? Cela vaut mieux que de m'enfoncer dans la mare aux souvenirs, et c'est sûrement moins te trahir, et même vais-je te permettre de respirer librement, de toucher terre comme moi, de prendre racine. Enfin, la vie est dans ce qui peut commencer à l'heure présente et tous les liens sont illusoirs. Fini, le passé! Ne regrette rien, ma pauvre Jeanne, et, quoi qu'il advienne, nous serons tout de même sortis d'un cauchemar."⁵⁵

However, love can go much further than merely free one from the despondency that frequently accompanies long periods of isolation. The promise of an extra-marital affair

⁵⁴Doran, Maryse, p. 87.

⁵⁵Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 75.

can strengthen the bond that exists between husband and wife. Pierre Desrochers in Et le septième jour came to realize that he had become complacent about his relationship with Jacqueline, his wife. Catherine's presence afforded him the opportunity to experience different feelings:

Allait-il s'y abandonner? Une curieuse envie lui venait de s'évader de lui-même. Pierre Desrochers, ingénieur voyageant pour affaires, marié, heureux en ménage, père d'une délicieuse fillette, cet homme-là le fatiguait tout à coup. Il n'avait guère sa place, d'ailleurs, dans l'instabilité qui l'entourait. Tout comme il avait besoin de partir pour se renouveler, il avait besoin de renaître pour partir. Car les routines de son existence ne se manifestaient pour lui que lorsqu'il les avait quittées. Elles cessaient alors d'apparaître méthode ou nécessité, pour devenir piège et fardeau. Pierre en mesurait avec l'éloignement toutes les chaînes, comme s'il ne pouvait vraiment évaluer leur poids qu'après s'en être dégagé. Mais y a-t-il une forme de routine dans les activités sentimentales?⁵⁶

Because of his experience with Catherine, Pierre became a more complete person. He would return to his wife, rejuvenated with a kind of love for her that closely resembled the sentiment he had felt while he had been a free, single man, before their marriage.

The sentiment of love can also have the opposite effect, for love and marriage often limit one's options. Like Danielle Cinq-Mars, for whom "rien ne lui déplait et ne l'effraie davantage que les promesses engageant l'avenir,"⁵⁷ there are many young people who, to remain unattached, refuse all interpersonal relationships that involve a commitment to the sentiment of love.

⁵⁶France, Et le septième jour, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁷Loranger, Mathieu, p. 246.

The concept of freedom can also be seen in the broader context of desiring to be unleashed from the political, economic, and institutional controls of society. The desire for independence has obvious political overtones, especially since the Separatist movement which began in the early sixties. The question of time is important because the agriculturalist delusions of Quebec's historical past were challenged by the writers of the fifties. Avant-garde authors proposed that one live in the present with one's sights set upon the future rather than the past. As Bernard tells Nicole in response to her inquiry regarding the direction in which they were going: "'Mais tu n'as donc rien compris? C'est justement parce que je ne sais pas encore que la vie me paraît belle. Ne peux-tu, toi aussi, te tourner vers l'avenir?'"⁵⁸ It is evident throughout La Fin des songes that Robert Elie wanted the reader to seize the political significance of Bernard's precarious family situation. Catherine's trip across the Atlantic, which she described as "une sorte d'étape en dehors du temps,"⁵⁹ can also be analyzed from a political point of view. Even the choice of the trans-atlantic liner, "l'Ile-de-France" is symbolic of Quebec's situation in Anglophone North America. During the voyage across the ocean, Catherine wrote to Bernadette, a French friend, and described her predicament in the following terms:

⁵⁸Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 69.

⁵⁹France, Et le septième jour, p. 284.

"Quand je pense aux misères des autres, j'ai honte de me créer des malheurs si peu sérieux. Mais pour moi, oui, c'est sérieux! As-tu déjà pensé au drame qui est le mien? Un vrai drame, je te jure! J'ai tout pour être heureuse, sauf un monstrueux détail: je n'ai pas de pays. Je n'ai plus de pays, Bernadette. C'est affreux! Je suis une Américaine fabriquée en France, avec une culture française, une mentalité française et un atavisme qui m'incrute dans cet état de choses. Et pourtant, en France, je reste le produit exotique, l'exilée, celle qu'on plaint et qu'on blâme à la fois, parce qu'elle vit loin de sa famille. Il m'arrivait de le sentir moi-même, à Paris, de me dire brusquement: 'Je ne suis pas d'ici.' Et cela me laissait, suivant les circonstances, souriante ou peinée."⁶⁰

Catherine's feelings of alienation parallel the experiences of political activists in Quebec during the post-war decades.

Freedom is the most significant personal value sought by the younger members of the bourgeoisie. It is a complicated state which involves not only the independence to live apart from one's family, but also the desire to live in the present. It requires that the individual be constantly aware of his strengths and weaknesses, since one is frequently obliged to answer for one's needs and desires. Solitude plays an important role in the process of self-awareness. However, when feelings of isolation become overbearing, the sentiment of love often brings relief. Though the value of freedom is most frequently examined in the context of the individual, one cannot overlook the obvious political overtones of a number of the plots. Freedom is portrayed as a humanistic value which mankind has struggled to acquire since the beginning of time.

⁶⁰France, Et le septième jour, pp. 122-123.

Along with freedom, individualism is a value that middle-class people acquire with great difficulty. Because each segment of society tends to regard itself as a homogeneous entity composed of interdependent individuals, one's social group is intolerant of those who do not conform to the accepted code of conduct of the group. As in other paternalistic societies, Quebec traditionalists manifest a great deal of contempt for individuality. Disdain for the individual is demonstrated in the working of social institutions, and in the general lack of concern that exists in the community, not only for the quality of life, but for human life itself. Though society is not expected to approve of individuals who persist in remaining apart from the group, especially if they are social misfits, the struggle of the young person in quest of personal values is a difficult continuous process which might cause him to appear to be more maladjusted than he really is.

The educational system is one of society's most important and influential institutions. People involved in the teaching profession have the power to influence and propagate the accepted norms of social behavior. When they utilize the powers granted to them to stifle individualism, teachers act as agents of the state. For example, Elisabeth Boudeux in il suffit d'un jour was condemned by her teachers because she displayed too much freedom of action. "Mais [la surveillante] se heurtait à un regard [d'Elisabeth] qu'elle jugeait méprisant, à un silence plein d'orgueil... Cette fille qui ne pleurait pas, ne posait jamais de

questions et qui, parfois, restait à son banc les jours de communion générale, n'en était pas moins admirée--ce qui la condamnait--par quatre ou cinq des meilleures (élèves) du cours."⁶¹ Maryse was also harassed by the principal of her school. "Vous n'êtes jamais dans les rangs, vous ne parlez que lorsqu'on demande du silence, et aux récréations vous êtes invisible. Si vous recherchez l'originalité, vous faites erreur."⁶² Independent-minded students generally found themselves pitted against an impersonal system which was allegedly created to educate individuals, but which in effect concentrated upon the collective cult, and the formation of members of society who would conform to the behavioral norms of the community. Though a majority of students successfully graduate, they are frequently seen as the real victims of society by some of their peers.

The heroine and narrator of Maryse remarks:

[...] Moi, je ne partais pas en vaincue. C'est pourquoi je revenais chercher dans ces pièces tout ce qu'il restait de moi. Je ne voulais y laisser aucune empreinte. Je partais avec les honneurs de la guerre, une drôle de guerre dont je ne connaissais pas l'agresseur. J'avais réussi à l'éviter toute l'année. De là, cette hâte à refermer les portes très vite derrière moi, pour ne pas lui laisser le temps de se présenter, s'il me suivait. J'aurais peut-être reconnu quelqu'un que j'aimais bien.⁶³

The school system is only one vehicle employed by society to channel the behavior of young people into directions that are socially acceptable. What is taught in the home is

⁶¹ Elie, Il suffit d'un jour, p. 76.

⁶² Doran, Maryse, p. 76.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 107-108.

often as restrictive to the individual as the instruction imparted in educational institutions. André Dastous in Délivrez-nous du mal is concerned because his sister and brother-in-law have already chosen careers for their small children.

[...] Je ne peux, sans frémir, voir ce cher Charles et ma soeur, se cacher pour épier leurs enfants jusque dans leurs jeux pour déceler "au plus vite" des motifs, des signes, des raisons de leur trouver un avenir préfabriqué. Cette façon qu'ont les parents de passer leur vie à préparer celles de leurs marmots, jetant sur eux leurs inhibitions, leurs désirs à eux, leurs espoirs frustrés, leurs rêves manqués. C'est d'une indécence, d'une tristesse... 64

Whether the training is formalized in an educational system, or limited to the home environment, the result is the same. The traditional bourgeoisie imposes its attitudes and behavior patterns upon succeeding generations and, in so doing, stifles individualism.

Contempt for the individual has pervaded every level of society. It is often manifested by community leaders who are made to feel superior to the masses. Throughout Quebec's history, the general population has regarded the clergy among the élite of the community. Though it is frequently thought that they are closer to the individual than other segments of society, it is taught in convents and seminaries that the clergy must remain detached from the very people they are supposed to direct. Pierre Dupas, the priest in Le Temps des hommes, was bothered by the exclusiveness of his office:

⁶⁴Jasmin, Délivrez-nous du mal, p. 79.

"Nous ne sommes pas de ce monde." Cette phrase à laquelle [Dupas] avait si ardemment cru, dure, d'un orgueil sublime, la musique la rendait presque séduisante. Il avait crevé des cadres, brisé une cellule, passé la clôture. Il avait franchi, aveugle et sourd, l'infranchissable frontière, rompu l'ordre immuable, choisi d'être exclu. "Nous ne sommes pas de ce monde." A part, hors d'atteinte, dans le privilège d'un ordre. Nous protègent d'invisibles murs qui ne peuvent être escaladés sans déchirements, sans blessure mortelle de l'âme, sans perte de soi-même. Hors des murs vous n'appartenez ni d'un côté, ne de l'autre. En suspens dans une zone de refus. Il n'y a de communications avec le monde que celles prévues, codifiées, aseptiques. Interdit de descendre dans la fosse et de se mettre au niveau du monstre.

"Nous ne sommes pas de ce monde." Nous officions seulement. Tu n'es plus un homme. Sans père, mère, frère, soeur. Choisi, élu, exclu; hissé au-dessus du flot de la vie, conduit hors du troupeau, arraché aux travaux des hommes. Abolie l'enveloppe de chair. Vomi hors du borbier.⁶⁵

Like the powerful ruling class, some priests have set themselves apart from the masses. Sensitive clergymen, like Dupas, are greatly influenced by a feeling of alienation. "Pourtant ce monde dont il n'était pas il avait su, au plus profond de sa chair, qu'il lui était lié, qu'il respirait avec lui, qu'il lui arracherait en fin de compte un cri de consentement. Dépouillé de sa véritable identité, vêtu d'un habit qui n'était pas le sien il n'avait pas été accepté."⁶⁶ Individuals in society who hold positions of power, including priests, are forced into well-defined social roles which leads ultimately to their own depersonalization.

It frequently takes an extraordinary event before one is willing to admit that societies which promote

⁶⁵ Langevin, Le Temps des hommes, p. 43.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

the collective cult show little regard for individual human beings. For Pierre Dupas, the realization came when he visited a dying boy shortly after his ordination:

[...] Au chevet de l'enfant une cloche de verre avait éclaté [en Pierre]; il avait vu, dans son être entier, vu dans une fulguration, comme une lame qui entrait en lui, la douleur humaine humiliée. [...] Pour la première fois dans sa vie consciente, il avait, une brève seconde, été un homme, un membre de l'espèce. Il avait quitté un abri sûr et ancien, les murs du séminaire, pour mettre le pied dans l'univers exposé, démuné des hommes. Pour une seconde il avait été de ce monde "dont nous ne sommes pas." 67

According to the accepted precepts of conduct which guide the élite, Pierre faltered. For a brief time, he empathized with the suffering youth. An enemy of secular humanism, the Church in Quebec possesses a built-in means for punishing people who weaken. Because he went against an article of faith when he empathized with the suffering boy, Pierre was made to feel guilty. This disposition to feel culpable was to assure his future co-operation.

"Alors vois-tu ce que j'ai fait?" [Pierre exclaims to Laurier, ten years after the incident]. "J'ai nié la rédemption. J'ai dit à Dieu: les souffrances de l'enfant sont inutiles, il est pur et vous le torturez en vain. Je ne crois plus en la rédemption, je crois à l'injustice. Guérissez-le. J'ai choisi l'enfant contre Dieu. Un prêtre choisit Dieu sans retour, Laurier. Moi, je me suis repris pour me donner à l'enfant. C'était comme si je n'avais plus été prêtre. Mon rôle était d'offrir ses souffrances à Dieu. Je n'ai pas accepté. [...] C'est un péché contre Dieu, Laurier. Le plus grand de tous. C'était me mettre à Sa place, guérir à Sa place, décider pour Lui du juste et de l'injuste." 68

Because Quebec society is anti-individualist, there are safeguards built into the system, sometimes in the form of

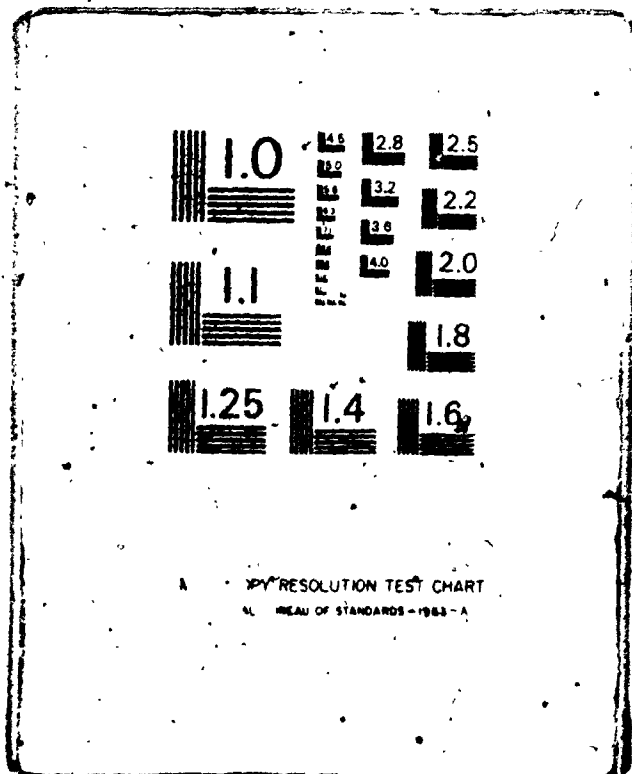
67 Langevin, Le Temps des hommes, p. 155.

68 Ibid., pp. 146-147.

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religious principles, which assure that individual leaders conform to their established roles.

Other factors contribute to the contempt for the individual often manifested in society. With the advent of the industrial revolution, western civilization became overly concerned with material values. The emphasis upon materialism meant a further decline in one's regard for human life. In Bonheur d'occasion, Emmanuel Létourneau imagined that the knockers on the doors of the wealthy proponents of war expressed their contempt for him and his comrades who would lose their lives overseas.

"Qu'est-ce que tu oses penser, toi, pauvre être humain! Prétendrais-tu par hasard te mettre à notre niveau? Mais ta vie, c'est ce qu'il y a de meilleur marché sur terre. Nous autres, la pierre, le fer, l'acier, l'or, l'argent, nous sommes ce qui se paye cher et ce qui dure." 69

However, the life of a human being is not always looked upon as "une chose si petite, si éphémère, si docile." 70

Dr. Simone MacDonald, one of the principal characters in Entre tes mains, claims that society's contempt for the individual is a kind of collective defense mechanism which keeps one from suffering mental anguish:

On supporte moins bien le regard d'un seul homme que celui d'une foule... Et notre culte du collectif, de l'organisé, n'aboutissait qu'à l'anarchie parce qu'il n'était qu'une fuite de chacun devant le regard de son frère. Toutes nos grandes charités collectives, organisées, paperassières--qui se justifiaient par une abstraction: l'efficience--n'avaient qu'un but: contre argent comptant, s'épargner l'insoutenable regard du frère qui souffre, et qui vous demande votre main... 71

⁶⁹Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 286.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 287.

⁷¹Maurice Gagnon, Entre tes mains (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960), p. 154.

A society is fundamentally weak when it acts as if it were obliged to undermine the rights of the individual in order to maintain the collective power it usurped when it created extensive safeguards for itself against individualism.

Dr. Simone MacDonald demonstrates that a significant degree of individualism is acceptable in certain professions. Because she is a strong individualist, she chose to become a medical doctor:

J'avais choisi la seule voie de toutes où l'intelligence trouve sa justification parce qu'elle se limite à l'individu et dédaigne la masse. Parce qu'elle mesure son horizon aux dimensions de l'être humain et n'a d'autre ambition que de faciliter, à un frère, à un autre, à un autre encore, la traversée des pires solitudes: celle de la souffrance physique et des terreurs qu'elle engendre.⁷²

Simone's views of industrialized society and the use it makes of human intelligence reflects those of young middle-class individuals:

Nous nous étions crus intelligents; nous avons découvert à l'essai que l'intelligence produit des petits machins qui vous couvrent et vous nourrissent mieux, qui vous transportent plus vite, mais l'intelligence n'avait apporté ni la paix de l'âme, ni celle de l'esprit. L'intelligence n'apportait pas le bonheur. Sa seule rédemption était dans ce qu'elle pouvait d'individuel et de spécifique pour des êtres vivants: un homme comprendre son frère, discerner la cause de son inconfort ou de sa souffrance, appliquer le remède...⁷³

Whereas the traditional bourgeoisie regarded intelligence in terms of the technology it produced, the succeeding generation was more concerned with wisdom in a very personal sense. For example, Mathieu's aim was to mobilize

⁷²Gagnon, Entre tes mains, pp. 152-153.

⁷³Ibid., p. 152.

his intellectual resources to help in the personal pursuit he was conducting:

"L'important est avant tout de chercher comment, moi, je pourrai atteindre la sagesse, ma sagesse. Je crois qu'il faut d'abord commencer par obtenir une parfaite coordination entre mes paroles, mes pensées et mes gestes. Tout ce que je dois faire, dire ou penser, doit être de moi, des centaines de personnes l'auraient-elles dit, fait, ou pensé avant moi. En un mot, tout recréer à mon usage."

La certitude d'être sur une voie qui ne peut que le mener au bonheur, le comble déjà d'allégresse. Certes, il ne sait pas encore qui il est; ni ce qui le fait différent des autres; il n'est pas toujours sûr non plus de ce qu'il croit aimer; mais par contre, il commence à savoir ce qui lui déplaît. En éliminant d'abord tout ce qui lui est contraire, il finira bien par connaître.⁷⁴

Intelligence can be viewed as a means of helping individuals to become more aware of themselves. For characters like Simone MacDonald, it is used to help alleviate the suffering of those who come to her for medical help.

However, only a few individualists are fortunate enough to enter a profession which encourages individualism. Most of the unique characters who appear in the novel are portrayed as social misfits, like Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit.

[Micheline] convenait que le jeune homme avait éveillé chez elle plus qu'une curiosité. Un intérêt prodigieux et, en même temps, une crainte. Avec les maigres matériaux qu'il lui avait fournis, elle tenta de l'analyser, d'expliquer ce qu'elle ressentait. Elle conclut que ce qui l'avait séduite était qu'il était différent, non pas meilleur ou plus vrai, mais plus intense, plus rare. Chez lui, elle craignait ce qui était trop lucide, ce qui opposait un refus à tout ce qu'elle acceptait sans interroger. Une façon de regarder les choses qui le rendait cruel, excessif.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 335-336.

⁷⁵Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 123.

Individuals like Cherteffe are seen as misfits because they refuse to conform to society's conventions. Also, as Jean Sicotte noted in Au delà des visages, some characters like Jacques Langlet appear as misfits because they object to:

"[...] une certaine forme de vie, une manière fausse de vivre sa vie. [...] [Jacques] détestait la vie mensongère telle que l'a édiflée une société qui ne tient pas à voir la vérité en face, qui ne veut même pas la regarder du tout, qui refuse simplement de l'admettre. C'est pour cette raison qu'il abhorrait de serrer des mains qu'il méprisait. C'est pour cela qu'il réagissait violemment devant le triomphe de certains hommes dont il savait, comme vous tous d'ailleurs, qu'ils sont des monstres d'injustice. Il ne croyait plus, depuis longtemps, à la signification des décorations. Pas même des chevaleries, les laïques... et les autres." 76

It is in great part due to the extreme unsocial acts of maladjusted individuals like Jacques Langlet that society feels justified in condemning individualism.

Consequently, it is not an easy task for a person to become an individual in the post-war society of Quebec. A number of soldiers who returned from Europe after the war could not easily readjust to civilian life. Some temporarily withdrew into themselves, seeking their identity. However, the paternalistic society of Quebec led by Maurice Duplessis was afraid of individuals. It conjectured that individualism would lead to crime and intolerable anti-social behavior. Hence, it believed that individualism had to be suppressed. However, oppressive measures did not always succeed:

⁷⁶Giroux, Au delà des visages, p. 123.

"[...] car être soi-même en toute circonstance implique une force intérieure qui ne peut tendre qu'à l'amélioration de l'individu. Les criminels, aussi bien que les fous, me paraissent au contraire, des êtres que les circonstances, ou une faiblesse qu'ils n'ont pas cherché à vaincre, ont privés de la satisfaction de s'exprimer. Le crime n'est jamais qu'une solution désespérée qui ne saurait tenter un homme en parfaite possession de lui-même." 77

Upon returning from Europe after the war, Bernard in La Fin des songes admitted to his wife that:

"Rien n'a plus de sens et il faudra commencer par nous retrouver nous-mêmes. Nicole, nous avons vécu sur des souvenirs et le présent nous a toujours manqué. Je sens le besoin de mettre de l'ordre dans ma vie, de lui donner un sens, de m'assurer au moins de quelques points de repère." 78

As Bernard realized, time in the historical sense is important. "'Non, il ne faut pas rêver. L'avenir paraît bouché parfois, mais il vaut mieux se raccrocher au présent, à n'importe quoi.'" 79 Like other soldiers whose identity had been changed by the armed forces, upon his return to Quebec society, Bernard recognized, "'qu'il me fallait tout apprendre, et reconnaître d'abord où je suis, où j'en suis. Si je préfère ne pas partir, c'est que je ne sais où aller, c'est que la réalité ne peut être ailleurs.'" 80 Bernard was more successful than his friend Marcel because, early in his quest, he realized that it was only with his wife Nicole, "qu'il y a encore un peu de chaleur humaine." 81

77 Loranger, Mathieu, p. 324.

78 Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 61.

79 Ibid., pp. 95-96.

80 Ibid., p. 119.

81 Ibid.

Like Marcel, many characters seek human compassion in an extra-marital relationship, generally without success. In the final analysis, it is the awareness of oneself and the environment that places one in harmony with reality, as Mathieu discovered after only a short while away from Montreal:

Conscient, pour la première fois, d'être en harmonie avec la nature, avec la vie, [Mathieu] marche d'un pas léger, s'émerveillant de tout. N'est-il pas solidaire de ces milliers de vies cachées dans l'herbe, ne concourt-il pas à ce bruissement continu, à cette palpitation de la terre, ne contribue-t-il pas lui aussi à cette interminable symphonie de la création?

L'idée de faire partie de cette création, d'un tout auquel il participe, bien que d'une façon particulière, individuelle; l'idée d'être à la fois une partie et un tout; un monde par lui-même, mêlé au rythme de l'univers, le pénètre de joie.⁸²

The pursuit of individualism is a continuing process because the self is in a constant state of development. For example, the hero of Mathieu realized that his struggle had just begun the day he became aware of his uniqueness.

"J'ai cru longtemps que du jour où j'obtiendrais la paix intérieure, cette paix serait à la fois stable et définitive. Quelle erreur! Cette paix est sans cesse à reconquérir et ne peut jamais être considérée comme acquise. Et comment pourrait-il en être autrement? Dans un univers en perpétuel mouvement, en progression permanente, pourquoi l'homme aurait-il seul le droit de se figer dans l'immobilité? Il n'y a pas de véritable stagnation; le moindre arrêt est l'équivalent d'un recul. Une évolution aussi constante exige nécessairement un réajustement qui met en équilibre instable ma trop récente quiétude.

Ai-je besoin de vous dire, d'ailleurs, que j'ai d'abord été un peu découragé à la pensée qu'en me cherchant je n'atteindrais qu'un Mathieu transitoire destiné à être modifié encore, et toujours susceptible

⁸²Loranger, Mathieu, p. 336.

de perfectionnement? Mais il m'a bientôt semblé que, loin d'avoir à me plaindre de cet état de choses, je devais m'en réjouir puisqu'il m'évitait de mettre un terme à un développement que je veux maintenant illimité." 83

Well-balanced people who are aware of their individuality are prepared to accept, and act according to, the ever changing facets of their personality. Any event, even a seemingly innocent cruise on a trans-atlantic liner, can alter one's attitudes significantly, as Pierre Desrochers discovered in Et le septième jour:

L'être humain se recrée sans cesse. Celui qui part ne revient jamais. Celui qui reste ne demeure pas. Les jours qu'on n'a pas partagés font, d'une présence familière, un monde à redécouvrir. Pierre se dit, songeant à sa femme, qu'à cause de Catherine il ne rentrerait pas chez eux. Il devait recommencer à les aimer, elle, Jacqueline et leur petite Agnès, avec un cœur qui ne serait plus celui du départ. 84

The doctrine that the state exists for the individual and not vice versa is a fundamental precept of individualism. By mobilizing the family, the school system, the clergy and other leaders of society, the Quebec government embarked upon an educational programme that was meant to halt the rapid surge of individualism that began after the Second World War. The reactionary measures taken by the traditionalists failed to stop the vigorous re-examination of the established values of society. During the post-war period, idealists rejected the falseness of many accepted traditions and opted for the truth they found in each individual. Whereas the establishment, by organizing itself into an

⁸³Loranger, Mathieu, p. 351.

⁸⁴France, Et le septième jour, p. 296.

impersonal community shielded from the human suffering and atrocities perpetrated upon mankind, in the name of justice, the succeeding generation sought a humanitarian alternative in individualism, for it was convinced that "la seule vérité est dans l'individu."⁸⁵

As a result of the lack of understanding that prevailed between the generations in traditional society, young middle-class individuals attempted to create lines of communication between themselves and others by stressing the value of mutual understanding. The usual procedure involved one of two possible forms; either the individual concentrated upon understanding others, or he sought their sympathy and compassion. Etienne Beaulieu in Mathieu took the former route:

Bien qu'il eût facilement et très tôt renoncé à être compris, comprendre les autres était, par contre, devenu pour Etienne une passion qui s'était développée avec le temps jusqu'à devenir un de ses plus puissants mobiles d'action.⁸⁶

In his youth, Etienne had been very precocious. Unwilling to tolerate the restrictions imposed upon him by his family, he escaped into a world of reverie.

Abandonné à ses songes, Etienne aurait pu se perdre en débauches d'imagination, mais c'était un enfant sage, naturellement sage, comme beaucoup d'enfants qu'on soupçonne d'être amorphes. Peu à peu, de lui-même, il remplaça les rêveries par des méditations qui lui permirent d'acquérir assez tôt une connaissance des autres qui, toute sa vie, devait lui être profitable.⁸⁷

⁸⁵Gagnon, Entre tes mains, p. 154.

⁸⁶Loranger, Mathieu, p. 132.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 126.

Even Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit "ne se guérirait jamais de cette curiosité qui le poussait à sonder l'intérieur des êtres et qui ne pouvait qu'aviver sa peine."⁸⁸ The desire to relate to others can also manifest itself in the form of expressing one's feelings openly. Micheline Giraud is such a person: "Il y avait en elle une douceur communicative qui gênait, une tendresse inemployée en quête d'un objet [...]."⁸⁹ In this, the similarity between Catherine Williams in Et le septième jour, and Micheline is striking, for "ne possédait-elle pas [Catherine aussi], un mystérieux pouvoir de communication avec les êtres? Elle les aimait."⁹⁰ It is the apparent failure on the part of the traditional bourgeoisie to communicate with the generation they produced, that created a desire among the youth to rebel against the reticence of their parents.

Communication is significant for middle-class idealists because it permits them to transmit and receive messages about themselves and the world around them. Etienne Beaulieu in Mathieu disagrees with his predecessors who utilized their intelligence solely to accomplish their own self-interested ends. For Etienne, "l'intelligence n'est pas faite que de raisonnement, mais aussi de perception, de compréhension..."⁹¹ Man is a complicated being who, because of his human feelings and sentiments, often cannot

⁸⁸Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 90.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰France, Et le septième jour, p. 63.

⁹¹Loranger, Mathieu, p. 321.

be readily deciphered by reason alone. Even the most extroverted people, those who easily communicate with others like Micheline Giraud, are not easily understood by other people. "[...] Malgré cela, [Micheline] était secrète, effacée. Qu'y avait-il sous l'apparence du corps jeune et net?"⁹² As well, Catherine Williams realized that Pierre Desrochers was more complicated than she had at first imagined him to be. "Il y avait chez lui quelque chose de secret, de profond, tellement plus humain, plus attachant que la jeunesse, et la séduction de Kenneth."⁹³ Intelligent middle-class youngsters did not underestimate the complicated nature of mankind. They regarded the human as a complex, not easily understood, being.

Those who make attempts at real communication generally reject the primacy of reason. They concentrate upon the intuitive knowledge that can be acquired from others. Although reason forms an important part of the process, as manifested by Alain Dubois in his attempts to understand his complicated wife Madeleine, the signals one receives from others are more valuable than any number of reasonable discussions one might initiate. In Poussière sur la ville, Alain Dubois was willing to accept Madeleine for what she was. Only then was he disposed by reason to understand her more fully:

⁹²Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 90.

⁹³France, Et le septième jour, p. 86.

Je n'ai jamais trouvé vulgaire ce goût qu'a Madeleine pour la romance. Je ne comprends pas que ce goût soit si vif, comme je ne comprends pas son exaltation au cinéma. Mais elle y met une telle spontanéité que je crois que cela correspond à quelque chose d'intérieur chez elle. Ce n'est pas de la sentimentalité. Elle ne goûte pas tellement la chanson elle-même, ou le film, que l'état de disponibilité où ils la mettent, un peu comme le ferait l'alcool. Cela appartient à cette part de son être que je n'atteins pas. Ce goût n'est pas vulgaire mais il a besoin d'un autre milieu que le mien pour s'épanouir.⁹⁴

Although communication between the Dubois is one-sided, Alain's sympathy for Madeleine makes it possible for them to remain together until the tragic end.

The most important ingredient in communication is sincerity. In order that the messages imparted by one individual be valid, they must be forthright and honest. It is this factor that made it possible for Bernard to communicate with his wife Nicole in La Fin des songes. After returning from Europe, Bernard realized that his relationship with the woman he had impetuously married before leaving for overseas military service had changed. Instead of keeping his feelings to himself, as his friend Marcel had done, he openly revealed them to Nicole:

"Crois-tu que je t'aie trompée? répondit Bernard. Il ajouta avec une profonde tristesse: Je reviens de si loin. Nicole! Tant d'heures perdues! Un si grand vide! Peu importe la liberté, mais si la vie nous a menti, pourquoi continuer à nous déchirer?"⁹⁵

When Nicole claims that she wants to remain married to him, Bernard replies: "C'est intolérable! Je n'ai pas l'habitude de ces situations fausses et je vais me retrouver de

⁹⁴ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, pp. 62-63.

⁹⁵ Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 61.

quelque façon que ce soit, à quelque niveau que ce soit.
 Je t'avouerai même que je n'ai pas de temps à perdre
 à me demander d'où nous venons ni où nous allons."⁹⁶

Bernard's frank admission inspired his wife's confidence.
 Nicole wanted to make their marriage work, for^{As} the idea
 of being left in solitude did not appeal to her. A similar
 situation arises in Et le septième jour between Catherine
 Williams and Pierre Desrochers. The young girl sought the
 protection of an older, married man.

Cet homme--Pierre Desrochers, c'était un nom agréable--
 s'il acceptait, comme ce soir, de partager sa solitude,
 ne la protégerait-il pas mieux que quiconque? Il
 lui avait d'emblée, inspiré confiance. De plus--
 Catherine devinait toujours ces choses-là--il était
 marié; c'est-à-dire, jugeait-elle, parfaitement
 inoffensif.⁹⁷

Communication between individuals is vital for
 mutual understanding. It is also an important ingredient
 in self-understanding. Through reflexion and meditation,
 individuals often arrive at a state of self-awareness.
 This process frequently takes place in solitude. Maryse
 was often attracted to nature in her moments of loneliness
 because that was where she gained greater insight into
 herself. However, at certain dark moments, she was not
 receptive to nature, as manifested in the following monologue:

Mais ce soir-là, j'avais erré dans le noir. La
 solitude n'était plus une amie, mes évasions ne
 conduisaient plus à des rendez-vous. J'arrivais au
 pied d'une colline qui n'avait plus rien de familier.
 Il n'y avait plus de bruits mystérieux qui faisaient
 une musique dans les branches, et les insectes fuyaient

⁹⁶Elie, La Fin des songes, p. 61.

⁹⁷France, Et le septième jour, pp. 39-40.

muets et effrayés. Ils n'étaient plus là ceux qui avaient été mes guides, ceux qui m'avaient fait connaître les délices du silence, ceux qui m'avaient appris toutes ces choses qui ne sont pas dans les livres, ceux de qui j'attendais une éternité heureuse.⁹⁸

The close relationships that often evolve between solitary people like Maryse, and nature, indicate that the entire universe plays a significant role for many who hold the personal value of communication in high regard.

Contempt for the individual is a cause of many difficulties in communication which prevail in Quebec society. In an attempt to overcome such barriers, many affluent young people make an extraordinary effort to understand others. Because the human being is not simply intellect, but endowed with feelings and sentiments as well, those who endeavor to understand and make themselves understood tend to regard intuition as equal to, if not more important than, the faculty of reason in matters of communication. Sincerity is another significant ingredient in the process because it inspires confidence and thereby facilitates free exchange of information. It is also possible for the communication process to exist in solitude, for messages are often received from nature.

Happiness is having or causing a feeling of great pleasure, joy, or contentment. Unlike the traditional bourgeoisie who gave up happiness for the traditional values of power, artfulness, security and religion, the young generation actively pursued it wherever it was to be found.

⁹⁸Doran, Maryse, pp. 122-123.

Many young people found happiness within themselves, either by remaining true to their inner being, by continually improving upon their personality, or by avoiding disagreeable situations. Some individuals, on the other hand, encountered happiness after experiencing the sentiment of love. Though happiness is regarded as a healthy emotional state, it is actively opposed by the generation which endorses traditional values.

In Le Mauvais pain, the reader is introduced to an embittered woman, Ruth Villemure, who tries to assure her two children that happiness is unimportant in life:

"Le bonheur: Ta soeur et toi n'avez que ce mot sur les lèvres. Comme si, à votre âge, on pouvait savoir à quoi cela rime.... Un jour ou l'autre, vous aussi, vous vieillirez. Vous verrez alors que le bonheur, ce n'est jamais ce qu'on avait d'abord imaginé. A vingt ans, on n'a qu'à fermer les yeux pour y croire." 99

Although Mme. Villemure tells her daughter, "le bonheur [...] à vrai dire, j'ignore ce que c'est,"¹⁰⁰ she makes every attempt to persuade both Marthe and Alain that if it did exist, it would not be worth pursuing:

"Ce n'est qu'à la longue qu'on découvre ce que le bonheur a de monotone, d'aride, de lassant. De prime abord, cela paraît injuste; on a du mal à se faire une raison. On voudrait tellement qu'il en soit autrement!... Mais le jour vient où, bon gré mal gré, il faut se résigner. On fait alors confiance à la vie en se disant que ce sera sans doute pour plus tard. Et demain arrive, si pareil, hélas! aux jours qui l'ont précédé qu'on reste déçu, un peu triste." 101

⁹⁹Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 29.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 30.

Ruth Villemure had forfeited her personal happiness for "ce qui prend racines quelque part, ce qu'on peut étreindre aux heures de lassitude et de découragement."¹⁰² Her domaine, La Hêtraie, gave her a kind of security that caused her to forget that she was unhappy much of the time.

Jamais madame Villemure n'avait boudé la vie et, cependant, elle avait dû s'arrêter en deça du bonheur. Faute de joie, elle avait recherché la sécurité, s'était enracinée chaque jour davantage dans une terre qui maintenant adhérait à elle.¹⁰³

Perhaps it is because she is unhappy that Ruth advises her son Alain in the course he should follow.

"Quand ces terres t'appartiendront, tu verras comme tu t'y attacheras. Elles t'accapareront tout entier, jusqu'à te rendre complètement indifférent à cette chose illusoire que ta soeur appelle le bonheur."¹⁰⁴

Other representatives of the traditional bourgeoisie cast doubt upon the personal value of happiness for other reasons. In Elise Velder for example, J.-P. Latour attempted to persuade his wife Hermine, that she was jeopardizing Marcel's chances of finding happiness because of her unscrupulous efforts to realize her personal ambitions.

"Tu dis que le rêve de ta vie est en miettes. Comprends donc que c'est pour faire place à un plus beau, ma pauvre femme. Plus beau et plus vrai: le bonheur de Marcel. S'il fallait que tu refuses ce rêve-là, ça voudrait dire que tu n'es plus la femme que j'ai menée au pied des autels: la folie des grandeurs t'aurait empoisonnée sans guérison possible."¹⁰⁵

The traditional bourgeoisie is hostile towards the young

¹⁰²Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 76.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 76-77.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 86-87.

¹⁰⁵Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 266.

generation's value of happiness because it threatens the survival of the traditional bourgeois values.

The concern of parents regarding the emphasis their offspring place on the quest for happiness is particularly in evidence whenever Ruth Villemure enters into a discussion with her daughter, Marthe. "'Mais une chose que je sais très bien, c'est que le bonheur est devenu chez toi une idée fixe. Il ne faut pas.'"¹⁰⁶ However, not all affluent young people are confident that the state of contentment they are seeking can be realized. For example, Lucille in Le Député, concluded that: "'Le bonheur n'est pas fait pour moi! Si j'avais la foi... Si j'avais la vocation, j'irais m'enfermer au fond d'un carmel.'"¹⁰⁷ Lucille's comment indicates that it was not unusual for unhappy people to seek solace in religion. Hence, the established religion in Quebec often played a major role in discrediting the personal value of happiness.

However, instances where the affluent youth reacted negatively to happiness are few. Most young people are like Maryse, who claims: "'Je rêve d'être heureuse.'"¹⁰⁸ Others, confronted with hostile parents like Marthe Villemure, became adamant in their quest for happiness. "'Je serai heureuse en dépit de tout.'"¹⁰⁹ In Mathieu, Etienne Beaulieu, the student, is described as having "pour le bonheur plus

¹⁰⁶Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 67.

¹⁰⁷Savary, Le Député, p. 97.

¹⁰⁸Doran, Maryse, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 67.

de goût que pour l'érudition," and that "il chercha inconsciemment à être heureux."¹¹⁰ As a child, Etienne was only content when he could mentally escape into his private world of reverie. Although he was often punished for day-dreaming, he continued the practice because it gave him great personal satisfaction.

Les punitions semblaient n'avoir aucune prise sur lui, non plus que les appels répétés à sa fierté et à son honneur. A vrai dire, s'il devinait bien ce que l'on attendait de lui, Etienne comprenait mal qu'on essayât de l'arracher à des rêves qui avaient pour lui tant d'importance et qui, en plus, lui procuraient tant de satisfaction. Il en conclut que les adultes avaient sur le bonheur des enfants des vues différentes des siennes, mais comme il s'agissait en définitive de son propre bonheur, il estima qu'il était meilleur juge et se garda de rien changer à sa conduite.¹¹¹

The quest for happiness involves more than the mundane search for pleasure. For many, the pursuit of happiness is one of the outcomes of the human condition. For example, Etienne Beaulieu was aware that since he could not achieve a real rapport with the other members of his community, it was fruitless to look for happiness outside himself:

Son expérience personnelle, acquise dès les premières années de collège, lui avait fait rapidement comprendre qu'il n'existait pas de véritables contacts entre les êtres humains et que chacun allait dans la vie séparé d'autrui par des cloisons étanches, impénétrables. Dès lors, renonçant à se faire comprendre, il avait tendu à ne chercher son bonheur qu'en lui-même. Le cherchant il l'avait trouvé; l'ayant trouvé, il avait eu soin d'organiser sa vie de façon à toujours être heureux.¹¹²

¹¹⁰Loranger, Mathieu, p. 125.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 126.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 131.

For Etienne, the secret of happiness is to be found in the individual.

"Je t'ai dit tantôt que je cherchais, après bien d'autres et comme bien d'autres, le 'secret' du bonheur. J'en arrive à me demander si un homme qui serait capable d'être lui-même constamment, vingt-quatre heures par jour, ne posséderait pas une partie importante de ce secret. Les moments les plus heureux ne sont-ils pas ceux-là précisément où l'on agit en toute liberté, avec un naturel parfait; ceux où l'on arrive à s'exprimer par des actes qui, loin de nous contrarier, nous permettent de nous épanouir?"¹¹³

The notion that keeps recurring is that a feeling of satisfaction results when one consciously agrees to accept reality and live each experience in life to the fullest. That is how Marthe in Le Mauvais pain views her quest for happiness: "L'idée ne lui était jamais venue d'un bonheur qui fût plus une espèce de point d'appui et de garantie qu'un acquiescement à la vie."¹¹⁴ Joyous moments are what the heroine of Maryse calls happiness:

Parfois quelque chose vibre en moi parce que j'ai entendu un air de chanson qui m'entraîne et que je me surprends à fredonner, ou que dans une fenêtre ouverte, d'où m'arrivent des échos du bonheur qui s'y trouve, j'installe une histoire toute neuve où je suis l'héroïne.¹¹⁵

By accepting to live life to the fullest and by taking advantage of pleasurable moments, an individual cannot help but ameliorate his personality. It took a long time for Mathieu Normand to appreciate the validity of this notion. At the end of Mathieu, however, he succeeded in finding happiness.

¹¹³Loranger, Mathieu, p. 323.

¹¹⁴Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 76.

¹¹⁵Doran, Maryse, pp. 150-151.

Cette joie que j'ai tant souhaitée, ce n'est pas en vain que je la cherchais: elle existe. Si j'ai mis tant de temps à l'atteindre, c'est que je refusais de reconnaître qu'elle tient tout entière dans l'amélioration de l'individu, et qu'il suffit de se vaincre pour que jaillisse la lumière. C'est dire que pour l'homme il n'y a qu'une solution: être un saint! 116

Once the joy of being alive has been experienced, one frequently pursues it wherever it leads. Danielle Cinq-Mars in Mathieu relinquished many of the other amenities of life for it.

[...] [Danielle] savait même qu'elle pouvait être heureuse à peu près n'importe où et dans n'importe quelles circonstances. Tout en elle rejetait le malheur; non seulement le malheur, mais les occasions de malheur, tout ce qui, de près ou de loin, risquait de la priver d'un certain état de joie sans lequel la vie lui paraissait dépourvue de sens et d'intérêt. 117

For many middle-class individualists, happiness can be found anywhere, except in the hostile environment of the traditional bourgeois family, for it really exists inside the individual who seizes the opportunity to pursue it with vigor.

There are some people who cannot be happy when they are alone. Marcel Latour in Elise Velder was one such individual, and his prime concern was to convince his mother, and indeed, Elise, the woman he loved, of this fact.

Depuis qu'il voyait Elise, il connaissait une euphorie où les laideurs et les mesquineries de la réalité n'avaient pas leur place. Dès le jour où il parlerait à sa mère, son bonheur perdrait de sa pureté par le seul fait qu'il faudrait l'expliquer, l'étayer d'arguments, le prouver. Ce bonheur d'aimer Elise et d'être aimé d'elle, il faudrait le défendre contre les objections et les sarcasmes, il faudrait descendre au

116 Loranger, Mathieu, p. 352.

117 Ibid., p. 172.

niveau de la querelle. Ces scènes détestables ne manqueraient pas de l'attrister. Elise s'en apercevrait. Elle voudrait savoir... Et parce qu'il connaissait Elise pour une défaitiste, Marcel avait voulu d'abord l'amener à considérer leur bonheur comme à ce point indispensable, qu'elle serait prête à affronter tous les orages.¹¹⁸

For individuals who seek true happiness in love, as well as for those who pursue it in themselves, the quest becomes an adventure which adds an extra dimension to the pleasure they are seeking. In Evadé de la nuit, it is the adventurous aspect that appealed to Jean Cherteffe, after he fell in love with Micheline Giraud.

Son aventure devait maintenant suivre des voies connues et c'est à cela que [Jean] tenta de s'opposer. Ils devaient être uniques, tendus démesurément vers le bonheur, fondus l'un dans l'autre, si libres que les autres pussent les haïr. Nulle autre ressource que de tout miser. Les demi-départs étaient maintenant interdits.¹¹⁹

In his doctoral dissertation: "The Treatment of Love in the French-Canadian Novel", George Black states:

The search for love may be a search for happiness, and the relationship between love and happiness is a subject which recurs in the French-Canadian novel. No simple description of the connection between the two is to be found."¹²⁰

Part of the answer can be attributed to the nature of communication. Through Parkill, André Langevin in Evadé de la nuit remarks: "'L'amour est l'expression la plus sensible de cette tentative de communication dont nous sommes tous victimes."¹²¹ Because the state of happiness

¹¹⁸ Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 120.

¹¹⁹ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 123.

¹²⁰ George Black, "The Treatment of Love in the French-Canadian Novel" (Unpublished doctoral thesis: The University of Western Ontario, 1971), p. 429.

¹²¹ Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 186.

is often an outcome of the high level of communication and mutual understanding that the sentiment of love inspires, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the search for love may be a manifestation of a desire to communicate with individuals who make one happy.

The quest for personal happiness goes on despite the contempt shown by the traditional bourgeoisie who view the state of contentment in young people as a threat to their values. For the young individualist, however, the quest for happiness does not signify the emergence of an age of decadence in the province of Quebec. It denotes a quest for inner solace which can be arrived at either by remaining true to the self or by reaching a high degree of mutual understanding with another individual.

The young bourgeoisie consider love to be of such importance in their lives, that they have adopted it as one of their personal values. It is not surprising that it should be the affluent individualists who give primacy to love, since it is a complex sentiment requiring a great deal of leisure time to flourish. Love, as it is experienced by middle-class youth, follows either traditional notions, or more innovative forms which give primacy to individual freedom and intensity of expression. Neither inclination precludes the element of physical love. However, Platonic relationships like those described in the novels of Laure Conan, and in other traditional novels, are conspicuously absent. The Platonic ideals of love are replaced by an element of pity which is regarded as an

important factor in human relationships. The question of marriage, when it arises, is either seen as a happy social arrangement or an obstacle that could undermine the quality of the relationship.

For some middle-class males, the sentiment of love includes the traditional inclination to attain possession over the young lady for whom they have an affection. In Elise Velder for example, Marcel Latour does not look upon Elise simply as an individual he loves. Rather, he sees her as an integral part of himself, as the following monologue indicates:

Elise! les yeux d'Elise! la présence d'Elise! Où était-elle, l'unique au monde? Où était-elle, pendant cette comédie? [le dîner]. Elle était à la fois lointaine et toute proche; mieux que proche; en lui-même, respirant en lui-même. La pensée d'Elise était en lui jusqu'à l'extrême bout de ses doigts, dans chaque nerf, dans chaque battement de son cœur, chaque pulsation de chaque artère. Il ne fallait plus qu'il commît l'imprudence de s'absenter en lui-même, car sa bouche privée de surveillance murmurerait le nom d'Elise. 122

Marcel's desire to integrate Elise's personality into his own is consistent with the traditional male concept of love. However, the manner in which Marcel thinks of his beloved is reciprocated by Elise. She wants to give up her individuality and become, in a sense, a part of him.

Au moment qu'ils remontaient en voiture, dans ce quartier chinois aux pâles réverbères, soudain [Marcel] l'avait enveloppée de ses bras, et [Elise] avait connu la chose irremplaçable, le désir d'être à lui de toute sa pensée, de toute son âme, sinon encore dans sa chair. Il ne fallait plus hésiter à être heureuse, --malgré tout. A ce bonheur conquis pour elle de haute lutte, il fallait se donner entière. 123

¹²² Choquette, Elise Velder, p. 179.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 293.

This traditional concept of love is not unusual among younger members of the middle class, for if during the course of their upbringing they had been taught about love at all, it was this time-honored notion of the sentiment that they received. Micheline Giraud in Evadé de la nuit, although she no longer supported such views, explained to Jean that when she first began to dream of the ideal lover, that he was always someone who would guide her, someone to whom she could give herself:

"Quand j'étais enfant, je rêvais souvent que j'aimais, mais ce n'était jamais un homme comme toi. Je me suis vu partout avec mon amant, dans toutes les circonstances [...]. J'aimais toujours un homme d'un certain âge, dans la trentaine; un homme qui eût été un peu mon père. Ce que j'ai vécu avec toi dépasse mes rêves." 124

Traditional notions of love persist among the youth of the middle class because of the initiation they received from a puritanical society.

Many middle-class individualists began to appreciate relationships where the individual who retained personal freedom was considered as sincere as the beloved who would forego the desire to assert strong personality traits for fear of intimidating her partner. Instead of the desire to control the beloved, believers in personal freedom want the partner to express individual personality traits openly. For example, in Poussière sur la ville, Alain Dubois refused to limit Madeleine's insatiable desire for freedom even though he had the right to request more conventional behavior from his wife: "Oh! non, je ne lui passerai pas le

¹²⁴Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 213.

licol: C'est en liberté qu'il me faut la posséder."¹²⁵

It is not because he is a coward, as the town of Macklin believes, that he allows Madeleine to do as she pleases.

It is, because his love for her was based upon her personality, not his own character traits, as was the case with Marcel Latour and Elise Velder. "[Madeleine] n'est pas un miroir où me réfléchir, ni un écho de ma voix, mais une proie.

Elle se moquerait la première du mot communion et de tous les autres qui suggèrent l'image de deux amants unis en un seul."¹²⁶

Since time in its historical perspective is an important factor, freedom involves more than a complete liberty on the part of the lovers to live as separate entities. For the young affluent person, the present is of primordial concern. For example, Catherine Williams in Et le septième jour became concerned with the element of time when she realized that her relationship with Pierre Desrochers was limited to the duration of the trans-atlantic crossing.

D'ailleurs, elle ne demandait rien. Rien que la permission de s'avouer une seule fois qu'elle aimait Pierre. Qu'importait le temps, avant et après? C'était maintenant qui comptait. Et maintenant elle aimait Pierre. Et ce soir elle danserait avec lui!¹²⁷

Pierre, who until that time had remained faithful to his wife, reciprocated the affection and confidences that Catherine lavished upon him. However, at first he did not

¹²⁵Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 64.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷France, Et le septième jour, p. 185.

understand how the young people aboard the ocean liner could accept to love each other without any regard for the element of continuity which plays a significant role in any traditional concept of love:

Leur conception de l'amour serait-elle d'intensité plutôt que de durée [Pierre asks himself]? L'amour: Il semble, justement, que cette jeunesse le situe dans l'espace, dans l'émotion, dans le risque. Ont-ils besoin de précarité? Et cet instinct latent de capitulation devant des changements possible, serait-ce un nouveau mal du siècle? Mais comment peut-on accepter d'aimer ainsi, privé consciemment, de la notion de continuité?¹²⁸

Contrary to what Pierre thinks, the young people he envies have what Catherine calls "une soif de définitif," and "ce désir de fixation."¹²⁹ These desires form part of the human psyche. Yet, situations often occur when interpersonal relationships cannot be expected to become permanent. Individuals who value the sentiment of love contend that one should not forego the experience simply because there is no chance for it to endure. It is this kind of temporary situation that characterized the relationship of Catherine and Pierre on the "Ile-de-France".

[Catherine] se demandait [...] si tous ces gens qui s'étaient aimés se reverraient à New York, en France ou ailleurs; ou bien si leur intimité de cette semaine-là resterait sans lendemain. Que c'était déroutant toutes ces correspondances que le raccourci d'une vie commune faisait découvrir chez les êtres! Avait-on, en de telles circonstances, une compréhension plus aiguë de la fraternité humaine, ou simplement plus de loisir pour la cultiver?¹³⁰

¹²⁸ France, Et le septième jour, pp. 275-276.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 184.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 245-246.

Those who believe in love concur with the adage that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. It appears to conform with their general outlook on life, especially that aspect of it which emphasizes the quantity and variety of human experiences.

The physical side of love is regarded as an important aspect of any relationship. Generally, the endorsement of the personal value of love indicates that traditional puritanical guidelines fall by the wayside. Micheline Giraud in Evadé de la nuit was thankful to Jean Cherteffe because he introduced her to concepts that were different from those she had been taught regarding human relationships. "Tu m'as appris la vie, celle du cœur pour laquelle rien n'est laid, pour laquelle il n'existe pas de faute."¹³¹ However, a number of supposed avant-garde, young, middle-class people experience guilt after indulging in sexual behavior. Robert Bouchard in Le Député is one of these:

Il n'avait rien prémédité. Si Suzanne s'était refusée, il serait rentré sans éprouver une amère déception. Non, c'est maintenant qu'il est déçu. Pourquoi avoir créé ces liens charnels entre Suzanne et lui? Il n'est pas le premier, bien sûr, Louis Jeanteau avant lui... Mais ce n'est pas une raison pour céder au vertige. Il n'a rien à donner à Suzanne, rien qu'un fugitif plaisir. Si Robert savait accorder un nom au sentiment qui l'étreint, il l'appellerait remords.¹³²

The same traditional society whose moral and religious outlook restricted love as a suitable subject for the

¹³¹Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 213.

¹³²Savary, Le Député, p. 109

novelist,¹³³ also influenced the individual members of society to a considerable degree. Like Robert Bouchard who took a shower after sleeping with Suzanne, "[pour] se sentir propre,"¹³⁴ the liberated Danielle Cinq-Mars also experienced feelings of guilt whenever the affection she felt for a man developed into the possibility of sexual contact. However, Danielle's preoccupation was not with doing something wrong. She was more concerned with the possibility of becoming a hypocrite than with guilt feelings that might result from her experiences. For example, after attracting Jacques Aubry to her, Danielle began to blame herself for the negative responses with which she greeted his advances, since her actions did not conform with her feelings.

Elle recommença à se sentir humiliée, diminuée, perdue, se cherchant et ne se trouvant pas. Jamais elle n'avait éprouvé aussi longtemps un malaise semblable. Tout ce qu'il y avait de vrai en elle protestait contre la fausseté de sa voix, contre la fausseté de ses gestes, contre la fausseté de ses paroles, contre la fausseté de toute son attitude. Plus le temps passait, moins s'effaçait l'odieuse sensation de ne plus savoir ce qu'elle pensait ni ce qu'elle était. "Je suis sûre que je m'analyse trop, je ne parviens pas à m'oublier. Je me regarde vivre, je m'écoute parler, c'est affreux! On ne peut pas vivre et se regarder vivre! Je veux vivre!"

Elle eut un regard de rancœur vers Jacques qui, avec assurance, calme et certitude, sans interrogation ni perplexité, cherchait à la prendre dans ses bras.¹³⁵

It is generally agreed that sex has a significant role to play, even by those who are inclined to think of the

¹³³Black, "The Treatment of Love in the French-Canadian Novel," p. xx.

¹³⁴Savary, Le Député, p. 110.

¹³⁵Loranger, Mathieu, p. 181.

sentiment of love in a more traditional context. For example, Robert Choquette is willing to concede that sex should be viewed as a normal and desirable component of the love experience. Although the reader of Elise Velder is not privy to the sexual fantasies of either Marcel Latour or Elise Velder, Marcel explains the reason for this omission towards the end of the novel.

[Marcel] comprenait qu'à venir jusqu'ici, sauf dans les tout premiers temps, il avait été distrait du désir physique par la lutte à soutenir contre sa mère, et même, un temps, contre Elise elle-même. A présent que les obstacles n'existaient plus, le désir remuait en lui, et Marcel, d'une voix rauque, comblait son impatience avec des mots. Parce qu'il savait Elise singulièrement sensible aux mots, il s'accordait cette volupté d'appuyer de toute sa voix sur chaque phrase, de peser sur elle de tout son regard. Cela était délibéré: il voulait la troubler. De la voir ainsi trembler et rougir devenait comme une promesse de leurs joies futures. Il la troublait délibérément, mais pas froidement, et c'est cela qui faisait toute la différence au monde. Il la troublait troublé lui-même, et dans son coeur plus encore que dans sa chair. Déjà, à ses yeux, elle était sa femme; tout cela, à ses yeux, était justifié par la certitude qu'il n'y aurait plus désormais qu'Elise, pour toujours. 136

Authors like Yves Thériault, Eugène Cloutier, and André Langevin make a conscious effort to stress the sexual aspect of love in their novels. Alain Dubois, the protagonist in Poussière sur la ville, discovered when Madeleine withdrew her affection, that the physical ties which had existed between them were very important to their relationship:

La chair souffre davantage que le cerveau, que l'esprit qui ne peut, lui, pleurer sur une image. Quels ont été, d'ailleurs, nos liens spirituels? Fragiles. Madeleine n'a jamais été pour moi cette

compagne qui imprime ses pas dans la trace de celui qu'elle aime; sur le plan intellectuel nous n'avons jamais communiqué. Qu'aurais-je fait d'un double de moi-même? Je ne l'ai jamais non plus, par la force des choses, dominée par l'esprit. Nos rapports étaient physiques, essentiellement. J'ai aimé en elle la liberté de son corps et cet amour-là, qui peut affirmer qu'il n'est pas le vrai? 137

Contrary to the traditional concept of love where sexual constraints are respected, those who pursue the personal value of love reject Platonic idealism for more human expressions of one's feelings for the beloved. One of the means of expressing these sentiments is through normal sexual behavior.

Despite the emphasis placed upon the physical aspect of love, an unselfish concern for the welfare of the beloved is also clearly discernible. Alain Dubois, for example, would have been justified, according to traditional rationale, to abandon Madeleine. Yet, he remained faithful to her because he understood the grief that she was experiencing.

Ah! Comme je comprends maintenant! Je ne peux rendre Madeleine heureuse, mais je n'ajouterai pas à son malheur. Je ne suis plus son mari, je suis son allié contre l'absurde cruauté. Le bonheur qu'elle a donné déjà me revient intact. Je ne le vois plus à la lumière des événements des derniers jours, et je suis heureux de n'avoir rien commis d'irréparable contre elle. C'est un abcès qui coule enfin. Je me stérilise pour l'aimer mieux. Ma pitié, c'est peut-être ça l'amour en fin de compte, quand on a cessé d'aimer comme si on ne devait jamais mourir. 138

In Evadé de la nuit, it was Jean Cherteffe's distress that

¹³⁷ Langevin, Poussière sur la ville, p. 131.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 153.

works performed by the traditional bourgeoisie. Instead of treating a person in need as a destitute beggar, it is felt that he should be regarded as a brother, "qui change de pays parce qu'il n'y a plus de viande à tuer dans le sien."¹⁴⁶ Micheline Giraud in Evadé de la nuit felt particularly good when she was at the hospital, helping people who were less fortunate than she.

[...] Elle préférait sans conteste se trouver à l'hôpital que chez elle. Elle se fût confiée davantage à l'une des infirmières ou à la mère d'un des petits malades qu'à son père ou à un camarade de cours. Elle ne raisonnait rien de cela. Elle le sentait instinctivement. Etait-ce cela aussi qui l'attirait en Jean?¹⁴⁷

The desire to bring happiness into a sick person's life encouraged Micheline to do volunteer work at the hospital. A similar inclination compelled her to lavish affection upon Jean Cherteffe. "[Micheline] s'aperçut que ce qui l'attirait vraiment vers [Jean] était qu'elle voulait à tout prix qu'il s'épanouît, qu'elle voulait le changer, l'obliger à aimer la vie et à la goûter sans honte."¹⁴⁸ Similar aspirations motivated Etienne Beaulieu of Mathieu to devote so much of his time to the search for "un art de vivre". His ambition was to find "un moyen d'atteindre au bonheur, non pas pour le plus grand nombre, mais pour chaque individu en particulier..."¹⁴⁹ As a young man he had discovered

¹⁴⁶Gagnon, Entre tes mains, p. 152.

¹⁴⁷Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 124.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁴⁹Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 320-321.

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¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁴⁹Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 320-321.

react to stressful situations by striking out in all directions, with less regard for humanity than the forces responsible for causing alienation in the first place. Several of Marie-Claire Blais' characters, especially some in Tête blanche and La Belle bête, are representative of this third personality type.

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¹Eugène Cloutier, Les Inutiles (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1956), p. 15.

rejected with a clear conscience. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is generally young people of means who are at the vanguard of innovations in the area of human relations which stress the sentiment of love.

There is a selfless aspect to the affluent youth's personal system of values which affirms that everyone in society has a right to a livelihood without constantly having to worry about the basic human needs. Recognizing that many people require help before this objective can be attained, middle-class young people who possess the necessary resources and leisure time frequently feel compelled to offer their services. They do so out of compassion for others rather than out of a sense of duty. Some idealists feel that they can best serve their fellow man by entering one of the traditional professions, such as medicine or the priesthood. Still, the selfless effort of volunteer workers is frequently unappreciated by headstrong individuals who refuse assistance. On the other hand, many young people reap unexpected rewards for their good deeds.

Not all individuals who espouse personal values are suitable for the task of helping their fellow man. Robert Bouchard in Le Député pointed this out to his sister who was doing volunteer work for the Red Cross: "Toutes ces oeuvres ne sont pour toi... qu'une façon d'échapper... de te fuir toi-même..."¹⁴⁵ Idealists like Bouchard feel that the deeds of young people must not copy the impersonal charitable

¹⁴⁵Savary, Le Député, p. 128.

works performed by the traditional bourgeoisie. Instead of treating a person in need as a destitute beggar, it is felt that he should be regarded as a brother, "qui change de pays parce qu'il n'y a plus de viande à tuer dans le sien."¹⁴⁶ Micheline Giraud in Evadé de la nuit felt particularly good when she was at the hospital, helping people who were less fortunate than she.

[...] Elle préférait sans conteste se trouver à l'hôpital que chez elle. Elle se fût confiée davantage à l'une des infirmières ou à la mère d'un des petits malades qu'à son père ou à un camarade de cours. Elle ne raisonnait rien de cela. Elle le sentait instinctivement. Etait-ce cela aussi qui l'attirait en Jean?¹⁴⁷

The desire to bring happiness into a sick person's life encouraged Micheline to do volunteer work at the hospital. A similar inclination compelled her to lavish affection upon Jean Cherteffe. "[Micheline] s'aperçut que ce qui l'attirait vraiment vers [Jean] était qu'elle voulait à tout prix qu'il s'épanouît, qu'elle voulait le changer, l'obliger à aimer la vie et à la goûter sans honte."¹⁴⁸ Similar aspirations motivated Etienne Beaulieu of Mathieu to devote so much of his time to the search for "un art de vivre". His ambition was to find "un moyen d'atteindre au bonheur, non pas pour le plus grand nombre, mais pour chaque individu en particulier..."¹⁴⁹ As a young man he had discovered

¹⁴⁶Gagnon, Entre tes mains, p. 152.

¹⁴⁷Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 124.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁴⁹Loranger, Mathieu, pp. 320-321.

the secret of how to attain inner peace, and he wanted to help others realize a similar state in their own lives. When his father suggested that it was time for him to take charge over the employees of the family firm, Etienne, became incensed: "Mais je ne veux pas les diriger: s'écria Etienne que cette seule idée glaçait d'avance. Je veux simplement les rendre heureux."¹⁵⁰ The drive to help others even in unconventional situations, such as that facing Danielle Cinq-Mars in Mathieu, is frequently so compelling that it is often impossible to refuse. For example, when Etienne asked Danielle for her help in guiding Mathieu out of his deep depression, she consented, even though she disliked Mathieu Normand very much:

"Vous voyez, dit-elle après un silence, il n'y a pas seulement moi, tout le monde est injuste envers lui: [...] Vous saviez bien, n'est-ce pas, que finalement j'accepterais de l'aider? Que je n'ai même pas le choix, que pour être en paix avec moi-même je dois accepter?"¹⁵¹

Some young people of means feel they can best serve their fellow man by opting for one of the traditional professions. Sometimes, the personal cost appears to be very great, as in the case of Alain Villemure in Le Mauvais pain, who gave up La Hêtraie, the family estate, in order to become a priest. "Pour Ruth, la décision d'Alain demeurait inconcevable. Elle la jugeait du dernier ridicule."¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰Loranger, Mathieu, p. 128.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp. 249-250.

¹⁵²Pinsonneault, Le Mauvais pain, p. 88.

However, Alain ignored his mother's pleas, so devoted was he to the ideal of alleviating human suffering. Charles in Maryse, also opted for the priesthood. He had "l'intention d'aller exercer [son] ministère dans les pays les plus lointains,"¹⁵³ where his ministry would do the most good. Though the bourgeoisie who think highly of the personal value of helpfulness rarely reject the traditional professions nor modern technological advances as means of achieving their goal, they do insist upon the primordial worth of the individual. Dr. Simone MacDonald in Entre tes mains was well aware of the value of technology in the practice of modern medicine, yet she never lost sight of the importance of the individual in the process:

Toute leur paperasse--la nôtre aussi d'ailleurs--servait surtout à vous faire connaître, à créer dans l'esprit du diagnosticien, une image de vous, une personnalité, à vous refaire une individualité à ses yeux. On créait des machines et des procédures pour mieux servir l'individu; et puis, au terme du processus, il fallait quand même qu'un individu vous regardât, ajustât les chiffres, les symboles, les mesures à votre dimension, les interprêtât, en rejetât ce qu'ils avaient de statistique et d'impersonnel, en tirât une personne qui avait un visage et un nom.¹⁵⁴

Despite a willingness to serve, many situations arise where individuals in need of help refuse the aid of those who offer their support. Volunteer workers are frequently confronted with resistance, especially when the aid they have to offer is not in the form of material aid. Pierre Dupas in Le Temps des hommes, knew what it was like to be opposed, for

¹⁵³Doran, Maryse, p. 67.

¹⁵⁴Gagnon, Entre tes mains, pp. 153-154..

that is what occurred whenever he tried to give spiritual guidance to his fellow workers in the lumber camp.

Les hommes ne le laissaient les aider que d'une façon: les soulager des corvées et leur prêter de l'argent. Pour le reste ils étaient fermés, ne l'accueillaient pas, ne partageaient pas avec lui. Il luttait cependant contre le sentiment d'inutilité et se refusait à mépriser cette indigence. Elle le réduisait à l'humilité.¹⁵⁵

Perhaps because they have already given up hope, many desperate individuals in need of help are not immediately receptive to the optimism which enthusiastic young workers attempt to impart. Encouraging others to continue struggling, despite the apparent hopelessness of the immediate situation, often contributes to the ultimate survival of those who suffer from severe depression. Robert Bouchard realized too late that his sister Lucille had committed suicide because "il n'avait pas su la protéger, la tirer du marasme où elle s'enlisait."¹⁵⁶ Jean Cherteffe in Evadé de la nuit eventually realized that he had been saved,¹⁵⁷ despite his objections. Due to the selfless efforts of some helpful people, many unfortunate individuals, like Cherteffe, were spared the misery of material deprivation, mental anguish, and in a number of instances, the agony of death.

Unselfish acts of kindness often benefit the person performing the deed. For example, Micheline was amply rewarded by Jean Cherteffe for guiding him out of his depression.

¹⁵⁵Langevin, Le Temps des hommes, p. 90.

¹⁵⁶Savary, Le Député, p. 158.

¹⁵⁷"Pourtant, il lui fallait avouer que Micheline l'avait sauvé, que, si elle n'avait pas été à ses côtés, il eût touché le fond lui aussi." Langevin, Evadé de la nuit, p. 119.

He introduced her to a kind of life that made her truly happy. Etienne Beaulieu was compensated for the concern he had for his employees. Each worker was more productive in his job because he occupied "la place qui lui convenait."¹⁵⁸ In Bonheur d'occasion, Emmanuel Létourneau told his working-class friends that his decision to go overseas to help alleviate the misery of those who were subjugated under Hitler's fascist rule was not entirely selfless. "'T'as-t'y déjà pensé, fit-il, qu'un gars s'aidait des fois en aidant quelqu'un d'autre.'" ¹⁵⁹ Resourceful individuals who decide to promote causes that benefit the community also serve themselves in the process.

Those in quest of personal values are often accused of being egotistical idealists by the traditional bourgeoisie. However, many people belonging to this group are anything but selfish. Though they refuse to propagate the impersonal aspect of traditional charitable institutions, a significant number of middle-class young people promote the value of being helpful to the less fortunate members of society. Though some assistance is not welcomed by those who need it most, volunteers are frequently rewarded for their efforts, for in addition to the personal satisfaction that is often derived, society as a whole commends selfless acts of kindness.

The personal values sought after by middle-class youngsters reveals a great deal about their nature. Freedom

¹⁵⁸ Loranger, Mathieu, p. 128.

¹⁵⁹ Roy, Bonheur d'occasion, p. 49.

is a value which focuses upon their opposition to the paternalistic system as it is manifest in the family, as well as in the Quebec political system. The value that they place in individualism shows an ardent desire to acquire a personal identity rather than twisting and molding their personalities to fit the traditional models that society has created. They demonstrate disapproval of the reticence and secrecy of their parents by adopting the value of communication as the vehicle by which they hope mutual understanding will be improved. Their awareness of what life should be all about is reflected in the personal value of happiness. Romantics they are in part, for they have confidence that love is an avenue towards happiness. However, they are also realists, for they believe that one cannot remain happy with the knowledge that so many are living on the verge of despair. The selfless part of their nature is revealed in the high value they place upon the act of assisting others. The traditional bourgeoisie looks contemptuously upon youth, for they believe their descendants to be undisciplined, self-indulgent libertines who are ungrateful for all of the privileges they have received. However, by their system of personal values, middle-class youngsters reveal themselves to be true individuals who have rejected the traditional paternalistic outlook on life for the humanist alternative.

CHAPTER XIII

QUEST OF THE ALIENATED GENERATION

The term "alienated generation" is used to identify a group of people who can be regarded as estranged from their social milieu. Their views regarding the family and community differ from the attitudes expressed by members of the three social classes who seek personal values. The alienated generation distinguishes itself by its inimical indifference towards organized society.

Three basic types of personalities form the alienated generation. There are some people who are acutely affected by the driving forces in society which they feel are destroying humanity. Feeling too weak to influence the course of events, they become cynical and indifferent. Often, they withdraw into an egocentric world where, by forming a parasitic relationship with the larger community, they fend for themselves without showing any regard for others. Harvé Jodoin in Le Libraire exemplifies this type of personality. There is another group which is portrayed as being in a state of childlike innocence concerning the realities of the world. Like Jean and Antoine in Les Inutiles, this type of personality cannot cope effectively when confronted by reality. Not infrequently, these over-protected people

react to stressful situations by striking out in all directions, with less regard for humanity than the forces responsible for causing alienation in the first place. Several of Marie-Claire Blais' characters, especially some in Tête blanche and La Belle bête, are representative of this third personality type.

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¹Eugène Cloutier, Les Inutiles (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1956), p. 15.

images se mêlaient à lui comme dans un cauchemar."² In some cases, it is unfulfilled expectations which cause aberrant behavior. Deranged by anxiety after the death of her son David, Marie-Andrée in Les Hauts cris, became overly exuberant after her sister died in childbirth, leaving her and Damien responsible for the orphan.

Damien comprit que, dans les zones obscurcies de son cerveau, Marie-Andrée confondait toujours l'enfant de Luce avec son propre fils. De là cette joie ininterrompue, la rupture définitive de ses anxiétés. Elle retrouvait ses certitudes de jeune mère, le rire et les grâces du premier enfant. A part cette aberration fondamentale, Marie-Andrée avait les attitudes et les mouvements normaux d'une jeune femme heureuse.³

One's past actions can also cause anxiety. For example, after falling ill in Paris, Pierre Cadourai in La Montagne secrète, became bewildered by the reasoning that had led him to slay a magnificent caribou in the Ungava Peninsula the previous year. While describing his pursuit of the caribou buck,

il en vint à décrire l'éclat de lune qui leur avait révélé à tous deux un peu d'eau luisant devant eux sur le sol de la toundra. Il dit la soif qui les dévorait. Il dit comment ils trottèrent longtemps, côte à côte, 'l'oeil dans l'oeil', leur épuisement, leur souffle brisé.

C'était très curieux; on eût dit que Pierre tout ce temps n'eût parlé que d'un seul et même être, poursuivi et poursuivant...⁴

In the final analysis, it is the truth regarding themselves

² Marie-Claire Blais, La Belle bête (Québec: L'Institut Littéraire du Québec, 1959; Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1968), p. 139.

³ Suzanne Paradis, Les Hauts cris (Paris: Les Editions de la Diaspora, 1960; Québec, Editions Garneau, 1970), p. 153.

⁴ Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 201.

and their environment which bewilders each of the above characters. They are seeking their identity. However, like François in Les Témoins, many must delve very deeply into the sub-conscious areas of the mind in search of enlightenment.

"La vérité, c'est que tu es maintenant tributaire de l'autre dimension, la dimension intérieure, plus vraie que le vrai, plus réelle que le réel. Indépendamment de toutes les autres justices extérieures à toi-même, tu dois comparaître devant tes propres personnages. Des personnages aussi invraisemblables que moi, que toi. Non, ne résiste plus à l'appel de cet étrange univers que tu sens palpiter derrière chacune de mes paroles. Personne de nous n'existe vraiment pour le monde extérieur. Mais chacun de nous est si vivant l'un par rapport à l'autre. Toi et les autres, vous m'avez chargé de diriger l'inventaire, de mettre de l'ordre dans tes pensées et tes sentiments. Mais c'est avant tout une histoire entre toi et toi-même."⁵

Because individual psyches are not organized according to society's priorities or abstract notions of order, people searching for an intangible image of themselves do not appear to act rationally. Indeed, many are deranged by anxiety and confused by reality.

Confusion, anxiety and the lack of a personal identity is frequently the outcome of one's estrangement from the family and community. Alienation from the family can take one of several forms. In Les Chambres de bois, Lia and her brother, Michel, are deprived of parental affection as a result of the death of both of their parents. "La mère est morte toute seule, au petit matin, les enfants endormis au bord du feu ne s'en sont pas aperçus. La

⁵Eugène Cloutier, Les Témoins (Montréal: Le Cercle de Livre de France, 1953; 1968), p. 10.

servante s'était enfuie, la veille, et le père n'était pas rentré de la chasse. Le père est mort à son tour, dans un pays étranger."⁶ In La Belle bête, Isabelle-Marie was very much affected by her father's death:

Isabelle-Marie ressemblait pourtant à son père, à son brave rêveur de père qui parlait de ses terres comme de filles élues de Dieu, en poète pur: [...] Isabelle-Marie avait dix ans à la mort du paysan. Depuis, elle s'était retirée à l'intérieur de son mal, et le mépris qu'elle nourrissait pour Louise [sa mère], l'avait asséchée.⁷

The contempt she harbors for her mother is based upon Louise's abhorrence of physically unattractive people and things.

"Mère, depuis que je suis enfant, je te vois chérir Patrice parce qu'il est beau et me mépriser, moi, la laide. Patrice, toujours Patrice! Tu ne m'as jamais aimée [...]. Moi, tu croyais que je n'avais pas de coeur parce que j'étais laide?"⁸

Evans in Tête blanche spent his formative years in a boarding school away from a drunken father and an actress mother who was often away from home. She died while he was still in his teens, leaving him utterly alone. While incarcerated, Jean and Antoine in Les Inutiles felt as abandoned by their families as Evans did. Jean cautioned Antoine against visiting his family after their escape from the asylum, observing, "'Est-ce qu'on est venu te rendre visite là-bas? Est-ce qu'on t'a fait parvenir des lettres, des colis, des cadeaux? Non, Antoine. Pour ta famille, comme moi pour la

⁶Anne Hébert, Les Chambres de bois (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1958), pp. 52-53.

⁷Blais, La Belle bête, pp. 23-24.

⁸Ibid., p. 131.

mienne, tu n'existes plus. On s'est habitué à vivre sans toi."⁹ Jean had occasion to corroborate his suspicions when he chanced a visit to the paternal home.

Il avisa le piano et y chercha vainement la photo, autrefois installée à la place d'honneur, et qui le représentait avec sa redingote et son sourire satisfait de bachelier. Piano désormais sans âme. Rien n'avait bougé dans cette pièce, hormis la photo. Comme la vie était simple, au fond! Le fils était perdu pour quelques années, il était tellement plus facile de le perdre à jamais. Une photo qu'on supprime... et la vie recommence à neuf.¹⁰

Whenever one's family withdraws its affection, whether the act take the form of death, physical or spiritual estrangement, the alienated individual frequently becomes confused, anxious, and often loses all sense of personal identity. In the family situation, one can easily respond to love, or rebel against authority. However, it is very difficult to react to indifference in a socially acceptable manner.

Other means of alienating one from the family and community can be as effective as withdrawal of affection. In La Belle bête for example, Patrice was prevented by his over-protective mother from realizing the little potential he possessed.

• Ce pauvre Patrice n'était pas né complètement idiot. Mais sa mère avait tout fait pour lui, tandis que lui n'avait que le goût de dormir, de s'accepter mollement. Louise disait ce que l'enfant devait dire et jamais l'enfant n'éprouvait l'envie de chercher des mots, de les arracher à son âme voilée.¹¹

Refusing to admit that Patrice was a slow learner who needed

⁹Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 30.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 35.

¹¹Blais, La Belle bête, p. 140.

discipline if he was ever to cope successfully with reality, Louise continued to extol her son, "lui fournissant au besoin l'âme qui lui manquait. [...] Elle était son esclave. Lui prêtait son intelligence. Le traitait en être exceptionnel et s'efforçait de lui épargner tout échec."¹² The consequences of Louise's actions were disastrous for both Patrice and Isabelle-Marie. Because his mother had attended to his every need, Patrice degenerated to an idiotic state, becoming unable to cope with reality. As well, bitter sibling rivalry resulted, since Louise gave all of her attention to Patrice at the expense of Isabelle-Marie's feelings. The strife became so intense that it culminated with the disfigurement of Patrice.

A somewhat similar relationship exists in Les Hauts cris, between Damien and his adoptive mother, Doris. In a sense, she too was over-protective, lying to Damien about his sexual capabilities in an attempt to prevent consummation of his marriage to Marie-Andrée.

Au nom de quelle vérité Doris lui avait-elle menti? Car elle avait menti. Mensonge, ces contes d'homme stérile. Mensonge, cette répugnance de sa chair à la chair de Marie-Andrée. Mensonge, l'image souillée de l'amour, la haine de l'amour. Pourquoi?¹³

Like Louise in La Belle bête, who had been impervious to everything but Patrice's physical beauty, "[Doris] était incapable d'ouvrir sincèrement son coeur à des exigences humaines. Un mur de verre tranchant la tenait à l'écart. Elle n'avait jamais eu qu'une conscience: la conscience

¹²Blais, La Belle bête, p. 14

¹³Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 29.

artistique."¹⁴ Deceit, like other acts which misrepresent or distort reality, produces longlasting harmful effects. In Les Hauts cris, Doris' deception resulted in a loveless relationship between Damien and his wife Marie-Andrée which lasted too long to be radically transformed after the truth concerning Damien's physical condition became known. The amnesia suffered by Marie-Andrée was as much a manifestation of her estrangement from those who had hurt her as Patrice's state of idiocy in La Belle bête. Neither character was fully capable of coping with reality.

The views which many alienated people share regarding society's treatment of the individual, intensifies their eagerness to withdraw into their own private world. One of François' personae in Les Témoins best verbalizes, with all the appropriate imagery, the plight of the sensitive individual in an industrial society. François relates how he first became aware of his place in the scheme of things.

"J'ai voulu mener une vie d'homme. Du moins dans sa forme extérieure. Je n'ai réussi qu'à m'identifier insensiblement à la machine. J'avais créé la société pour moi. Désormais j'étais sur la terre pour la société. Et je devais jouer mon rôle d'esclave, si je ne voulais pas être détruit."¹⁵

François soon realized that, along with his fellow man, he was destined to lead a life which would not be unlike an ant's existence, the only difference being that he and his kind had a city rather than an ant-hill in which they conducted their endless and oftentimes aimless race to and fro.

¹⁴Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 103.

¹⁵Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 155.

Imagining himself deep inside the corridors of a factory where everyone worked at a feverish pace for no apparent reason, he began to feel himself drawn in by the frenzied activity.

"[...] J'ai été incorporé vivant dans un mécanisme [...] où l'on me laissait toute liberté de principe d'agir selon mon désir et ma conscience... mais une liberté dont je ne pouvais me servir sans rompre l'une ou l'autre des innombrables courroies qui me rattachaient au service."¹⁶

François demanded to know who was responsible for the conditions that prevailed in the android factory, however, the answer was not to be found anywhere.

Ni à l'administration. Ni plus haut, chez les penseurs ou les philosophes. Chacun avait son travail, ses pensées, ses rêves, ses espoirs, son âme... mais personne n'avait le temps ou la liberté de s'occuper des autres.¹⁷

The metaphor of the android factory used by Cloutier in Les Témoins to describe the city and its inhabitants, is consistent with the diagnosis of other authors who characterize individual human beings in complex industrialized societies as being metaphysically dead. For example, Marie-Claire Blais describes Patrice as being "comme un mort dans la vie, au milieu de la vie des autres."¹⁸ In Les Inutiles, Jean perceives his father as "un mort qui rêvait de la vie dans son tombeau."¹⁹ Suzanne Paradis

¹⁶ Cloutier, Les Témoins, pp. 162-163.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁸ Blais, La Belle bête, p. 139.

¹⁹ Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 36.

suggests that because of "l'austérité de son coeur", "Damien vivait, semblait-il, en dehors de la peine ou de la joie, sans souffrance, sans souvenir."²⁰ Yet, even he was disarmed by Marie-Andrée, "cette esclave irréaliste, aux regards blancs sur un espace sans identité," because of her "absence si totale, son détachement naturel, la grâce aveugle de son existence."²¹ However, it is not only the distressed few who show signs of lifelessness, boredom, and indifference. These reactions are commonplace among city-dwellers, as Antoine in Les Inutiles realized after studying passers-by on the streets of Montreal.

Jamais Antoine n'avait lu tant de tristesse sur les visages qu'au cours de ces dernières heures. Toute la gamme y était. Et aussi celle de l'ennui et de l'indifférence.²²

The question of who is responsible for dehumanizing the population of cities is frequently posed by contemporary authors. Using the extended metaphor of the android with effect, Cloutier offers one answer in Les Témoins:

L'unique responsable, c'est celui qui a eu l'idée de la première machine à chair humaine. Mais justement, cherchez de tous les côtés, vous ne le trouverez pas. Et vous ne le trouverez pas, parce qu'il n'existe pas. La première machine à chair humaine s'est faite d'elle-même. Parce que les hommes aiment bien vivre les uns près des autres, sans se souder ensemble: ils se transforment fatalement en machine à chair humaine. S'il existe le responsable, c'est moi, c'est chacun de nous, c'est toi, François. Ce sont tous les hommes de la terre. Et nous ne pouvons rien contre ça. Il fallait naître aux premières heures de cette usine. [...] Car inconsciemment, tous ensemble, nous avons mis des siècles à inventer l'irresponsabilité.²³

²⁰Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 10.

²¹Ibid., p. 75.

²²Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 43.

²³Cloutier, Les Témoins, pp. 166-167.

It is generally acknowledged that overcrowding in modern cities is a prime cause of the alienation of the individual. What distinguishes the alienated generation from other city-dwellers is their refusal to accede to demands that, like single sprockets on the rim of wheel, each individual makes an effort to mesh with the aims of the community. Life under these conditions may even be considered a form of suicide.²⁴ The alienated generation prefers to cope with the human condition by consciously withdrawing from the mainstream of society.

Alienating oneself, mentally or physically indicates only that there may be an effort on the part of an individual to escape from the dehumanization process that threatens to debase everyone in the industrialized milieu. However, the four personal values espoused by the alienated generation demonstrate an attempt to counter these formidable forces. Anarchic behavior is perhaps the most rudimentary form of opposition sanctioned by the alienated generation. It has attained the status of personal value for them because they rationalize that violent measures are generally necessary before the bonds that shackle one to the system and its goals can be broken. Living in the present is highly esteemed because it demonstrates that one is opposed to civilization and progress, as these concepts are perceived by industrialized nations. The personal value we have termed amity and love came about chiefly as a result of the strict restrictions in the area

²⁴Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 97.

of sensory experience imposed upon the individual by the community. Even their pursuit of art often indicates a hostile response to the plasticity in modern life. Though not all facets of the personal values pursued by the alienated generation are negative, the main thrust behind anarchic behavior, living in the present, amity and love, and even art, is directed against the institutionalized views that prevail in the industrial milieu.

Anarchic behavior is a term used to describe a personality disorder as well as overt manifestations of a violent temperament. It is also perceived in the context of an unfortunate but often necessary first step in the rehabilitation of some individuals identified with the alienated generation. One's rebellion against estrangement is often intensified by jealousy or boredom. Terrorism against a specific group or society as a whole is another manifestation of anarchic behavior. Seditious acts are frequently employed by terrorists who espouse a revolutionary cause because they aspire to stir up discontent against the established powers in society. Proponents of this personal value also display a kind of moral and ethical nihilism.

In Les Témoins, François, through a number of personae, attempts to rationalize the violent act which resulted in the death of his wife Line, and his best friend Claude. Representing the aspect of revolt in François' personality, one persona makes the following remark about the double-murder:

"Rien ne peut l'expliquer, hormis la révolte. Une révolte dont j'ai souffert le premier, mais qui a fini par se mêler à mon sang. Pas une révolte intellectuelle. Ni une révolte participant à un mouvement collectif, quel qu'il fût. Une révolte pure, aussi vraie et aussi intense que le souffle même de la vie."²⁵

The period of introspection that followed the crime improved François' understanding of himself. He arrived at the conclusion that his personality was composed of several powerful facets, each competing to dominate the personality. The resulting lack of internal balance was responsible for the act of violence which overcame him while he watched Claude and Line in the act of love.²⁶ François did not possess an integrated personality, nor did he experience inner freedom. The most powerful facet of his character ruled for as long as it could, then another usurped the position of strength, leaving François the individual quite alienated from himself and the environment. Speaking to the other facets of François' personality which act as witnesses at the imaginary trial, the persona which represents revolt states:

"Chacun de nous a cru vivre sa propre vie, mais il ne l'a vécue dans les faits qu'à travers les autres. Et voilà pourquoi aucun de nous ne semble véridique à François, lui qui a été simultanément nous tous. Sa propre vérité, ce n'est pas d'un seul d'entre nous qu'il peut la tenir, mais de l'ensemble que nous formons, amas invraisemblable de contradictions."²⁷

²⁵Cloutier, Les Témoins, pp. 144-145.

²⁶"Toute ma révolte tient dans l'impossibilité d'atteindre jamais à l'équilibre... même dans le plus infime des devenir."²⁷ Ibid., p. 145.

²⁷Ibid., p. 150.

In committing the double-murder, François revealed that he had lost control over an essential facet of his personality. The act was prompted as much by a sense of estrangement from the self as from feelings of alienation from Line and Claude.

Jealousy can incite people to perform violent acts, as La Belle bête shows. Physically unattractive, Isabelle-Marie was violently jealous of the physical beauty of Patrice, her younger brother.

Sa révolte contre Patrice l'exaspérait. Elle le guettait, lui reprochait tout. Elle méprisait sa mère qui n'avait jamais su faire le juste partage entre ses enfants. Sa jalousie se gonflait à ses tempes comme le triomphé d'une passion de damné. Il lui fallait satisfaire cette passion ou mourir.²⁸

She seized her opportunity one night when Patrice was examining the contents of a cauldron hanging over the open flames of the fireplace. Grasping him by the nape of the neck, she plunged his face in the boiling water, permanently disfiguring him. As in earlier years when she mistreated Patrice,²⁹ Isabelle-Marie on this occasion was not afraid of being punished for her hideous act.

"Il ne dira rien, pensa Isabelle-Marie, son manque d'esprit me protégera." Elle transporta le pauvre enfant, ravie de le découvrir si laid, de le savoir désormais traqué par sa blessure d'enfer. [...] Heureusement, l'eau avait épargné les yeux de Patrice. Les paupières ne saignaient pas mais tout le reste de l'ancien beau visage était balafgré."³⁰

²⁸ Blais, La Belle bête, p. 114.

²⁹ "Son frère ne parlerait pas. La pauvreté d'esprit de Patrice la protégeait. Elle rit au fond d'elle-même et cette perversité éclata un moment dans ses yeux." Ibid., p. 33.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

Despite his mental deficiencies, Patrice too had experienced jealousy during his short lifetime. While on horseback one afternoon, he seized an opportunity to vent his rage upon the middle-aged dandy his mother had married. Galloping at full speed, Patrice charged at Lanz, separating him from Louise. The boy was thrown as the steed's front hoofs crushed in the man's chest.

Patrice se releva, éclata naïvement de rire, d'un rire qui sonnait tragique au milieu de cet énorme silence de mort. Interdite près de son mari, Louise ne respirait plus, atteinte cette fois, jusqu'à l'âme. [...] A demi prostré, la tête en rond, Patrice ne regardait rien. Il fixait le néant lointain des idiots.³¹

With Lanz permanently removed from the scene, the relationship between Patrice and his mother reverted back to what it had been before her marriage. The close ties between mother and son lasted until Isabelle-Marie, induced by jealousy, scalded her brother's face with boiling water.

For some characters, like Evans in Tête blanche, boredom is the principal motive behind acts of violence. During the early stages of his disorder, Evans, nicknamed Tête Blanche, appeased his violent urges by bullying his roommate at school.

Tête Blanche se mordait les lèvres. Il avait froid; ce vertige avant d'accomplir le mal le troublait. Il ne détestait pas Pierre, mais il n'aimait personne. La soif de se venger de quelque chose le hantait sans cesse. Son front devint humide, son coeur battit plus fort; enfin il ne résista plus, car il éprouvait physiquement une sorte de nausée à ne pas agir suivant sa volonté et il poussa, de son coude sournois, l'enfant qui lisait...³²

³¹Blais, La Belle bête, p. 92.

³²Marie-Claire Blais, Tête blanche (Québec: L'Institut Littéraire de Québec, 1960; Montréal: Editions de L'Homme, 1969), p. 10.

His attention diverted by a small kitten belonging to a cook at the school, Evans was no longer contented with hurting Pierre. In a letter to his mother, he writes: "J'aimais bien ce chat. Je mettais de la terre dans son lait ou bien j'attrapais sa queue dans les portes. Tout m'ennuie tellement vite. Pourquoi?"³³ Out of boredom³³ one day, he picked the kitten up by the tail and smashed its head against a stone wall, killing it. After that, Evans began to escape from the other boys during his free time, "pour aller à la chasse aux oiseaux dans la forêt. [Il] en rapporte, aux jolis ventres ensanglantés [...]"³⁴ Eventually, "son instinct de destruction"³⁵ was appeased only by more violent and inhumane acts. An eighteen-year-old delinquent with a heart ailment who had been at school for about a month became his next target. From the cover of a tree, Evans threw a stone at the boy, striking him on the forehead. Instead of feeling remorse when his victim died, Tête Blanche was overcome by ennui.

"Depuis l'enterrement du jeune homme, les élèves sont tristes. Ils réfléchissent, posent des questions, ils se regardent étrangement. Après tout, ce n'est qu'un mort. Je pense souvent à la mort des autres; mais moi je ne me vois pas couché dans un cercueil. Maman, dis-moi, est-ce que je suis sur la terre pour m'ennuyer sans cesse? Je m'ennuie."³⁶

Unlike the characters examined above whose revolt is limited to sporadic acts of violence perpetrated

³³Blais, Tête blanche, p. 25.

³⁴Ibid., p. 38.

³⁵Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶Ibid., p. 46.

against specific individuals, terrorists, because they identify society as the agent responsible for their plight, conduct a campaign of intimidation and terror against specific groups or their representatives. An example of how society can breed terrorism appears in Les Inutiles. During their period of adjustment from the seclusion of an insane asylum to the harsh realities of industrial society, both Jean and Antoine lost the human feelings and compassion they had once possessed. Julien, the successful land developer who had been leader of the threesome before his remarkable re-entry into society, was blamed at first by the two comrades because of his callous refusal to accept their friendship. However, after a period of reflection and the purchase of a fire-arm, Jean resolved that society, and not his former friend, was to blame for dehumanizing him.

Ce n'est pas Julien qu'il abattra mais tous ceux qui l'ont dépouillé de sa sensibilité. Lutte combien inégale: Ridicule tragédie d'un homme dressé contre sa ville: Condamné à l'asphyxie, il aura eu un geste d'auto-défense avant de succomber. Jeux de forces qui insufflent aux derniers hommes le goût du martyre... ou du crime.³⁷

Antoine had independently come to the same conclusion, a coincidence not unexpected, since each received an identical formation after escaping from the asylum.

In reaction to the strength and the overwhelming numbers in the enemy camp, and the likelihood of dying a violent death, many terrorists function better

³⁷Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 171.

after seeing themselves as martyrs for an honorable cause. Others are more interested in becoming "des héros".³⁸ One character in Ethel et le terroriste explains that anarchic behavior is often a combination of "machismo" and playing out childhood games. "On jouait à Tarzan, au surhomme. Nous refaisions, à vingt ans, à vingt-cinq ans, nos jeux d'enfants. Ceux des ruelles des quartiers pauvres. Et maintenant, enfin, nos jeux, nos acrobaties, servaient à quelque chose; la cause."³⁹ Sedition often forms a part of terrorist activities, especially when there are discontented people available who are seeking an outlet for their frustrations. As explained in Ethel et le terroriste, it becomes a simple matter of harnessing the energy at hand and making it serve the terrorist cause.

"Il y a là-haut une bande de jeunes gens qui ont mal, qui souffrent, qui cherchent des raisons de haïr, qui cherchent des excuses et des prétextes. Ils ont mal! Ils ont mal, Ethel. Comme j'ai eu mal. Avoir besoin d'agir, de frapper, de se soulager. Il faudra que je monte, que je puisse leur parler de nouveau. Il faut qu'ils sachent qu'il y a le mal."⁴⁰

Ignorance is the evil that many Québécois terrorists wanted to eradicate from society.

"Le mal, Ethel, le vrai mal, le seul, c'est l'ignorance. Voilà une bonne raison de se battre. C'est là le vrai ennemi. Notre seul ennemi. L'ignorance. Ethel, l'ignorance, rien n'est plus grave, ni plus mauvais. C'est elle qui sème les confusions, qui entretient la médiocrité, les tabous et les préjugés. C'est la plus grave des faiblesses."⁴¹

³⁸Claude Jasmin, Ethel et le terroriste (Montréal: Librairie Décom, 1964), p. 21.

³⁹Ibid., p. 90.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 113.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 114.

Terrorism and the stirring up of discontentment is an aspect of anarchic behavior that was accepted by many among the alienated generation, especially during the sixties, because it offered an opportunity for comradeship and seemed to give a purpose to otherwise disordered lives.

Moral nihilism frequently appears as an essential component of anarchic behavior because people who espouse revolt, violence or terrorism generally reject the customary beliefs in morality. The notion that one is not bound by social convention nor the laws of the land is particularly applicable to the alienated generation who have spiritually withdrawn from organized society. It is noted in Les Inutiles that Jean and Antoine felt no compulsion to abide by society's laws because they had been estranged from it for too long.

D'ailleurs, pouvaient-ils se sentir liés par l'une ou l'autre des lois ou des habitudes d'une société qui les avait délibérément écartés? Non. Ils devaient agir en toute liberté de conscience et prendre sans hésiter les chemins de raccourci qui s'offraient.⁴²

Antisocial acts can range from relatively minor transgressions against local regulations, such as selling censored books to students and taking great delight in misleading the parish priest about it, as Harvé Jodoin did in Le Libraire,⁴³ to robbing a bank as Jean and Antoine did in Les Inutiles. "Ils voulaient de l'argent, beaucoup d'argent, assez d'argent en tous cas pour accomplir leur

⁴²Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 47.

⁴³Gérard Bessette, Le Libraire (Paris: R. Julliard et Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1960; Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1966), pp. 75-84.

mission sans perdre un temps précieux à faire des calculs... Eh bien, ils iraient en chercher là où il s'en trouvait de trop."⁴⁴ The characters involved in such offenses often share a common attitude regarding the integrity of their actions. There is a complete absence of any notion of rightness or wrongness based upon value judgements, or considerations that go beyond the needs and desires of the alienated individual. Like François in Les Témoins, some people who reject the moral standards of society create their own value system which reflects their personal needs and desires to a greater degree. One of François' personae explains that during his youth,

"[...] je me suis appliqué à refaire ma propre échelle de valeurs morales. Qu'était-ce donc que cette morale qui me donnait tant de soucis? N'était-ce pas un code de lois, définies par des hommes pour des hommes? Peut-être ces hommes étaient-ils inspirés, et ce code s'était-il enrichi de la longue expérience des siècles depuis les Dix Commandements!... Mais ma vie ne me permettait plus de théories purement spéculatives."⁴⁵

Individuals who display anarchic behavior are frequently morally nihilistic as well, for an absence of rules and controls is desirable if one is to enjoy unrestricted freedom of action.

For a number of individuals who feel alienated from society, the alternative to anarchic behavior is submitting to a state of deep depression. Even respected members of the community like Monsieur Brenner, headmaster

⁴⁴ Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 47.

⁴⁵ Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 58.

of the college where Evans had been a resident student, advises the teenager that a period of revolt is preferable to a permanent depression. "Soyez révolté, méchant si vous le désirez, criez, pleurez, mais ne vous cachez pas au fond de votre détresse comme les fous se cachent dans leur folie."⁴⁶ Violent acts perpetrated against individuals often reflect a state of disorder within the personality, a condition often caused by boredom or jealousy. Terrorist activity, including sedition, is directed against the community rather than specific individuals. Nevertheless, a well-conceived revolutionary conspiracy to overthrow the system does not form a part of the alienated generation's concept of anarchic behavior. There exists only a certain number of people who have independently arrived at the conclusion that violence may be the most effective way of focusing public attention upon the dehumanizing effects of modern industrialized society. Individuals estranged from the community are often morally nihilistic because they do not accept the moral and ethical principles of the milieu in which they live. Anarchic behavior is a personal value which permits the alienated generation to act according to the dictates of the psyche for a time, without feeling the restrictions placed upon them by society. More than the other personal values, anarchic behavior demonstrates that the group of alienated people examined above are the precursors of the impatient generation of the sixties who organized themselves into cells, and employed urban guerrilla tactics to achieve their goals.

⁴⁶Blais, Tête blanche, p. 181.

The high priority placed upon material values by the capitalist system contributed to the alienation experienced by some characters in the novel. Many people physically or spiritually withdrew from organized society because they were opposed to the popular notion that civilization and progress are superior to man's natural state.

Tout ce qui est naturel, spontané, enraciné, tout ce qui court sans but et ne sert à rien, tout ce qui chante pour chanter, et vit pour le seul plaisir de vivre, tout cela inspire une profonde méfiance à l'homme qui s'est affranchi de son état primitif et dont le moindre geste voudra désormais être rétribué.⁴⁷

In protest, alienated individuals from different social backgrounds challenged society's attitudes regarding progress by endeavoring to live in the present with as little regard as possible for the future. What began as a gesture of defiance evolved into a personal value that manifested itself in a variety of ways, depending upon the individual supporter's particular orientation. Hardy types, like Pierre Cadourai in La Montagne secrète, renounced the comforts of modern life for the challenge of surviving from day to day in a cruel and harsh environment. Jean and Antoine in Les Inutiles were obliged to live in the present if they wanted to continue eluding the authorities and remain successful fugitives from justice. Hervé Jodoin in Le Libraire, a self-indulgent person, absorbed himself with activities that brought him immediate gratification. Finally, there are alienated individuals like Damien in Les Hauts cris who endeavored to restructure their priorities

⁴⁷Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 109.

regarding the future because they experienced the greatest measure of personal freedom when they committed themselves to living in the present.

Pierre Cadourai in La Montagne secrète exemplifies one type of individual who has withdrawn from the industrial milieu. For almost a decade, he lived a primitive and usually solitary existence in Canada's far north. The winter he spent with Hans Sigurdson, the fur trapper known as Steve, demonstrated to Pierre how vital living in the present was for the inhabitants of the north.

[Pierre et Steve] avaient pris le rythme, épuisant des longues tournées du plein hiver, ne revenaient plus au gîte que toutes les trois semaines, pour un ou deux jours, après quoi ils repartaient, poussés par un vent glacial, ou en lutte contre lui pas à pas. Ils dormaient dès lors en leur camp volant, mangeaient une poignée de fèves à peine dégelées, puis, sans soleil pour leur annoncer l'heure, se remettaient en route, des ombres d'hommes à la poursuite de la bête inlassablement et, comme elle, devenus peut-être cette seule pensée: survivre.⁴⁸

Concern for the future had to be suppressed so that all of one's faculties could be devoted to the challenge of immediate survival. The theme of man's struggle, not against society nor his fellow man, but against the harshness of the environment is a common one in the literature of the period.

The anxieties that afflict individuals who must constantly battle the environment to survive can also beset alienated people who find themselves on a collision course with society. The problem of psychological survival, an

⁴⁸Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 53.

element of which includes escape from the authorities, is crucial, especially for those who have committed an antisocial act. After the bank robbery, Antoine in Les Inutiles, coped with fears of being arrested by pre-occupying himself with each passing moment, especially after serial numbers of the money he and Jean had stolen were published.

"Les rues pouvaient se couvrir d'agents à leur poursuite. Le temps s'était arrêté. Plus de journées organisées à vivre au pas de course: Savourer chaque minute comme si elle eût été la dernière. Loin des visages anxieux, des rues bruyantes, des greniers enfumés et de l'obsédante 'cicatrice': Retrouver une paix douce, caressante. Goûter un repos sans une ride. Participer de tout son être à la vie des arbres, qui choisissent de grandir là où l'air leur paraît bon à respirer, là où des oiseaux peuvent chanter."⁴⁹

In an attempt to overcome some of the pressures of being a fugitive from justice, Antoine withdrew into an imaginary world where nature, the present, and the immediate future prevailed over the pressing requirements of industrialized society and its preoccupation with future progress.

Though not a fugitive in the strictest sense of the word, Hervé Jodoin in Le Libraire is spiritually withdrawn, content to do as little work as possible, and satisfied to lead an apparently aimless existence. Because he was required to work a certain period of time before becoming eligible to claim from the Unemployment Insurance Fund, Hervé accepted a book-selling job he did not want in the small town of Saint-Joachin, which he did not like.

⁴⁹Cloutier, Les Inutiles, pp. 80-81.

As a consequence of the disagreeable conditions of Hervé's new life, "[...] tuer le temps devient un problème sérieux."⁵⁰ Certain that he would be staying with the Joachinois at the Librairie Léon but a short time, Hervé grappled with only the most immediate problems associated with living in a small provincial town. He overcame boredom by drinking "Chez Trefflé" up to seven hours per day. On Sundays, when the tavern was closed, he occupied himself with a diary he kept. In the first entry he writes: "Je n'ai pas commencé ce journal pour ressasser des souvenirs. Je l'ai entrepris pour tuer le temps le dimanche quand les tavernes sont fermées..."⁵¹ Hervé was a practical creature of habits⁵² whose preoccupation with the present interfered with a frequent urge he experienced to mentally escape from the insularity of Saint-Joachin. To his chagrin, he realized one Sunday that he was writing descriptions of fellow workers, the clientele at Léon's bookstore, and other disagreeable aspects of a life from which he wanted to flee.

"Il faut que je sois singulièrement désœuvré pour décrire de pareilles insignifiances. Mais qu'y faire? C'est ça ou rien.. Je n'ai pas d'imagination. Je ne saurais rien inventer. Quant à ma vie passée, j'aime mieux l'oublier. Il ne me reste donc que le présent."⁵³

A disregard for the past along with a lack of concern for the future permitted Hervé to experience a measure of personal freedom that continued to elude individuals who may

⁵⁰ Bessette, Le Libraire, p. 12.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵² "On pense trop quand on ne suit pas une petite routine bien tracée d'avance, et c'est désagréable." Ibid., p. 172.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

have been favored with great wealth but burdened by responsibility as a result of it.

Because it is generally coupled with feelings of liberation, living in the present is a personal value that is sought by many people who sense that they are alienated from their inner selves and from society. In Les Hauts cris, Damien, the sculptor who had renounced a great deal for the sake of art, tried several times during the course of the novel to live each moment as it arrived. However, it was only after he overcame his obsession with art and divested himself of his worldly possessions,⁵⁴ that he was free to experience life in all of its immediacy.

Libre: [Damien] se dressa sur sa journée avec fierté. Ses chaînes étaient rompues. Il avancerait dans son vêtement nouveau de vagabond. [...] Il connaîtrait la source la plus cachée et le cri de l'oiseau, à toute heure du jour et de la nuit.⁵⁵

The sense of freedom that is derived from living in the present is so welcomed that individuals like Damien make drastic changes in the way they live to assure its continuance. The new life-style is generally directed away from the material values of industrialized society and oriented towards a more carefree state of harmony with nature.

The drive to live in the present marked the lives of the alienated generation so significantly that it was sanctioned as one of their prized personal values. Living in the present manifests itself differently to various

⁵⁴"Chez le notaire, [Damien] avait donné sa maison de la baie, au pied des collines, ses figures sculptées, ses meubles et sa voiture." Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 165.

⁵⁵Ibid.

individuals. It can be reflected in the life style of those who challenge the environment, but also assist fugitives who are pursued by the authorities. To the self-indulgent person, it can provide for immediate gratification, while contributing to another's sense of personal freedom. This diversity demonstrates that a wide range of different people no longer endorse the values of Western Societies, preferring instead to pursue a set of personal values that better reflects their particular individuality.

It is generally agreed that love and companionship are desirable experiences for everyone in society. However, the alienated generation is at variance with established notions of what love should be. Their pursuit of a humanitarian definition that would emphasize acceptance rather than the censuring of sensory experiences resulted in the personal value we have termed amity and love. Alienated young people, in particular, are optimistic that love is the sentiment that can humanize society by bringing out the good in people, as well as satisfy the human desire to achieve happiness. Perhaps more important in the long term is the amity that results when love transcends physical passion and anchors itself in the need to understand and secure the acceptance of one's companions. Unlike romanticized notions of true love, the alienated generation's notion of amity and love takes into account that experimentation in human relationships will occur.

The need to be loved is particularly meaningful to youngsters during their insecure formative years. Maternal affection is particularly important during the earlier stages of a young man's emotional formation. For example, in Tête blanche, Evans faced the loss of his mother and her love as if it meant surrendering his own life. He remarks: "'Après la mort de maman, j'ai connu une mort plus froide que la mort même: l'indifférence. J'ai moins peur de la vraie mort.'"⁵⁶ The lack of affection between husband and wife can have equally devastating results. In Les Hauts cris, Damien's apparent indifference to Marie-Andrée's emotional needs resulted in her alienation from him and his world, a state which manifested itself psychologically by her amnesia.

"Je ne vous aime pas, Damien. Damien, qui êtes-vous? Est-il possible que nous ayons dormi ensemble, et que mon corps soit cet infidèle que vous me décrivez? Vous ressemblez à un mensonge, Damien. Je n'ai pas de mari. [...] Je suis une âme morte."⁵⁷

Damien realized that he was responsible for the extinction of the vital spark that had made Marie-Andrée into a vibrant woman.⁵⁸ Deep-seated feelings of loyalty and affection can also characterize the relationship between companions. In Les Inutiles for example, Antoine exclaims that: "'sans Jean [...] il n'y aurait pour moi de vie possible nulle part.'"⁵⁹ The notion that life is not

⁵⁶Blais, Tête blanche, p. 130.

⁵⁷Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 62.

⁵⁸"[Damien] ne pouvait imputer [à Marie-Andrée] sa cécité, car c'était lui, lui qui la jetait ainsi dans la nuit contre laquelle toutes les lampes du monde perdaient leur lumière." Ibid., p. 75.

⁵⁹Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 13.

possible if it is devoid of love governs the conduct of Jean and Antoine "[qui] s'étaient spontanément chargés d'une mission d'amour auprès d'un homme à jamais fermé à ce langage."⁶⁰ They act as if Julien had taken his own life, explaining that "la huitième forme de suicide est celle qui consiste à vider sa vie de toute amitié."⁶¹

Their challenge to the man who had once been their friend is replete with macabre imagery.

"Quand tu seras dégoûté de traîner ton cadavre d'une fosse à l'autre, fais-nous signe! Peut-être ce qu'il reste de notre amitié suffira-t-il à te ranimer pour quelques heures. Au point où tu en es, tu ne risques rien de t'offrir ces petites vacances."⁶²

The notion that life without love is no life at all is particularly relevant for the alienated generation whose state of estrangement is often an outcome of a grave lack of affection and love.

An obvious solution to the problem of estrangement is to seek love since it is one of the essential elements missing in the life of many alienated people. However, when the concept of love advanced by society is examined closely, reasons for its failure to solve the problem of alienation become apparent. In Catholic French Canada, only spiritual love receives the full sanction of society. This orientation is explicitly manifested by "tous les systèmes de pensée et toutes les religions," which show

Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 152.

Ibid., p. 113.

Ibid., p. 110.

contempt for the human body by regarding it as "le mal".⁶³
 As well, there exists people in Quebec society, represented
 in Les Hauts cris by Doris, who appear to be preoccupied
 with "le goût sauvage de tuer l'amour terrestre."⁶⁴ According
 to some characters, condemnation of "earthly love" pervades
 French-Canadian social customs, notably the ceremony of
 marriage. For example, François in Les Témoins did not
 readily acquiesce to the idea of marrying Line.⁶⁵ He
 regarded marriage as,

"[...] une cérémonie [qui est] peut-être noble et
 enrichissante pour les autres, mais pour moi sans
 aucune résonance. [...] On me forçait à dénaturer,
 aux yeux de tous le seul sentiment intense où toute
 ma personne humaine pouvait se refléter sans rougir
 et s'accepter dans toute son intégrité."⁶⁶

The condemnation of erotic love often contributes to the
 discord that can abruptly end an important relationship.
 In Les Chambres de bois for example, the shame that Michel
 experienced in response to the activities of his sister Lia,
 drove him from the paternal home they shared.

"Chassé: Je suis chassé de ma maison par la honte!
 Jamais je ne retournerai là-bas, à présent. Tout
 est sali, perdu, fini... [...] De la boue, voilà ce
 qu'elle est devenue, cette fille sacrée entre toutes.
 La faute est entrée chez nous avec elle."⁶⁷

Even "destructive monsters,"⁶⁸ like the main characters in

⁶³Cloutier, Les Témoins, pp. 91-92.

⁶⁴Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 34.

⁶⁵"Accepter le mariage, c'était accepter de con-
 damner ouvertement notre amour passé. Je ne pouvais y
 consentir." Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 62.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 63.

⁶⁷Hébert, Les Chambres de bois, p. 60.

⁶⁸For a definition of "monstres destructeurs", see
 R. Lehman, quoted by Marie-Claire Blais in La Belle bête, p. 9.

La Belle bête, are disgusted by the passionate love affair that united their mother to Lanz, a middle-aged fop.

"Isabelle-Marie les jugeait pleins de vices, répugnants. Car au plus sacré d'elle-même Isabelle-Marie était comme son frère: un être de pureté instinctive."⁶⁹ Attitudes which disapproved of ennobling the human body and discouraged earthly love became established in tradition and the social institutions, thereby creating conflicts between individuals who follow their natural impulses and the others who seek a spiritual orientation to life.

Overenthusiastic support by one's spouse of society's sanctions against erotic love can have devastating effects upon the marriage. In Les Hauts cris, a constant state of tension exists between Marie-Andrée, who "avec sa voix toute neuve de femme, encore un peu fausse [...] réclamait l'amour,"⁷⁰ and her husband Damien. He was unable to discharge his duties as a husband because,

la pensée de Doris l'arrêta; il aurait écrasé la jeune fille dans une étreinte absurde. Mais il se souvenait qu'un jour, il avait juré de ne prendre Marie-Andrée que pour ses cheveux. Une malédiction ne s'attachait-elle pas à sa stérilité? Doris le lui avait dit. Il savait, de sa parole, qu'un accident de bicyclette le condamnait.⁷¹

When he realized that Doris had lied for the selfish reason that she wanted to keep him chaste, Damien reproached himself because of the irreparable harm he had caused. The injury

⁶⁹Blais, La Belle bête, p. 58.

⁷⁰Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 21.

⁷¹Ibid.

was soon to manifest itself with Marie-Andrée's amnesia.

"[Damien] souffrait d'avoir trompée [Marie-Andrée], d'avoir détourné son désir. [...] Doris devenait le monstre, sans pardon, sans indulgence, à affronter."⁷² In Les Chambres de bois, a preoccupation with things spiritual dictates Michel's conduct, adversely affecting the relationship he has with his young wife, Catherine. Try as she may, Catherine could not elicit a sexual response from her husband.

Le son de la voix [de Catherine] se perdait, puis paraissait atteindre Michel après coup, comme une fronde. Il sursautait, mais ne s'éveillait pas. Puis elle secoua Michel par les épaules, découvrant la poitrine nue, désarmée. Michel, en son sommeil, poussa une sorte de plainte déchirante, sensuelle. Catherine laissa retomber sa tête sur le coeur de cet homme que le songe livrait au désir et à l'angoisse.⁷³

However, persistence on the part of Catherine won out.

With time, Michel was beguiled. She succeeded in alluring him to her bed. "Vers le matin, Catherine était devenue femme. Michel s'écroula à ses côtés comme un noyé et il répétait: 'Tu es le diable, Catherine, tu es le diable.'"⁷⁴

Michel never forgave her for seducing him. Feeling guilty about his participation in the act of physical love, Michel accused Catherine of being "'mauvaise, [...] une sale fille, voilà ce que tu es, comme Lia, comme toutes les autres:"⁷⁵ The state of innocence admired in children becomes a destructive

⁷²Paradis, Les Hauts cris, pp. 24-25.

⁷³Hébert, Les Chambres de bois, pp. 68-69.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 80.

force when it is perpetuated by one of the partners in the marriage relationship.

Some members of the alienated generation regard the sentiment of love as a symbol of hope for future happiness. Characters like Evans, in Tête blanche acquire an optimistic outlook on life as a by-product of love.

"Je t'aime, Emilie; alors je pense que je vais tout trouver. Les petites filles ont peut-être, dans leurs yeux tendres, ce secret d'une lumière que je cherche."⁷⁶ The love one experiences for another can also give birth to a kind of moral awareness, as Evans remarked in a letter to Emilie:

"Je ne peux pas oublier que j'ai désiré faire mourir Pierre, que j'ai été méchant. Avant de te connaître je n'avais que le désir du mal; mais je sais que le bien existe, maintenant. Au fond, tous les êtres humains sont comme moi. Ils portent le désir du mal et le désir du bien. En moi, le désir du mal est le plus fort. Je le sais."⁷⁷

Love is a sentiment which has a humanizing effect upon many individuals like Evans, who have alienated their heart of affection for their fellow man. In a letter to his ex-student, M. Brenner writes:

"Emilie vous a humanisé, [...] maintenant c'est à vous de continuer. Oui, votre but le plus impérieux doit être de libérer en vous l'humain. Ensuite vous comprendrez que les autres existent vraiment. Ils n'existent pas pour être vaincus, mais pour être aimés."⁷⁸

Even hardened antisocial people, like the protagonist in Ethel et le terroriste, needed love and affection. When

⁷⁶Blais, Tête blanche, p. 130.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 130.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 188.

these needs are threatened by the revolutionary cause, it is generally the ideals that are abandoned:

"La parade du nationalisme, je n'y tiens plus. Je préfère garder [Ethel] ma juive, et perdre l'idéal national! Tant pis pour les échelons du parti, au diable le Mouvement et les belles doctrines. Je préfère dormir, la joue sur l'épaule d'Ethel. Je préfère sa peau ambrée été comme hiver. Je préfère le doux et chaud nid du creux de ses cuisses, son duvet, son ventre rond et doux. Ses bras qui s'ouvrent. Oh non, rien au monde ne peut m'offrir mieux. Ni une cause, ni une race, ni une colère à vider. Il faudra se trouver d'autres anonymes et fidèles et loyaux serviteurs, porteurs de bombe. Je ne suis plus un robot. Je n'ai nulle envie de suicide, et la prison me serait un pénible exil. Exil d'Ethel, châtement insupportable."⁷⁹

The kind of love sought by the alienated generation is frequently characterized by passion, a desire for happiness, and an optimism that one will be humanized by the experience.

These traits generally correspond to the aspirations of youth. One of the witnesses who appears at François' imaginary trial in Les Témoins, questions whether "l'amour pouvait s'acclimater ailleurs que dans l'adolescence?"⁸⁰ Suggesting that true love is incompatible with adulthood, he asks the other witnesses: "Comment avez-vous pu croire en détruisant votre adolescence, vivre encore par l'amour?"⁸¹ Though little can be done to change one's chronological age, it is possible to retain youthful ideals where love is concerned. These are often characterized as romantic. In Les Inutiles, it is the fanciful aspect of Julien's

⁷⁹Jasmin, Ethel et le terroriste, p. 93.

⁸⁰Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 191.

⁸¹Ibid.

marital relationship with Danièle that influenced him to leave her for Monique. He reveals that he supports a more utilitarian approach to the notion he calls love:

"Dans les mains de Danièle, l'amour était devenu quelque chose d'effroyable, qui emprisonnait pour mieux dévorer. Aucun problème de cet ordre avec [Monique]. Elle avait sa vie, il avait la sienne. Leur entente se situait sur un plan supérieur. Elle était en tous cas dépouillée de tout romantisme." 82

Julien's concept of love and affection was modified to suit his new attitudes towards life. As a successful building contractor in a capitalist system, his aim was to maximize the profits of his company. As an individual in a human relationship, he sought as much gratification as he could obtain, at the same time giving of himself as little as possible. Even where the sole aim of a relationship is sexual gratification, the passionate exuberance of young lovers is not often imitated by more mature couples. In Le Libraire for example, Hervé Jodoin's blasé attitude towards life is carried over into the way he performs sexually, as the description of the night he spent with his landlady demonstrates:

"Après le cinquième ou le sixième verre, je lui ai pris la main--rueuse--et je me suis mis à la peloter gentiment. Elle a réagi avec une vitesse surprenante: même un peu embarrassante pour moi car je ne me sentais pas tout à fait prêt. Mais ça s'est tassé. J'ai simplement mis un peu plus de temps qu'il ne fallait pour la dévêtir. De son côté, elle a sans doute compris, car elle a fait le nécessaire, sinon avec raffinement, du moins avec à propos. D'ailleurs, je suis loin d'être un connaisseur. Je n'ai jamais forniqué outre mesure. C'est trop fatigant." 83

82 Cloutier, Les Inutiles, p. 128.

83 Bessette, Le Libraire, p. 97.

Love between two people who have abandoned their youthful fantasies is compared by one of François' personae in Les Témoins, to a flower in full bloom: "Notre amour, comme toutes les amours épanouies, n'était plus qu'une valeur à préserver, c'est-à-dire qu'il n'était plus une valeur, ayant perdu son dynamisme intérieur, son pouvoir d'exaltation."⁸⁴ Like other couples who assumed the attitudes of the adult world, François and Line were no longer guided by the burgeoning force that vitalizes the relationships of those who remain young at heart.

If passionate love is for the young, amity is for the more mature. A solid friendship can satisfy most of the criteria of a true love relationship, and at the same time be less restrictive in the sense that there is no sex discrimination. This is important particularly for the individuals who have chosen to physically alienate themselves from organized society. Like Pierre Cadourai in La Montagne secrète, they generally find themselves in a rugged, sparsely populated environment where only men will venture. During the winter he cabined with Hans Sigurdson, Pierre, who was aware of the dangers of exposure trappers ran, often worried about being left alone if anything should happen to his friend during a severe snow storm. "Dix fois au moins en une heure, Pierre allait à la porte, l'ouvrait, s'efforçait, à travers les bondissements de la tempête revenue, de saisir au loin un bruit

⁸⁴ Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 124.

d'attelâge, ou quelque forme approchante. Ah! que revienne seulement Sigurdson, et il ne se plaindra plus de rien; il connaît à présent que la seule privation tout à fait intolérable, c'est celle d'un compagnon."⁸⁵ When spring arrived, Pierre spoke of departing towards the direction of Great Slave Lake, and, like a loyal companion, Sigurdson took for granted that he would accompany the wandering artist. "Pierre se taisait, souffrait. Comment faire comprendre à l'amitié que pour se connaître mieux, mieux mériter d'elle peut-être, se mieux accomplir, il lui fallait partir seul."⁸⁶ However, words were not necessary to express how Pierre felt in his heart. Hans accepted the idea,

qu'ils devaient se séparer. Leur compagnonnage avait bien assez duré en effet. Plus longtemps qu'il n'est d'usage souvant dans les bois. Sans doute était-il temps de le rompre, s'ils ne devaient pas finir par se prendre en grippe.⁸⁷

Where there is true amity between people like Pierre and Hans, lengthy verbal explanations are unnecessary because there exists an intuitive awareness of each other's needs. This insight, which springs from a desire to understand, is most frequently accompanied by a sense of deep devotion to one's companion. In Les Inutiles, Jean cites the example of his dog, Caligula, to illustrate to Antoine the kind of loyalty that is necessary to bind individuals together in true friendship. Years before, when he returned home

⁸⁵Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 63.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 79.

⁸⁷Ibid.

downcast after failing an examination, Jean greeted his overexcited dog with a kick instead of the customary hug. Later that evening, Jean allowed Caligula up on his lap, and petted him as if nothing had happened.

"Mais les yeux [de Caligula] n'étaient pas apaisés. Ils voulaient toujours comprendre. Sans le savoir, Caligula me livrait ce soir-là le secret de l'amitié vraie. C'est dans cette 'insistance à comprendre' qu'elle réside. Insistance profonde, sereine, pacifique."⁸⁸

It is this kind of relationship, based upon a constant need to understand, that Jean and Antoine wanted to rejuvenate between Julien and themselves. Ideally, these aspects of friendship also apply to relationships based upon love between individuals of the opposite sex. However, occurrences of this are not examined here because such relationships are more characteristic of behavior among individuals who identify with the established social classes. Instead, couples from the alienated generation who are dissatisfied with conventional approaches, tend towards experimentation in the area of human relations.

Experiments in life-styles, involving the participant's understanding of the situation and his consent to it, must be distinguished from predicaments where one can be misguided by an authoritative individual, personal weakness, or a psychological disorder. In Les Hauts cris for example, Damien's attempts to maintain a Platonic love relationship with Marie-Andrée was in response to the pressure tactics of his step-mother, Doris, and not as

⁸⁸ Cloutier, Les Inutiles, pp. 115-116.

a result of a mutual agreement between himself and his young wife. In Les Chambres de bois, Michel's notion that he could sustain the same type of brother-sister relationship with his wife, Catherine, as he shared with his sister; Lia, is an outcome of a psychological disorder based upon a concept of sex as evil. Whereas in both of the above examples, the traditional struggle between spiritual and terrestrial love is a crucial issue, such conflicts rarely manifest themselves in a significant way whenever individuals agree to experiment with their life-style. Of all the members of the alienated generation examined above, the three central characters in Les Témoins make the most sincere effort to experiment with the sentiment of love.

The experiment was conceived by François and Claude, two medical students who had learned "[...] à tout mettre en commun: les pensées, les désirs, les regrets, les passions."⁸⁹ They became obsessed by a subconscious drive "[...]"de partager un jour au même degré un amour féminin, l'amour de Line. Mystérieuse tentation que nous savions par avance d'une impossible actuation, mais qui nous tenait déjà sous son joug."⁹⁰ It was several years later, in a comfortable chalet situated in an isolated environment, "que la phase principale de cette expérience a commencé."⁹¹ François, his wife Line, and his best friend Claude, were to spend several weeks together, secluded from

⁸⁹Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 28.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 29.

the outside world. Their relationship to each other appeared to be a conventional one. François reassured Claude "de son amour pour Line, et de son amitié pour lui."⁹² Initially, François imagined that Line was completely devoted to him.

"Pour Line, je n'étais pas uniquement le mari, mais aussi le meilleur ami; le confident de tous les jours, bref, j'étais le seul être devant qui elle pouvait se manifester sous tous ses aspects, sans avoir à les étudier... et sans douter un instant de ma parfaite compréhension."⁹³

Likewise, he did not doubt his friend's loyalty, at first. "Pour Claude, j'étais l'ami. Et la femme de l'ami n'est pas une femme, mais l'ami lui-même... une partie de l'ami. Elle n'a de vie propre que dans le cadre de cette amitié."⁹⁴

It soon became obvious to François, that Line and Claude were involved in an amorous relationship that they wanted to conceal from him. A suspicion on the part of François that Claude's actions were betraying him, was supported by Line's display of uneasiness. As if he possessed the sang-froid of an objective observer, François noted that:

"Line elle-même était devenue d'une nervosité excessive. Moi, je voulais continuer le jeu jusqu'au bout. Il ne manquait pas de piquant. Je me rappelle certain soir, où à force de ménagements et de savantes caresses, Line s'est offerte à moi dans un véritable délire; j'ai eu la sensation très nette de tromper Claude avec ma maîtresse, sa femme."⁹⁵

⁹² Cloutier, Les témoins, p. 29.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 34.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

François wanted to know beyond any shadow of a doubt what the relationship between Claude and his wife was, or what it could develop into, were they to feel free to follow their natural inclinations. The participation of his wife and best friend in his experiment was facilitated by initiating a nude, midnight-swim for the three of them.

"J'ai voulu savoir. Voilà pourquoi j'ai moi-même pris l'initiative de ce bain de nuit à trois. Ce n'était pas un pur caprice de collégien, ni une tentative de naturisme attribuable à notre éloignement de toute civilisation, ou à la chaleur exceptionnelle de cette nuit de juin. Non, derrière mon air désinvolte, se cachait un désir aigu de ne rien perdre de vos réactions. La proposition lancée, j'étais devenu l'observateur le plus pénétrant de la terre."⁹⁶

With the participation of Line and Claude assured, François' objective was to observe how they would react to the next phase of his experiment which was to leave them alone, together. He calculated that alone without constraints, unrestricted by clothing, Line and Claude had four options open to them. They could, a) sacrifice their passionate desires for the sake of their friendship for François, b) bring a new facet to their amity which would be in harmony with their acceptance of the passion they felt for each other. They were also free to c) rid themselves once and for all of their desires, and having done so, bring a repentant and purified spirit to their friendship, or they could, d) by a secret heroism, transpose their passion to a superior plane, thereafter to be eternally invigorated by it.⁹⁷ The double murder which marks the

⁹⁶Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 134.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 136.

final outcome of François' experiment indicates that, unlike many people in the sixties and seventies, the alienated generation of the early fifties was not ready to accept innovations such as open marriages, communal living, and other cohabitation arrangements later popularized by the youth movement.

The personal value of amity and love is important to the many individuals in the alienated generation who felt unloved during their formative years. A lack of affection is a factor contributing to the state of alienation, however, the emphasis society placed upon spiritual love, as well as its condemnation of earthly affection became another source of estrangement between individuals and the community. Alienated young people in particular, view the increase of physical and emotional alliances between individuals as a hopeful sign that individuals as well as the community can be humanized. Less youthful members underplay the passionate aspect of love, stressing the need for genuine understanding between two people without the obstacles that can be created when the relationship is based upon sexuality. Because it is based upon emotional responses rather than theoretical principles, the personal value of amity and love opens up the possibility for the approval of experimentation in life styles by a significant number of people. Of the four personal values they espouse, amity and love is the one which is most likely to instill in the alienated generation the desire to reincorporate themselves into some kind of social grouping.

There are many among the alienated generation who can be distinguished from the masses by their level of education, their awareness of how industrialized societies function, and their keen sensitivity to the inhumane treatment of the individual by the system. These distinctive characteristics often become catalyzed within the personal value of art they endorse. Though not all individuals estranged from organized society are artists in the traditional sense of the word, a significant number identify with them because they pursue similar goals. The artist's traditional quest is to create works of beauty. Individuals hostile to a plastic-oriented society based upon mass production, frequently share in the craftsman's longing for the beautiful. They are also aware of the potential of creative works to operate as a means of communication between themselves and the greater community.

In the novels we have examined, it is implied that close emotional and spiritual ties exist between the alienated generation and the artist. Artists can identify with this group because many of them have withdrawn from the mainstream of society. Individuals who feel alienated frequently experience the artist's compulsion to make his aspirations known to the greater community. ~~Because it is a~~ personal value, art signifies something different to each individual, and the artist in particular is often the least competent judge of what it is. As one character in La Montagne secrète remarks: "L'art n'était-il pas un peu comme l'amour. Quand on était dedans, on ne pouvait à la fois y rester et analyser. Ceux

qui en étaient sortis, seuls, [...] avaient licencié d'examiner le phénomène, mais ceux qui étaient dans le feu souffraient, c'est tout."⁹⁸ Some artists suffer because they lack the ability to cope with their daily responsibilities, and, at the same time, do justice to their art. Contrary to what one might suspect, the type of obligation need not be solely material in nature. In Les Hauts cris for example, Damien, who is away attending a showing of his sculptures, asks Doris for guidance when he receives word informing him that Marie-Andrée has lapsed into an amnesiac state after giving birth to David, their first-born child. Damien's preoccupation with his identity as sculptor is so complete that he begins to doubt whether he should resume his responsibilities as husband and father.

"J'arriverai devant [Marie-Andrée], je serai un inconnu. Elle aura le mince sourire de politesse qui est l'accueil aux étrangers. Elle doutera de mon nom, de ma présence, et jamais je ne serai Damien devant elle. [...] Qu'est-ce qui est vrai, Doris, mon art ou la douleur humaine? Qu'est-ce donc qui est vrai?"⁹⁹

Another factor which gives rise to the artist's anguish is his dissatisfaction with personal accomplishments. In La Montagne secrète, Pierre was bitterly disappointed when his canoe capsized, destroying his sketches. "Sa douleur vive, sa vrai douleur, elle ne lui venait pas cependant d'avoir perdu tout ce qu'il avait fait, mais bien plus de n'avoir rien encore réussi de si parfait que, même l'ayant

⁹⁸Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 206.

⁹⁹Paradis, Les Hauts cris, pp. 50-51.

perdu, il eût été heureux de l'avoir accompli."¹⁰⁰ Later, Pierre's Parisian art teacher was to remark that dissatisfaction with one's aptitudes was a common phenomenon among people with artistic talent.¹⁰¹ Augustin Meyrand himself was a victim of it, as Pierre observed.

Dans les yeux du vieux peintre, sous les sourcils lourds et noirs, au fond de ce visage ravagé, [Pierre] crut apercevoir l'expression d'une souffrance grave peut-être d'une tendresse affligée. Et, tout à coup, Pierre comprit que le vieil homme non plus n'avait jamais peint comme il en avait envie, que pour cela sans doute il s'était fait le guide des autres et qu'à présent, en chacun, sans trêve, il se poursuivait et se châtiât. Rarement sans doute était-il consolé de sa défaite par le talent que toujours il espérait voir poindre en l'un ou l'autre de ses élèves.¹⁰²

Art is a personal value that can influence the life of those who are committed to such a degree that it frequently produces the sort of anguish which makes it impossible for the victim to analyse the phenomenon objectively.

Traditionally, art has been thought of in terms of those features of it that are considered beautiful. However, beauty is a difficult philosophical question that has eluded definition by great minds throughout history. Some French-Canadian authors obviously feel that beauty is an overrated feature of the novelist's craft. Through Patrice in La Belle bête, Marie-Claire Blais reveals that a self-destructive force is put into motion whenever beauty

¹⁰⁰Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 99.

¹⁰¹"Le maître scrutait [Pierre]. Toujours donc la même chose, pensait-il. Le talent que l'on a à profusion ne console pas de celui que l'on préférerait. Quel être bizarre que l'homme!" Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 184.

is pursued for its own sake. "Patrice se savait désormais beau et la beauté serait le but de sa vie. Patrice était devenu le dieu de Patrice. Il n'avait pas assez d'âme pour désirer davantage."¹⁰³ A narcissistic fascination with physical attractiveness led Patrice to commit suicide after he became disfigured. As well as showing the impermanence of physical loveliness, the author of La Belle bête also suggests that beauty is a quality which lies in the eyes of the beholder. Hence, those who are either figuratively or literally blind can be fooled into believing that beauty exists where it is obviously absent. Isabelle-Marie who thought, "'je serai sans doute belle à force de le vouloir,'"¹⁰⁴ deceived Michael, a blind youth overly concerned with physical attractiveness, into marrying her.

Seul un aveugle pouvait la voir belle. [Isabelle-Marie] résolut donc de jouer à être belle pour [Michael]. [...] "Oui, je suis très belle. J'ai les yeux lilas et de long cheveux blonds. Touche à mes cheveux. N'est-ce pas qu'ils ont le goût du pain?"¹⁰⁵

Evans in Tête blanche saw beauty from an emotional as well as an aesthetic point of view. He writes in his diary:

Ecrire un roman, c'est savoir que chaque mot fait aussi partie d'un immense trésor. Oh! si un jour je pouvais écrire des choses belles! Ne pas écrire le désespoir, mais l'espérance. Je me réjouis de sentir que chaque mot a une musique. J'écris 'forêt' et la forêt sort de mes veines. J'écris 'nuit' et mes yeux connaissent le noir du sommeil."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Blais, La Belle bête, p. 19.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁰⁶Blais, Tête blanche, p. 97.

Other characters went beyond the sentimental dimension of beauty, interpreted as hope by Evans. For example, during his youth, François, the protagonist of Les Témoins, added humane features to the notion of beauty by juxtaposing it with human suffering and death. During his imaginary trial, François remarks:

"Cette même faim [de beauté], je la retrouvais toujours aussi inapaisée. C'est elle qui fut à l'origine de ma carrière de médecin: le mirage aidant, la médecine m'apparaissait comme la seule profession capable de satisfaire la totalité de mes désirs. Quels étaient alors ces désirs: celui de transformer le fumier en lys, celui d'arracher le plus de bonheur possible à la pourriture."¹⁰⁷

A number of novelists find their inspiration in the realist tradition of literature. They regard beauty, art, and life itself as facets of a single jewel, and like Stanislas in La Montagne secrète, claim that "'l'art c'est de couler de la vie dans un moule, au détriment, il est vrai, d'une part de la vie, et, du reste, chacun selon son moule."¹⁰⁸

For Damien in Les Hauts cris, this concept of art meant that he abandon the ideals of beauty passed on to him by Doris. Under her tutelage, he was required to think of women in terms of what is pure and spiritual, despite the fact that his wife, Marie-Andrée was his model. While he was sculpturing, "[Damien] oublia la femme de chair, abandonnée à son décor vaporeux d'épousée vierge. Il calcula, en ombres et lumière, en rythmes et formes, la femme statue aux grandes

¹⁰⁷Cloutier, Les Témoins, p. 97.

¹⁰⁸Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 206.

nervures pures, aux yeux sans horizon."¹⁰⁹ He was not successful in capturing his ideal of the truly beautiful woman until the morning after he was seduced by Marie-Andrée.

Au matin, il s'éveilla près d'elle. Elle resplendissait et l'homme sut qu'il l'avait marquée d'une grâce. Il recréa dans l'atelier cette vision inconnue, et, sous la caresse du couteau inspiré, la Figure de Proue leva son profil ébloui.¹¹⁰

About La Figure de Proue, Marie-Andrée later remarked:

"Je la reconnais. C'était mon visage, la nuit où David naissait, en moi."¹¹¹ It is especially true in the realist tradition that life's experiences constitute an essential ingredient of an artist's conception of what is, or is not beautiful.

The notion that art need not strive to be utilitarian has little impact upon societies that have gone only one step beyond the frontier stage of civilization. Throughout its history, Quebec culture has been influenced by its teachers who used all branches of the arts to bring their message to the masses. The doctrinaire authors of Parti Pris are recent manifestations of the same type of missionary drive. A more subtle contemporary form of this phenomenon lies behind much of an artist's motivation, as André LeBonniec, a missionary priest from Northern Quebec remarks to Pierre Cadourai in La Montagne secrète: "Car, après tout, pourquoi pensez-vous vous épuiser à peindre? Pour vous? Pour moi? Mais non, voyons, vous travaillez pour des

¹⁰⁹Paradis, Les Hauts cris, p. 14.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 22.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 88.

inconnus, la grande meute. C'est ainsi, proprement singulier, mais vrai: les plus grands parmi nous travaillent pour des inconnus qui, bien souvent, au reste, n'y comprendront rien."¹¹² Pierre had not been totally unaware of his public, however, his wish¹¹³ was not based solely upon a vain desire to have others admire his paintings. While painting *La Resplendissante* for example,

[Pierre] s'aperçut penser à des hommes, des inconnus, une multitude. Il rêvait d'eux, d'une entente entre eux et lui,--d'une entente avec des inconnus,---lui qui, toute sa vie, jusqu'ici, s'était sans cesse éloigné des hommes. Eloigné? Ou rapproché?¹¹⁴

Pierre Cadotai's desire was rooted in a deep-seated longing to establish lines of communication between himself and the masses of people he did not know.

In *La Montagne secrète*, Gabrielle Roy examines art in terms of the functions it can serve. One of the most characteristic roles of a painter, for example, is to capture visual beauty upon canvas. In the Canadian tradition of the Group of Seven, Pierre Cadotai travelled to the remotest areas of Canada, recording its natural beauty as he went along. It was as if unusually magnificent natural phenomena could transmit messages to the solitary traveller, as the secret mountain did: "Je suis belle extraordinaire-ment, c'est vrai, disait-elle. En fait de montagne, je suis peut-être la mieux réussie de la création. Il se peut

¹¹²Roy, *La Montagne secrète*, p. 134.

¹¹³"[Pierre] souhaite vivement un autre regard que le sien sur son oeuvre." *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

qu'aucune ne soit comme moi. Cependant, personne ne m'ayant vue jusqu'ici, est-ce que j'existais vraiment? Tant que l'on n'a pas été contenu en un regard, a-t-on la vie? A-t-on la vie si personne encore ne nous a aimé? Et par toi, disait-elle encore, par toi, enfin, Pierre, je vais exister."¹¹⁵ Along with the role of capturing nature's beauty in oils for his fellow man to enjoy, Pierre harboured a more traditional ambition: that of teaching others the truth.

A presque trente ans d'âge déjà, il en était venu un jour à comprendre que ses efforts devaient tendre à cerner et à exprimer les choses les plus simples: l'eau, le feu, les flammes, le ciel. Et ces choses n'étaient pas simples. Ou peut-être alors la simple vérité était-elle la plus difficile à démontrer.¹¹⁶

The author of La Montagne secrète further suggests that a principal aim of those engaged in the written genre is best summarized by a phrase borrowed from Shakespeare's Hamlet: "to tell my story."

Oui, c'était le désir profond de chaque vie, l'appel de toute âme: que quelqu'un se souciât d'elle assez pour s'en ressouvenir quelquefois, et, aux autres, dire un peu ce qu'elle avait été, combien elle avait lutté. Tant d'agitation, de secrets et de tergiversations, pour en finir sur cette douce plainte: "to tell my story:"¹¹⁷

In the final analysis, artists of all genres create works of beauty, relate the truth as they envisage it, or simply tell their story, because they want their creative works to affect their public emotionally. In this connection,

¹¹⁵Roy, La Montagne secrète, p. 102.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 147.

Pierre entertained the notion that it was possible for art to free people, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

Il pensait à cette impression qu'il avait maintes fois éprouvée d'avoir en la poitrine un immense oiseau captif--d'être lui-même cet oiseau prisonnier--et, parfois, peignant la lumière ou l'eau courante, ou quelque image de liberté, le captif en lui, pour quelques instants s'évadait, volait un peu de ses ailes. Songeur, à demi étendu sur la mousse, Pierre entrevoyait que tout homme avait sans doute en sa poitrine pareil oiseau retenu et qui le faisait souffrir. Mais, lorsque lui-même se libérait, pensait Pierre, est-ce que du même coup il ne libérait pas aussi d'autres hommes, leur pensée enchaînée, leur esprit souffrant? Cela lui paraissait possible tout à coup. Il en tremblait à la fois de crainte et d'enivrement. Il leva les yeux. Il imaginait voir passer dans le ciel des âmes joyeuses, à tire-d'ailes s'éloignant, délivrées par ceux qui sur terre ont mission de s'occuper à cela, et le font par leur musique et leur chant. 118

The artist who identifies with the alienated generation should, by definition, remain indifferent to people in organized society. In reality, however, the dual aim of art, consisting of communication with the masses via creations of beauty, makes it impossible for the artist to ignore totally the aspirations and feelings of the public.

The personal value of art is not easily defined because the alienated generation and the artists with whom they identify are too involved in the process of creating and popularizing objets d'art to analyse the procedure involved in assessing its effectiveness. Because it is a personal value, art has the potential to signify different things to various people, even within the group that feels estranged from industrialized society. However, there is basic agreement that certain standard features govern art, regardless

of the medium, the decade or the personality of the people involved. The notion of beauty is one important ingredient of art; however, it is imperative that not all of one's efforts be devoted to it since beauty is based upon subjective judgement. Equally important to the alienated generation is the impression that they can communicate with and be enlightened by their public. Just as beauty by itself is not art, communication by itself is not beauty. Together, however, beauty and communication are essential ingredients of art.

Though the set of personal values examined above can be regarded as negative in orientation, the alienated generation view their quest as a positive one because it is meant to improve them as individuals, regardless of the harmful effects it may produce in the community. Anarchic behavior serves a useful purpose if it encourages one to seek independence and develop the personality more fully. Though it generally manifests itself in as many forms as there are individuals, living in the present generally embraces a sense of personal freedom and a close affinity with nature. Amity and love is treated by many as a prescription for the humanization of the individual and of society. When it provides a means for mutual understanding between people, art asserts itself as a positive force. The personal values sanctioned by the alienated generation show that a significant degree of hostility exists between those who have withdrawn from modern industrialized society and the majority who have established themselves within it.

Yet, each value has positive aspects which, while undermining the aims of the community, contribute in a meaningful way to the individual's own well-being. The alienated generation rejects organized society as it is presented to them, not for the humanist alternative which they cannot comprehend, but for the human expectations which they insist be fulfilled before they, in turn, can be expected to direct their energies toward helping others.

* * *

The quest for personal values is not a simple undertaking. It involves more than a determination to choose one established set of values over another. Committed individuals subject themselves to a long period of internal struggle and change. In the process of acquiring a set of personal values, one becomes aware that traditional beliefs and attitudes do not help in coping with the problems that prevail in industrialized society. The initial phase, in changing one's outlook takes the form of a negative response to the traditional values. What follows is an antagonistic reaction to the quest for personal values by the established forces within society.

The main thrust of the peasant's quest for personal values is a negative one. It is directed against the conservatism of the agriculturalist movement and the traditional values that have taken root in rural Quebec. The personal values they pursue are as much a manifestation of protest against established attitudes as an affirmation of what they

want to acquire. For example, many of the peasants we have studied who seek an integrated personality are very antagonistic towards several traditional peasant values. Paternalism is opposed because of the severe restrictions it places upon the individual. The large family is rejected, not only because of the poverty it creates, but also because of the limited possibilities it affords for personal improvement. The traditional preoccupation with materialism is repudiated because of the hold it has over the peasant and the boundaries it seems to place upon humanitarian considerations. The feature of the established work ethic that is most vociferously denounced is the aspect glorifying backbreaking and boring toil. Because they display a common disregard for the individual, the above four traditional peasant values are denounced by those who seek an integrated personality. The rural custom of hiding one's sensibilities, as well as the puritanical aspects of traditional Catholicism, are rejected to make way for the open expression of one's feelings and sentiments. Young farmers who favor a life of excitement and adventure do so partially in reaction to the stay-at-home existence demanded of the farmer. The negativism of rural youth is reciprocated by traditional farmers, especially in response to the transformations which students of peasant backgrounds frequently undergo. Agriculturalists concerned about the apparent erosion of traditional values are suspicious of the education their descendants are receiving, for they often display more interest in art and the pursuit of knowledge than cultivation of the soil. Since a rejection

of the established social attitudes marks the beginning phase of the quest for personal values, the preponderance of negativism in the peasantry reveals that the desire for a change of values is a relatively recent phenomenon in this sector of French-Canadian society.

Young workers engaged in the search for personal values display a more positive outlook towards the quest. Though they too find themselves in conflict with their parents, the aggression is directed primarily against them. There is a conflict between the generations because of the different outlook each group has regarding the working and living conditions of the working class. Older workers who accepted their lot in life with resignation (some of whom were unable or unwilling to see the poverty that existed in their own households), disapproved of the younger proletarian's approach to the problem: a total renunciation of the working-class values. The challenge to parental authority is hotly contested because open defiance is involved. Other working-class values were abandoned almost imperceptibly, as the ambitious, self-confident and optimistic young worker struggled to escape from the material, spiritual and cultural poverty of his milieu. It is with mixed emotions that parents condemned whatever steps were taken by their children to achieve such a feat. The self-confident worker found it more difficult to contend with the scorn of those who were seeking to humiliate people of economically-deprived backgrounds. So, as well as being in conflict with working-class traditionalists who were committed to uphold the

established values, the worker in pursuit of personal values also found himself opposed by members of the larger community who strove to keep the proletariat in its place so that the status quo could be maintained.

People of middle-class backgrounds who seek personal values are greeted with less hostility from traditionalists and hence, experience less difficulty in achieving their goal than other groups who pursue similar ends. Nevertheless, there are two areas where the conduct of traditionalists creates hostility among a significant proportion of people in the middle class who seek personal values. A great source of annoyance is the power associated with wealth that established members of their class exercise over them and the rest of society. Though they protest against many aspects of the capitalist system, middle-class idealists remain undecided about an appropriate substitute for it, having generally ruled out the socialist alternative. Hostility also frequently accompanies the young lovers' rejection of reasoned parental advice and guidance concerning marriage. However, when compared to the struggle of their counterparts in other socio-economic milieu, the general reaction of middle-class youth to these contentious issues resembles more a polite breakdown in communication than a state of open conflict. Some of the personal attitudes they endorse demonstrate an opposition to many time-honored values, yet the reaction of the traditional bourgeoisie is frequently restrained, perhaps because of the lack of communication between the two factions. For example, the traditional

middle class is content to merely express its opposition to the notions of freedom widely held by their offspring, even though such suggestions threaten established spheres of power, since people who feel liberated are very difficult to control. The traditional contempt of individualism became incorporated into the workings of established social institutions. For example, the educational system of the pre-sixties era promoted the collectivist cult, stifling all individual behavior that did not closely conform to the norms set by the community. The personal value of happiness was actively opposed by the traditional bourgeoisie, not only because of the threat it presented to those who renounced it in favor of the traditional middle-class values, but because of its elusive quality. The discord between the two factions in the bourgeoisie is manifested more by a breakdown in communication than an inclination of one group to launch a destructive attack upon the other, a step which would seem degrading to both. Though the tendency to practice restraint signifies a positive approach to reconciling personal differences, much of the credit for it belongs to the greater resources available to the middle class, as well as to the advanced phase of their quest for personal values.

By their conception of modern man as being metaphysically dead, the alienated generation demonstrate that they feel the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and the problem of overcrowding in modern cities more keenly than many others. Their principal form of protest against organized society consists of spiritually or physically

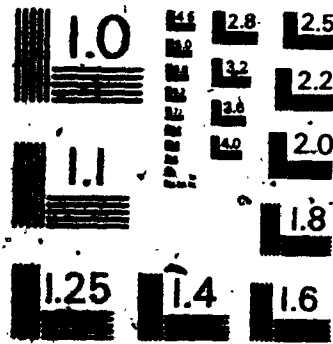
withdrawing from it. The personal values they endorse are a further manifestation of their discontent. For example, the alienated individual's violent opposition to the goals of industrialized society is frequently displayed in the form of anarchic behavior. The specific form which the violence takes can range from personal protests to involvement in terrorist activities. Moral nihilism is a vital component of anarchic behavior since those who have spiritually withdrawn from organized society do not feel bound by accepted social conventions nor the laws of the land. Living in the present with as little regard for the future as possible is another form of protest against a planned society. Even their pursuit of a humanitarian definition of amity and love, with its emphasis upon acceptance rather than the censuring of sensory experience, marks a dramatic departure from established notions of the sentiment. Their support of art is made up of negative aspects also, for it is frequently directed against the plasticity of modern life. Though several of the personal values just cited are essentially positive in nature, the alienated generation often insist upon the negative element of each value because of their hostility to organized society, its notions of progress, and the established values.

In the initial phase, the quest for personal values steered towards a rejection of the time-honored attitudes of one's socio-economic milieu as well as the traditionalism that characterized French-Canadian society until the very recent past. This negativism was commonplace during the

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transition period which spanned the two decades between 1940 and 1960. It is an era in Quebec history which was marked by an extensive re-examination of the values endorsed by society and a search for attitudes that could supplant the rejected ones. Though the individual who sought change may have thought he was struggling alone against established thought, he was actually participating in a movement that would produce a significantly noticeable impact upon the traditionalist province during the sixties and seventies. What inspired the quest was a deep-seated desire to break loose from the established options that society instituted for each individual. A rejection of traditional roles was necessary if a feeling individual who could depend more upon his own intellect than the established policies of the past was to be allowed to evolve. The personal values sought after by the different groups in society were geared towards the development of each person. It was expected that one who harboured the correct attitudes should mature into a genuine individual who, as a minimum, would possess the following: a positive outlook on life, a willingness to display one's feelings, and a desire to develop one's intellectual faculties.

A positive outlook on life, combined with an acknowledgement of the fundamental goodness of man, is basic to any attempt at developing the human personality. This perspective on life is exhibited by young people from rural Quebec in their undaunting efforts to attain a harmonious state within the personality and with nature. Young workers

also give their unqualified support to this approach to individualism, as the personal values they endorse demonstrate. The high priority placed upon self-esteem shows not only that they reject the notion that resignation is a virtue. Upwardly mobile workers must feel superior to their peers if they are to acquire the self-confidence that is vital if they are to successfully compete with the more privileged for society's employment opportunities. Their positive outlook on life is underscored by their hope in the future. It is an optimism based upon an ambition for wealth, power, and a position of prestige. Middle-class young people demonstrated a high regard for the notion that man is fundamentally good by their admiration of individualism. Unlike the preceding generation which eulogized the collectivist cult, they believed that it was within the individual that one had to seek the truth. The quest for happiness is a further manifestation of their belief in the individual, for most people could discover a state of solace within themselves, either by remaining true to their personalities, by continually developing their characters, or by avoiding disagreeable situations. The alienated generation as well, by seeking to live in the present in defiance of other people's notions of progress, demonstrated a positive approach to their own individual aspirations. Though various types of people choose different ways of manifesting their attachment to the present, most share a common desire to live by a unique set of personal values which reflects their particular individuality. Each of the four groups examined in

the preceding chapters seek an alternative to the prescribed roles already established for them in society by developing their personalities more fully than is consistent with traditional expectations. By believing in the fundamental goodness of man, and by striving to maintain a positive outlook on life, many obstacles placed in their path are successfully overcome.

Emotional growth also forms a vital part of the complicated process of human development. Feeling good about one's feelings and sentiments is vital if one is to be considered emotionally mature. This was difficult to achieve in the pre-sixties, conservative society of Quebec which praised self-control and was suspicious of most forms of personal expression. The non-traditionalist rural population's insistence upon the uninhibited expression of personal feelings and sentiments was originally meant as an act of defiance against the reserve and apparent insensitivity of the traditional farmer. However, negativism was soon supplanted by a more positive approach towards the emotional development of the individual. As a result, many young farmers began to feel good about themselves and their experiences regarding the more complex sentiments of friendship and love. The working-class girl relied greatly upon whatever charm she possessed or could cultivate to subdue the overly ambitious, self-confident, and hard-working proletarian male in an attempt to win his affection, for he represented her escape from the dreary conditions in which she had been raised. Because of the resources and leisure time available

to him, the middle-class person was better equipped than other segments of the population to foster the development of personal feelings and sentiments. Where love is concerned, traditional notions persisted; however, there was a trend among males to abandon the custom of dominating the beloved. Instead, a more egalitarian relationship was favored whereby each partner felt free to express his emotional needs and desires, not only to the partner, but also to the greater community. The alienated generation also sought to gain public acceptance rather than the censoring of sensory experiences. Their pursuit of a humanitarian definition of love demonstrates their optimism in this regard. They hope that amity and love will lead to a greater humanization of society and the realization of unsurpassed happiness for each individual. Such goals can only be realized if individual members of the community aspire to become emotionally mature people.

Cultivating one's intellectual faculties is as vital to the process of human development as an amelioration in the expression of one's feelings and sentiments. It is particularly important during the formative phase of an individual's evolution. This applies equally to French-Canadian society in a collective sense, for until recently, the only acceptable intellectual pursuits were those which complied with the aims of the authoritative, paternalistic leaders of society. Efforts to cultivate the individual's rational and intuitive faculties were not condoned. For example, it was only over the objections of traditional

farmers that many school-aged peasants, particularly girls, were successful in furthering their formal education. Unlike their elders, they recognized the value of knowledge in achieving self-awareness, as well as in increasing one's ability to deal with the vast changes that were taking place in society. Ambitious young workers depended upon opportunities that they felt awaited them on the job market provided that scholastic success was achieved. Hence, students of working-class background competed hard, both at day and night school, for the honors and awards that were available. Middle-class young people did not appear to be as concerned with the employment opportunities that might result from their educational training. Their prime goal was to achieve a high level of self-awareness, as well as an understanding of and a desire to be understood by others. Therefore, they sought to acquire an intuitive kind of knowledge that they felt could best be realized by focusing upon the value of communication. Through the pursuit of art, the alienated generation also concentrated upon the communicative aspect of intellectual development: By imparting their version of the truth to others, or simply by telling their story, many felt that they contributed to the spiritual, intellectual and emotional liberation of their fellow countrymen. Individuals who strove to cultivate their intellectual abilities did so for reasons which reflect the concerns of their socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, they share a collective desire to advance the cause of human development.

Attempts to develop oneself more completely by acquiring a positive outlook on life and by cultivating one's emotional and intellectual faculties are beneficial to society, for people who are content with their personal development are better able to care about others. Though the personal values which make this a possibility are frequently oriented to the individual, one must also come to terms with the fact that mankind is a social being who has to coexist with his fellow man. The emphasis placed upon the values of love and communication by the different groups demonstrates their ways of coping with this reality.

However, the most significant manifestation of giving selflessly of oneself comes from idealistic members of the middle class. Their personal value of helpfulness originates with the humanitarian notion that each person in society has the right to expect that his basic human needs can be satisfied. They recognize that they have a responsibility as members of the human community to assist the more unfortunate among them who could not survive as individuals and as members of the Quebec political system without their aid. Middle-class people who pursue the personal value of helpfulness are able to think of someone else because they have succeeded in getting out of themselves long enough to become involved with others. This accomplishment demonstrates that they have advanced further in the process of human development than the other three groups studied in the preceding chapters.

The personal values which are sought after by a generation of people who come from all segments of society

of man began. As he progressed to the state of conscious being, mankind became more remote from the animal condition. One of the consequences of man's evolution was that he became vain. He soon imagined himself to be equal to the gods. The Promethean myth attributes man's vanity to the fire which lost its spiritualizing force after it had been stolen. Because the theft was a violation of Zeus' law, the intelligence man acquired as a result turned him into a self-satisfied, excessively proud person whose aspirations became limited to the commonplace and the banal.

The principal theme of Part One of this study, "Noble Traditions", approximates closely the proposition presented in the first phase of the Promethean myth. Given that the heroes of Greek mythology are personifications of psychological tendencies prevalent in man, by drawing parallels between mythical characters and the various types of characters in the novel, one arrives at fresh insights into complicated psychological phenomena. For example, there is a similarity between the established members of society who endorse the traditional values and Zeus, the supreme power on Olympus. Both display a high regard for discipline, a respect of authority, and a veneration of the spiritual aspects of life. Like Prometheus, on the other hand, the hero in pursuit of a set of personal values is more concerned with the emotional, psychological, and intellectual evolution of the human being. The reaction of Zeus to the enlightenment of earthly beings resembles the traditional attitude of the Roman Catholic Church in French-Canadian society which emphasized the use

CONCLUSION

A significant number of French-Canadian novels written in the realistic mode between 1940 and 1960 examine the quest for personal values of people from all sectors of society. An investigation of traditional and personal values has shown that a fundamental philosophical difference sets the group which supports established social attitudes apart from the faction which actively opposes them. Two additional conclusions follow from the study. Firstly, the quest for personal values is an intensely personal pursuit, undertaken by most individuals during the critical phase of personality development which is responsible for shaping the consciousness. Secondly, certain groups, and ultimately the entire society evolve along with the individuals who experience significant change in their personality.

The human desire to reach beyond the commonplace applies especially to young idealists during the developmental stage of maturation. This aspect of the human psyche is examined, not only in light of the need to resist traditional attitudes and customs, but also in relation to the pursuit of a set of values which might better reflect the personality of the individual. History reveals that the drive to develop the human consciousness is a phenomenon not restricted to modern man. It is recorded in Greek mythology as well as in the Judaeo-Christian traditions. The myth of Prometheus is particularly significant because

it traces the path of human development beginning with the state of animal innocence (represented in modern psychology by the unconscious) and through the intellectualizing stage (which in the terminology of psychiatry is represented by the conscious phase of human development). Once a sufficiently high level of awareness is attained, the danger arises that mankind will become vain and deviate from his evolutionary course, a possibility rendered in contemporary terms by subconscious desires that are likely to lead one astray. According to the Promethean myth, human beings who overcome this phase acquire spiritual awareness and gain immortality. The superconscious state allows the mind to function with a mystical insight which goes beyond the narrow scope of reason. It is the modern equivalent of the last phase in the evolution of mankind.

Since Prometheus is a mythological symbol of humanity, he has been used in French-Canadian literature and, hence, in the present work, to personify the hero of the novel whose pursuit of personal values is a manifestation of a deep-seated desire to develop fully as a person, despite the established course set by society. The combat itself is as important to the myth as Zeus and Prometheus, the principal combatants. Since it is more of a psychological than an historical conflict, the contest bears a close relationship to the struggle Quebeckers initiate against the forces in society which are dedicated to obstructing the natural development of the individual. Since "la sym-

bolisation mythique est un calcul psychologique exprimé en langue imaginé,"¹ use of the Promethean myth to clarify complex psychological phenomena seems appropriate, particularly in light of the fact that this is a literary and not a psychological dissertation.

The Promethean myth has four basic components which relate closely to the major parts of this work. The creation of a conscious being constitutes the first phase of the Greek myth. Though Prometheus is not a god but a Titan, he successfully fashioned a living creature out of earth and mud; the earth symbolizing terrestrial desires, the mud mediocrity. The Titan sought to raise his creature above the commonplace by giving it intellect. To do so, however, Prometheus had to go against the orders of Zeus, and abscond from Olympus with the flames which would bring enlightenment to his creation. Fire is an apt symbol for the intellect, for the light given off by the flames finds a parallel in the spiritualizing function of the intellect, heat in the mind's sublimation process, and the destructive quality of fire in the perversion of thought. Fire is also significant in light of the history of man, since it was fire which liberated the human kind from his animal condition. Primitive man became more sociable as a greater number of his kind gathered around the fire seeking warmth. With time language developed, and the progressive intellectualization

¹Paul Diel, Le Symbolisme dans la mythologie grecque (Paris: Payot, 1952), p. 17. The following discussion is based upon Diel's interpretation of the Promethean myth which appears in the chapter entitled: "Le Combat contre la banalisation", pp. 231-246.

of man began. As he progressed to the state of conscious being, mankind became more remote from the animal condition. One of the consequences of man's evolution was that he became vain. He soon imagined himself to be equal to the gods. The Promethean myth attributes man's vanity to the fire which lost its spiritualizing force after it had been stolen. Because the theft was a violation of Zeus' law, the intelligence man acquired as a result turned him into a self-satisfied, excessively proud person whose aspirations became limited to the commonplace and the banal.

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of authority and a promotion of messianic views by the community leaders. These ideals profoundly influenced the essential nature of the traditional values. Also, there are important similarities between the fire taken from Olympus, against the express ^{As} orders of Zeus, and the personal values endorsed by young idealists in defiance of established social traditions. Just as the mythological fire was meant to spiritualize Prometheus' earthly beings, thereby elevating them above the commonplace, so too, the intended aim of personal values was to provide the ordinary person with the psychological means whereby he could develop beyond the mediocre norm. Like the Olympian flame which lost its spiritualizing force after it was stolen, personal values can also be made to act against the stated aims of their proponents, especially when individuals allow themselves to be led astray by their newly-found freedom. This occurs when, like Prometheus' creatures who thought themselves equal to the gods, young idealists focus so intensely upon their personal attitudes that they give the appearance of vainly setting themselves above the established values, as well as the traditional leaders, of society.

The second part of the Promethean myth examines mankind's seduction by mundane desires, and his steady decline to the commonplace. As foreseen by Zeus, Prometheus' defiant act resulted not only in a want of intellectual foresight in man, but also in his moral depravity. Mankind's plight is recounted in the story of Pandora and Epimetheus. The first mortal woman, Pandora, did not possess

a soul. She epitomizes earthly desires and their corrupting influence upon humans. Prometheus was suspicious of Pandora, Zeus' highly seductive gift, aware that she could be a tormentor sent to inflict punishment upon the world for his theft of fire. He forewarned his brother, Epimetheus, to be wary of her captivating charms. However, as his name indicates, Epimetheus only realized that he had been led astray after he married Pandora. When the ceremony was over, she opened the box which Zeus had given her, unleashing all the ills and vices known to man into the world. The iniquity falls into three basic categories: a deformation of the spirit, sexual perversions, and social degeneracy. Together, these constituted the initial phase of the spirit-creator's revenge for the defiant act perpetrated by Prometheus.

Part Two of the thesis examines the human failings which frequently impede the pursuit of personal values. Since mythical figures are personifications of negative as well as positive qualities of the human psyche, revealing parallels can be drawn between weak protagonists in the French-Canadian novel and the principal characters who appear in the second part of the Promethean myth. Pandora personifies the deceptive aspect of the human imagination. The box containing all the evils known to man represents subconscious desires deeply embedded within the human mind. Epimetheus is the embodiment of a lack of foresight with which many human decisions are formulated. The marriage between Pandora and Epimetheus, and the opening of the box

in celebration, signifies that the outcome of a union between the deceptive aspect of the human imagination and a lack of forethought is impulsive and chaotic behavior, the result of which can lead to man's ultimate downfall. Individuals in quest of personal values often experience psychological torment resembling the three forms of evil which escaped from Pandora's box. For example, in the chapter entitled: "Chained by Personal Incapacity", the physical and mental handicaps which afflict individuals seeking personal values is examined. A frequent outcome of these impediments is a deformation of the spirit and the eventual abandonment of the quest. The chapter dealing with the protagonist's personal history reveals that the emphasis traditionalists placed upon moral principles and strict discipline resulted in the following inadequacies in their offspring: a distorted view of normal sexual drives, a deep sense of shame, and feelings of guilt regarding all types of sexual practices. The chapter entitled: "Chained by Solitude" examines the behavior of solitary individuals who find it difficult to adjust to any form of social interaction. Their conduct, which ranges from a masochistic desire to be dominated by a strong individual to a compulsion to tyrannize others sadistically, is a reflection of the social degeneracy that can prevail in society. Idealists who regard personal values as a measure of self-development are frequently misguided by the subconscious which contrives impediments emanating from within the individual, his background, or the environment. These obstacles are an outcome

of the union between the deceptive facet of the human imagination and a want of foresight, characteristics of the human psyche personified in Greek mythology by the joining together of Pandora and Epimetheus in matrimony.

The third component of the myth examines how mankind, through Prometheus, atoned for the act of defiance against Zeus and, hence, was freed from further castigation. The penalty meted out to Prometheus took the specific form of his being chained to a rock on Mount Caucasus where, each day, he was tormented by an eagle which ate away at his liver. He was saved by Heracles, the mythical hero who emerges in the Latin tradition as Hercules. Heralded as the symbol of heroic man who triumphed over the commonplace, Hercules slew the eagle with his bow and arrows, liberating Prometheus from his torment. The symbolical meaning of Prometheus' experience leads to analogous situations in contemporary psychological literature. The rock to which Prometheus was chained is suggestive of the callous, earthly desires which characterizes the banality of mankind. The liver being eaten away signifies repressed guilt, and the eagle, culpable vanity, since it acts as the agent responsible for the repression of guilt feelings. The arrow is a solar symbol representing an illuminer of the spirit. The eagle can be killed by a weapon of the spirit; mankind can be released from self-reproach by atoning for his spiritual faults. These phenomena, examined in either the mythological or psychological forms, are highly relevant to our study of the quest for personal values.

"Herculean Deliverance", Part Three of the dissertation, examines the means utilized by some Quebeckers to overcome their preoccupation with the mundane aspects of life, their repressed guilt, and their intense desire to be liberated from the mediocrity of their condition. Chapter VII deals with the reasons behind the protagonist's escape from his regular environment. Like Hercules, who liberated the intellect from the banality which gained possession of it, a number of individuals seeking personal values were hopeful that their escape to a different yet demanding environment would eventually result in a conquest over the negative attitudes they harboured about themselves and society. They hoped that their recently found strengths would physically, emotionally, and spiritually prepare them for a successful combat against the internal and external forces opposed to their quest. In Chapter VIII, the hope which discontented individuals placed in the act of revolt is examined. Parallels exist between Hercules' conquest over the eagle, which acts as an agent of repressed guilt, and people who become aggressive in an attempt to quell inner feelings of hatred and repressed culpability. Just as the arrows used to subdue the mythological bird are symbolical of illuminers of the spirit, the means employed by Quebeckers in their revolt are important in that they often result in a keener awareness of the self as well as of others. Chapter IX shifts emphasis to consider the hope in evolution displayed by many in society. It is a developmental process which involves the personal growth of

traditionalists and the mutual benefits of the resultant social evolution to both traditionalists and the impatient idealist in quest of personal values. The confidence placed in the evolutionary means of attaining freedom corresponds to the time-period in the Promethean myth immediately following the Titan's deliverance from his torment. This aspect of the myth demonstrates that the intellect finally succeeded in shaking off its initial revolt and was therefore restored to the spiritual plane. In mythological language, this phase of the story signifies that Prometheus is ready for a reconciliation with Zeus.

The suspension of hostilities between Prometheus and Zeus results in the abrogation of the original fault. Therefore, the fire brought down from Olympus recovered its positive significance. Symbolically speaking, Prometheus took his place among the divinities. However, death is a prerequisite before mortals can achieve immortality. In non-symbolical terms, before the intellect which has overcome revolt can regain its evolutionary form and reach a higher spiritual plane, it is essential that the banal, the negative principle, perish. Like Epimetheus, who represents the negative aspects of the intellect, Chiron, the Centaur famous for his knowledge of medicine, symbolizes the commonplace mortal side of Prometheus. Chiron not only forms the link between mankind and his animal condition, but, because of his unhealable leg-wound, he acts as a constant reminder that death is the price for deliverance from the human condition. So that he might escape from the suffering

caused by his incurable wound, the immortal Centaur implores Zeus to grant him death. Chiron offers Zeus his immortality in order that Prometheus might receive it. Hence, the Titan who has overcome the revolt stage joins the immortals while the Centaur dies. In non-mythological terms, the intellect is elevated to the high spiritual plateau occupied by an enlightened establishment which has finally accepted their fellow man's mystical qualities.

This phase of the Prometheus myth can be compared to Part Four of the dissertation. As is the case for the mythological hero, it would not be possible for young idealists to support a set of personal values in the highly authoritative paternalistic society of Quebec during the pre-sixties if a reconciliation between the traditionalists and themselves could not be realized. The peasant, for example, would not have actively sought a change in personal attitudes were his behavior not tolerated, albeit reluctantly, by the traditional farmer. Though there were often clashes between the two generations of workers regarding a refusal by the upwardly mobile to adopt the established values of the proletariat, parents of ambitious workers realized that a different set of values than those which had kept them at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder were necessary if their children were to achieve material success. The breakdown in communications between middle-class parents and their offspring is a manifestation of the conflict spurred on by the young peoples' rejection of their parents' values. However, a reconciliation between the opposing sides frequently

accompanies maturity. The alienated generation are frequently portrayed as confused, anxious people who lack a sense of identity because of their estrangement from family and community. For them, a reconciliation with society is essential before they can successfully cope with feelings of alienation. The four groups examined in the last section of the dissertation, perhaps because of their lack of worldly experience, believe that the values they cherish surpass those that are firmly established in society. To counter this assertion, traditionalists charge that their descendants are vain, hence, erecting a barrier between themselves and their offspring which can only be lifted by a reconciliation between the two opposing factions. Acceptance of young people by traditionalists from each social class is essential before the coming generation can be admitted as a group into the establishment as they are, with their weaknesses and strengths, their personal attitudes and values. When this occurs, rebellious idealists have achieved a Promethean triumph, for like the mythological hero, they have transcended beyond the bounds of commonplace vanity. They have assumed their rightful place alongside the traditionalists.

The analogy between the Promethean myth and the quest conducted by the protagonist of the realistic novel demonstrates that an intensely personal search is involved in any awakening of the human consciousness. Of particular importance is the atmosphere of conflict which existed between the individual Quebecker and French-Canadian society

during the two decades under study. An ambiance of intense discord, like that which is central to the Promethean myth (ie. between god and man, Olympus and earth; the spirit and the intellect) marks the relationship between those in established positions of power within society and those opposed to them who wanted to live according to their own personal set of values. Our study shows that society was steadfastly pitted against the individual, with tradition placed in opposition to change. Therefore, the quest for personal values which, by its very nature creates discord, is conducted in an uneasy atmosphere of social conflict which touched the lives of everyone in Quebec during the forties and fifties.

Heading the list of volatile issues which characterize these two decades is the Second World War. It created a philosophical clash between tens of thousands of heretofore unemployed industrial workers who were made aware that they owed their timely state of good fortune to the vast numbers of civilians and soldiers who were dying in Europe. The most immediate impact of the war upon Quebecers came during the conscription crisis of 1942. The severe strain in federal-provincial relations which followed MacKenzie King's county-wide referendum on the question of conscription was reflected in the 1944 debacle of the provincial Liberals who were replaced by Duplessis' Union Nationale Party.

Towards the end of the forties, Maurice Duplessis had established himself firmly as a principal opponent of the Quebec union movement, a popular crusade whose stated aim

was to better the plight of the ordinary worker. The premier had formulated a policy against unions,

[...] qu'il allait appliquer de plus en plus vigou-
 reusement et cruellement. Pour lui, communisme et
 syndicalisme n'étaient qu'une seule et même chose.
 Lors de l'élection de 1948, il abandonna la maxime:
 "Les travailleurs ont le droit de s'organiser, mais
 aussi de ne pas s'organiser" et la remplaça par:
 "Les travailleurs ont le droit de s'organiser, mais
 pas de désorganiser". La conviction qu'une grève
 désorganise les plans d'un employeur lui fit décider
 que toute grève déclarée sans sa permission était
 illégale. Il adopta également le stratagème qui
 consistait à identifier les leaders syndicaux au
 communisme [...].²

The Asbestos Strike in the Eastern Townships during 1949 is
 but one dramatic consequence of the oppressive government
 policies against the worker. Opposition to Duplessis went
 far beyond unionists and working-class sympathizers. For
 example, the Bloc Populaire which "was primarily a youth
 movement and a class movement, drawing its main strength
 from the élite of nationalist-minded French-Canadian youth,"³
 became a staunch anti-Duplessis base. Shek remarks in his
 study that:

Bloc Populaire leaders such as Jean Drapeau, André
 Laurendeau, Michel Chartrand and René Hamel continued
 to oppose the Union Nationale administration after
 the collapse of their party shortly after the 1945
 Federal election. They helped stimulate the "social
 nationalism" of "Le Devoir" in the early 1950's,
 calling for reforms in labour legislation, public
 ownership of utilities and national resources, and
 restoration of democratic practices.⁴

Paul Sauriol, an editor of "Le Devoir" writes in an article

²Leslie Roberts, Le Chef Jean Paré (trans.)
 (Montréal: Editions du jour, 1963), p. 98.

³Wade, The French Canadians, p. 1012.

⁴Shek, "Aspects of Social Realism in the French-
 Canadian Novel: 1944-1964," p. 36.

subtitled: "'Le Devoir' a toujours servi la liberté en temps de crise," that in 1956,

notre journal devint le point de ralliement des éléments d'opposition, l'une des rares voix qui s'élevaient contre un système dictatorial. [...]
 Notre journal ne recula pas devant sa mission difficile, et la révélation du scandale du gaz naturel, dans "Le Devoir", fut probablement le premier ébranlement sérieux du système de patronage de la dictature qui devait couler en 1960.⁵

"Cité Libre", founded in 1950 under the editorship of Gérard Pelletier and Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, manifested a similar critical spirit towards the Duplessis regime and its institutions, "finding no ~~one~~ too sacred to be sociologically anatomized."⁶

Despite the broad base of opposition, "le chef" remained in power until his death in 1959. His long reign can be attributed to the extensive under-representation of Montreal in the Legislative Assembly and the fraudulent election practices which Pierre Laporte notes in his book, Le Vrai visage de Duplessis, were legalized by "une législation odieuse [...] qui a fait de la loi électorale une arme redoutable, de haute précision, entre les mains du gouvernement."⁷ In this climate of extraordinary encounters and bitter conflicts, a system of personal values that were fundamentally different from French-Canadian traditional

⁵Paul Sauriol, "Indifférent aux promesses et aux menaces 'Le Devoir' a toujours servi la liberté en temps de crise," Le Québec qui se fait, Claude Ryan (ed.) (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 310.

⁶Wade, The French Canadians, p. 1109.

⁷Pierre Laporte, Le Vrai visage de Duplessis (Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1960), p. 29. The author is referring to Bill 34, enacted in 1953.

attitudes became an established fact among a significant number of independent-minded people. These values became the foundation upon which individuals began to create a new identity for themselves. Eventually, the increasing number of people who embraced personal values affected the entire social fabric of Quebec. The result is the evolution of a new society in Quebec which began to manifest itself in the early sixties and which is still in the process of development.

Personal values have had a particularly significant impact upon the literature produced in Quebec since 1960. The emphasis is now upon individualists who have abandoned the traditional French-Canadian stereotype. The protagonists frequently experience extreme difficulty in identifying with anyone or anything in their immediate surroundings. Under the various aspects of form and substance, there are attempts to expose the spiritual and social causes of uncertainty which exists in the mind of protagonists. The radical dissimilarity in structure between the novels written before and after 1960 is most revealing, as is the method of presentation of the principal characters. The important role that history plays in the narrative is also telling. The topic of violence, often in connection with an ardent belief in Quebec's independence from Canada, is a predominant theme. The collective desire of Quebecers to be released from the oppressive nature of their own institutions is also prevalent. Authors of the past decade frequently have a specific social phenomenon to expose through their writing. Like Jacques Godbout, who

explains in an introduction to Le Couteau sur la table, that his novel "ne prétend pas être autre chose qu'une approximation littéraire d'un phénomène de ré-appropriation du monde et d'une culture,"⁸ few contemporary authors claim to do anything less than use the prose form to extemporize upon reality, "renonçant plus par paresse que par principe au découpage prémédité d'un vrai roman." Aquin remarks with a certain pride: "'Je laisse les vrais romans aux vrais romanciers.'"⁹

The dramatic change in the structure of the French-Canadian novel since 1960 marks the end of the descriptive period in the literature of Quebec, for the time being at least. Contemporary authors are more interested in suggesting alternative ways of doing things (in society as well as in literature), than in presenting a multiplicity of characters in a readily recognizable setting. Without a well-defined set of rules to follow, the creative process can become as confusing to the narrator of the novel as it is for the reader. For example, it is remarked in L'Antiphonaire, that the book being written consists merely of a series of events, and that it is "sans titre, sans logique interne, sans contenu, sans autre charme que celui de la vérité désordonnée."¹⁰ Hubert Aquin goes one step

⁸Jacques Godbout, Le Couteau sur la table (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), p. 9.

⁹Hubert Aquin, Prochain Episode (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1965), p. 14.

¹⁰Hubert Aquin, L'Antiphonaire (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1969), p. 17.

further in Trou de mémoire, claiming that:

le roman de Pierre X. Magnant [the fictional author and editor of the novel] se présente à nous comme absence de roman; son coefficient de réalité est bien près de zéro absolu. [...] Il convient, si l'on veut comprendre parfaitement le livre de Pierre X. Magnant, de le situer hors littérature, hors fiction et tout à fait hors roman: car ce serait tomber dans un piège grossier que de lui reconnaître une typification de dé-roman ou de contre-roman ou encore d'a-roman ou même d'infra-roman, autant de variables possibles d'un roman interminablement nouveau. Non, le manuscrit de Pierre X. Magnant n'a rien à voir avec le roman ou la littérature fictive en général [...].¹¹

Novelists who write in this genre not only demonstrate a refusal to be bound by traditional conventions. They are also making a statement about the breakdown of traditional social structures, the established institutions, and the initial chaos which accompanies such a collapse. The diary format is a technique frequently used by contemporary authors to give a logical order to the narrative. It involves the division of the book into digestible parts which sometimes appear sequentially numbered, as in L'Avalée des avalés,¹² and Le Couteau sur la table, or separated only by asterisks as in La Guerre, yes sir!¹³ The diary form is effective because it creates a highly personal relationship between the author and reader, thereby enhancing the likelihood that the suggestions imparted will be kindly received. Attempts are frequently made to inject a degree of objectivity into the material by integrating into the text quotations from

¹¹Hubert Aquin, Trou de mémoire (Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1968), p. 74.

¹²Réjean Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966).

¹³Roch Carrier, La Guerre, yes sir! (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1968; 1970).

popular sources, such as "Time Magazine", Reuter News Agency, and The Canadian Press.¹⁴ These sources are sometimes recorded in the form of a footnote. In Trou de mémoire, Hubert Aquin makes extensive use of the footnote to inject the fictitious editor's personal opinion into the narrative, to elaborate upon a particular aspect which may appear vague, or simply to assist in hiding the true identity of the narrator. The composition of the novel during the past fifteen years has been transformed to comply with the emphasis contemporary authors place upon suggesting rather than describing reality.

The characters created by these authors differ greatly from "les prototypes des principaux acteurs du roman de la fidélité,"¹⁵ and from the characters appearing in the novel written in the realistic mode. Though the latter group may display "la marque d'un tempérament particulier, [il] ne s'éloigne pas d'une ligne de conduite moyenne."¹⁶ Since the novels written since 1960 suggest what reality is, the characters who act in them profess to be based upon real models. For example, one of the main characters in Trou de mémoire, a rapist, a murderer, an author, and an editor, is not a mere invention. "[Il] n'a pas été choisi au hasard, ce n'est pas un soldat de plomb sorti tout droit de ma vaine imagination, je le

¹⁴ Godbout, Le Couteau sur la table, pp. 14-15, 25, and 155-157.

¹⁵ Tuchmafer, "Evolution de la technique du roman canadien-français," p. 172.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 196.

reconnais: J'ai connu, de fait, une personne de chair [...] qui m'a servi de modèle pour composer le personnage [...]."¹⁷

At the beginning of the novel just cited, the narrator confesses that: "le roman d'ailleurs c'est moi: je me trouble, je me décris, je me vois, je vais me raconter sous toutes les coutures, car, il faut bien l'avouer, j'ai tendance à déborder comme un calice trop plein."¹⁸ Some novels are mostly concerned with the person who is being addressed, and through him the reader, rather than the narrator.

For example, the narrator in Aquin's first novel, Prochain épisode, writes:

Ecrire, c'était t'écrire; et maintenant que je t'ai perdue, si je continue d'agglutiner les mots avec une persévérance mécanique, c'est qu'en mon for intérieur j'espère que ma dérive noématique que je destine à des interlocuteurs innés, se rendra jusqu'à toi. Ainsi, mon livre à thèse n'est que la continuation cryptique d'une nuit d'amour avec toi, interlocutrice absolue à qui je ne puis écrire clandestinement qu'en m'adressant à un public qui ne sera jamais que la multiplication de tes yeux. Pour t'écrire, je m'adresse à tout le monde.¹⁹

Claude Jasmin used a similar technique to stimulate the reader of the late sixties into thinking about controversial social issues. In Jasmin, he writes: "En novembre 1968, je me pris à rédiger une longue lettre ouverte à nul autre qu'au célèbre révolté de Charleville, Arthur Rimbaud."²⁰ The result

¹⁷Aquin, Trou de mémoire, p. 124.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁹Aquin, Prochain épisode, p. 70.

²⁰Claude Jasmin, Jasmin (Montréal: Claude Langevin, éditeur, 1970), p. 116.

was Rimbaud, mon beau salaud! He addresses Rimbaud as he would a confidant, disclosing facts about his own upbringing, the social and attitudinal changes which have occurred since the Conquest, French-Canadian poets such as Nelligan, Saint-Denys-Garneau, Grandbois, and the violent acts which took place in Quebec during the late sixties.

There are cases where the narrator's true identity is hidden from the reader. In Trou de mémoire for example, it is only revealed at the end of the novel that Pierre-Xavier Magnant, Charles-Edouard Mullahy, and the "éditeur" responsible for a majority of the footnotes in the novel, are one and the same person. Similarly, only in the "Note Finale" is it disclosed that the initials R.R. do not represent an unknown pseudonym of Pierre-Xavier Magnant as the reader had been led to believe,²¹ but that they are the initials of Rachel Ruskin, sister of the girl who had been raped and murdered by Magnant. However, she too changes her name at the end to Anne-Lise Jamieson, to correspond with her newly acquired identity. She claims that, like her murdered sister, "[...] j'ai moi aussi changé de langue et je suis devenue une Canadienne française--québécoise pure laine! Il a fallu beaucoup de morts pour abolir mon passé,

²¹"[...] R.R. ne sont pas vraiment mes initiales; c'est en quelque sorte un pseudonyme abrégé [...], Aquin, Trou de mémoire, p. 123, and at the end of the following paragraph, the admission, "Pierre X. Magnant dans la réalité, c'est moi!" Ibid., p. 124. However, in the last chapter it is revealed that the passage just cited is a hoax. "Qu'on me pardonne aussi d'avoir écrit ce passage où je raconte que, moi R.R., j'ai écrit ce livre, que j'ai été l'amante de Joan qui est ma soeur; j'espère seulement que cette plaisanterie n'a rien d'injurieux pour sa mémoire... Mon propos était seulement de troubler cet éditeur [...]" Ibid., p. 202.

tout ce passé. Mais maintenant il est réduit à néant et j'ai changé ma vie jusqu'à changer de nom [...]."²² The ruses practiced to attain anonymity by the various characters in the novel just cited are also used by social critics who wish to speak out against established social institutions, but who are afraid to do so. In Les Insolences du Frère Untel, the question is posed: "DE QUI ONT-ILS PEUR, ET POURQUOI?" In the political and social climate of the year 1960, the only reasonable answer to the question was that the social critics were afraid of authority.

Nous avons peur de l'autorité; nous vivons dans un climat magique, où il s'agit, sous peine de mort, au moins, de n'enfreindre aucun tabou, de respecter toutes les formules, tous les conformismes. [...] Nous choisissons le plus sûr: ne rien dire, ne rien penser, maintenir.²³

There was justification for André Laurendeau's reluctance to divulge the true identity of Frère Untel. According to Mason Wade, Frère Untel, whose true identity is Brother Jérôme (Jean-Paul Desbiens), had been "silenced by his order in 1960 for criticizing the educational system."²⁴ As late as 1968, Pierre Vallières was prosecuted by the courts for the things he was alleged to have written two years before. He writes in Nègres blancs d'Amérique, that included in the half-dozen charges brought against him in 1968 was the

²²Aquin, Trou de mémoire, p. 203.

²³André Laurendeau (ed.), Les Insolences du Frère Untel (Montréal: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1960), p. 67.

²⁴Wade, The French Canadians, p. 1119. It is further noted in the same passage that "the pace of evolution [in the society of Quebec] is indicated by the fact that Brother Jérôme [...] is today an official of the provincial Department of Education."

accusation that he had participated in the death of Mlle. Thérèse Morin,²⁵ "par mes paroles, PAR MES ECRITS, [les écrits produits par la Poursuite étaient PUREMENT THEORIQUES]²⁶ par mes attitudes, etc."²⁷ In his case studies of the F.L.Q. entitled: Terror in Quebec, Gustave Morf supports the stance taken by the judge who condemned Vallières,

to life for non-qualified murder in the case of Thérèse Morin. He was not sentenced for having committed the act but for having inspired the outrage at Lagrenade by his writings, his actions and his attitude. The judge had good reason for saying this. The police had found detailed F.L.Q. instructions for acts of violence dated March 1966. These instructions were written in the style of Pierre Vallières.²⁸

Due to legitimate fears of ridicule or prosecution, the practice of disguising the first-person narrator in works categorized as fictional almost became an established practice among authors who criticized the established social order during the sixties.

Several authors suggest that Quebeckers with newly acquired identities should re-examine their history,

²⁵She is the sixty-four year old secretary who became the F.L.Q.'s first victim. Serge Demers had made the bomb. Accompanied by a juvenile, Gaetan Desrosiers, he placed the bomb in the offices of the strikebound Lagrenade shoe factory. "Some minutes later, Demers phoned the company that a bomb had been placed in their offices. But the management had already received so many threatening calls that they did not pay any attention. [...] Miss Thérèse Morin had just come back from lunch when the bomb exploded in her face, killing her instantly." Gustave Morf, Terror in Quebec (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1970), p. 83.

²⁶Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, p. 376.

²⁷Ibid., p. 375.

²⁸Morf, Terror in Quebec, p. 89.

both in a personal as well as in a collective sense.

In L'Outaragasipi, a "récit historique" of one small Québec village "[qui] est semblable à celle de tous nos villages,"²⁹

Claude Jasmin gives the following advice to his readers:

Pour grimper plus haut encore que ne l'imaginerait l'ordinateur le plus ambitieux, il me semble qu'il faut d'abord tout déterrer. Bien déterrer ce passé ignoré. Savoir bien qui est qui, qui était quoi, d'où nous venons, qui nous étions!³⁰

A re-examination of the past is vital if the common stereotype of the French Canadian is to be changed. An example of what English-Canadian soldiers had learned in school about their Québec counterparts appears in La Guerre, yes sir!³¹

Les French Canadians étaient solitaires, craintifs, peu intelligents; ils n'étaient doués, ni pour le gouvernement, ni pour le commerce, ni pour l'agriculture; mais ils faisaient beaucoup d'enfants.³¹

Wide-spread negativism concerning the French-Canadian cultural heritage adversely affected the self-image of individuals belonging to the group. To reverse the self-defeating notions, a more positive approach to the humiliating events in the history of French Canada was required by Quebeckers. Roch Carrier suggests that, with increased exposure, the Anglo-Canadian's scurrilous view of Québec history can be made to appear as ridiculous to every Canadian as it is to the reader of La Guerre, yes sir!

²⁹Claude Jasmin, L'Outaragasipi (Montréal: Les Éditions de L'Actuelle, 1971), p. 193.

³⁰Ibid., p. 174.

³¹Carrier, La Guerre, yes sir! p. 91.

Quand les Anglais étaient arrivés dans la colonie, les French Canadians étaient moins civilisés que les Sauvages. Les French Canadians vivaient, groupés en petits villages, le long de la côte du Saint-Laurent, dans des cabanes de bois remplies d'enfants sales, malades et affamés, de vieillards pouilleux et agonisants. Tous les ans, les bateaux anglais montaient dans le fleuve Saint-Laurent parce que l'Angleterre avait décidé de s'occuper de la Nouvelle-France, négligée, abandonnée par les Frenchmen. Devant les villages, les bateaux anglais jetaient l'ancre et les Anglais descendaient à terre, pour offrir leur protection aux French Canadians, pour lier amitié avec eux. Dès qu'ils apercevaient le drapeau anglais battre dans le Saint-Laurent, les French Canadians se sauvaient dans les bois. De vrais animaux. Ils n'avaient aucune politesse, ces porcs. Ils n'avaient même pas l'idée de se défendre. [...]

Pourquoi n'acceptaient-ils pas l'aide que les Anglais leur offraient? Puisque la France les avait abandonnés, pourquoi ne voulaient-ils pas accepter le privilège de devenir Anglais? L'Angleterre les aurait civilisés. Ils ne seraient plus des porcs de French Canadians. Ils sauraient comprendre une langue civilisée. Ils parleraient une langue civilisée, non un patois.³²

Claude Jasmin suggests in L'Outaragasipi that the defeat on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 can still be reversed. He hopes that Quebeckers will soon be able to claim a victory, even though,

les soldats du Canada et de la France ont perdu! Il y a des gens, ici, qui pleurent, il me semble les entendre aujourd'hui alors qu'il se passe, ici même, le commencement d'un redressement. En avril 1970, il y a un espoir pour une nation à reconstituer! Sur cent Québécois, vingt-quatre votent pour "une patrie bien à nous".³³

Heroic figures taken from history are very frequently evoked in an attempt to legitimize the violent means once considered essential to bring this hope to fruition. One of the most popular is Joseph Papineau, whose passionate

³²Carrier, La Guerre, yes sir!, pp. 91-92.

³³Jasmin, L'Outaragasipi, p. 121.

speeches made him a rallying point of the patriots of the 1837-1838 uprising. An "Effelquois" recruit in Le Salut de l'Irlande, imagines that Papineau accompanies him on his nocturnal bombing missions.³⁴ Jasmin, as well, juxtaposes Papineau's triumphs with those of "une poignée de jeunes patriotes [qui] se réunissent pour jeter la base d'un grand rassemblement. Ce sera bientôt celui 'pour l'indépendance du pays'."³⁵ French-Canadian literature during the past fifteen years stresses that a greater awareness of history is important if Quebeckers are to overcome the deep-seated feelings of inferiority which have stereotyped them for two centuries.

A significant group of authors during the 1960's promoted violence as a justifiable means of affecting social change. A number of these viewed themselves as active participants in the revolution they were promoting. Claude Jasmin reveals in Jasmin: "Je suis de ceux qui croient qu'écrire est un moyen de combattre [...] --je tente de suivre ces écrivains exemplaires d'ici ou d'ailleurs, partout où règne prison, torture, totalitarisme. Y compris la Russie."³⁶ It is suggested in L'Avalée des avalés, that the options open to the individual are limited because of

³⁴ Jacques Ferron, Le Salut de l'Irlande (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1970), pp. 218-219.

³⁵ Jasmin, L'Outaragasipi, p. 168.

³⁶ Jasmin, Jasmin, p. 22.

the oppressive nature of contemporary society.³⁷ "Le seul combat logique est un combat contre tous. C'est mon combat. C'est, sans qu'ils s'en rendent compte, le combat de tous ceux qui font la guerre."³⁸ In a 1968 letter sent to a number of his F.L.Q. friends while he was incarcerated in a Montreal prison, Pierre Vallières advocated the use of violence as a means of fighting the oppressive forces in society, stating that "même si la violence est un phénomène détestable en soi, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que, pour les exploités et les colonisés que nous sommes, la liberté se trouve au bout des fusils."³⁹ In his open letter to Arthur Rimbaud, Jasmin explains that the young activists of the sixties do not shy away from the use of force because: "ils cherchent un nouvel ordre. La force est invitante."⁴⁰

The desire for change in the existing social order is motivated by specific reasons. François Reine in David Sterne, a law student whose social protests culminated in the act of self-immolation tells David: "'Moi aussi je veux réformer l'ordre social parce que je ne lui appartiens pas.'"⁴¹ Violence is defended as a means

³⁷ "Qui n'est pas avalé, militairement, administrativement, judiciairement, monétairement et religieusement? Qui n'est pas avalé par un évêque, un général, un juge, un roi, et un riche?" Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés, p. 160.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 245.

³⁹ Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, p. 385.

⁴⁰ Jasmin, Rimbaud, mon beau salaud, p. 123.

⁴¹ Blais, David Sterne, p. 29.

of recapturing "notre destinée collective de Québécois."⁴²

Another way of justifying one's commitment to violence is to view it as a self-defensive measure, as Vallières does in Nègres blancs d'Amérique:

La soi-disant "paix sociale" que la bourgeoisie veut nous imposer à coup de matraques est elle-même une violence permanente exercée contre notre liberté et notre droit de remettre en question l'Ordre capitaliste et colonial, de le détruire et de le remplacer par un autre, plus conforme à nos aspirations, plus digne de l'homme.⁴³

The revenge motive is also used to vindicate acts of violence. Jacques Godbout in Le Couteau sur la table, suggests that: "[...] les peuples vaincus ont toujours pris leur revanche... ou alors c'est qu'ils avaient été assimilés."⁴⁴ The young "Effelquois" recruit in Le Salut de l'Irlande obtains dynamite "[pour faire] sauter le système maudit,"⁴⁵ an act meant to avenge "la deuxième Irlande,"⁴⁶ which Jacques Ferron uses in the novel to symbolize, "l'honneur de tous les humiliés du Canada."⁴⁷ Oftentimes, a stated motive resembles more an excuse than a valid justification for the perpetration of a violent act.

Sex and violence are two themes which seem to blend naturally with each other in contemporary literature. Though it is over-exploited, sex can play a meaningful role

⁴²Jasmin, Rimbaud, mon beau salaud!, p. 140.

⁴³Vallières, Nègres blancs d'Amérique, p. 385.

⁴⁴Godbout, Le Couteau sur la table, p. 108.

⁴⁵Ferron, Le Salut de l'Irlande, p. 184.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 183.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 75.

in novels which treat the subject of violence in Quebec. Firstly, the sexuality of the characters engaged in violent acts is coupled with youthfulness, thereby identifying the Quebec rebel of the sixties with the youth movement. The affinity between violence and indecent assault accounts for the recurring theme of rape in the novel. French-Canadian authors frequently examine the subject from the point of view of the person who has been violated, drawing parallels between victims of rape and oppressed Quebecers. In Rimbaud, mon beau salaud, Jasmin juxtaposes the indecent assault perpetrated against the young French poet in 1896 by "le 88ième régiment [qui] te jette sur une paille et te fait violer à la ronde,"⁴⁸ and the Quebec youth, "de plus en plus nombreux [...] qui sont en prison déjà; ivres de liberté, ils ont posé des gestes graves d'enfants sérieux qui en savent plus long déjà que les chefs militaires ou policiers."⁴⁹ The crime of sexual assault is also analyzed from the vantage point of the rapist. This allows the reader to examine the state of mind of an individual perpetrating the act of rape. Startling parallels are often drawn between this crime and other violent acts. In Trou de mémoire for example, the rapist, Pierre-X. Magnant reveals that the motive which directs him to execute acts which have political consequences is the same as that which activates his desire to commit rape:

⁴⁸ Jasmin, Rimbaud, mon beau salaud!, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

Je vis dans la terreur, parfois l'éprouvant avec honte, parfois l'engendrant; c'est cela que je préfère, sans nul doute! Engendrer la terreur: oui, j'aime faire peur. J'aime provoquer des réalités politiques qui m'effraient; j'aime aussi troubler des vies innombrables... Je viole, chaque nuit, un nombre toujours croissant de belles inconnues que j'abandonne terrifiées.⁵⁰

In a footnote, the editor of the fictitious autobiography (who is actually Pierre-X. Magnant under the alias of Charles-Edouard Mullahy) makes the following remark about the protagonist's behavior: "Cette obsession du viol peut se comprendre, peut-être, dans un contexte de phantasme d'impuissance."⁵¹ The observation that an exaggerated perception of one's own weaknesses can motivate sexual assaults is applicable to other less heinous violent acts. Desperate people who feel that they are too weak or insignificant to have any influence upon the social institutions which affect their daily lives sometimes resort to violence, thereby concealing their lack of power from themselves as well as from others. Several authors indicate that such notions became an important motivating factor in the bombings and other acts of terrorism which occurred in Quebec during the sixties.

The central issue of much contemporary Quebec literature is liberation, both in the political context of Quebec independence, and in a broader sense of an individual's pursuit of personal freedom within society. In the literature of the forties and fifties, the theme of alienation often

⁵⁰ Aquin, Trou de mémoire, p. 117.

⁵¹ Ibid.

appears in connection with Québec nationalism. However, it is only during the past fifteen years that alienation of the individual has not been viewed in a totally pessimistic light. Because emotions such as anger and fear are associated with a sense of estrangement, alienation has been portrayed in recent years as a positive force which holds the promise of an eventual liberation for the entire French-Canadian cultural group. The greater freedom gained by the author as a result of modifications made to the structure of the novel has facilitated the change. For example, in L'Avalée des avalés, innovative ways are used to graphically portray the problem of alienation. Bérénice Einberg imagines herself to be the province of Quebec, which she depicts on a slate as a small triangle inside "une vague tête d'éléphant", representing Canada:

Et ce triangle, c'est moi, Bérénice Einberg. Comme vous le voyez, la terre me borne des trois côtés, la terre me presse de toutes parts. Je ne suis qu'une tache à la terre. Je ne suis pour la terre qu'une pustule qu'elle absorbera, dont elle guérira. [...]. Or donc, je ne suis pas un être libre et indépendant, mais une sale excroissance, une sorte de verrue avec des bras et des pattes, une sale verrue poussée à la surface de la terre et se nourrissant à même ce sale être qu'est la terre. Que faudra-t-il que je fasse pour être moi-même, pour être par moi-même, pour cesser de n'être qu'un infime parasite de l'être qu'est la terre? Que faudrait-il que je fasse pour ne plus avoir à dépendre de tout, tout le temps, pour tout? Chaque fois que la terre tremble vous tremblez. N'en avez-vous pas assez? N'aimeriez-vous pas mieux être ce qui tremble? Que faut-il faire pour être libre? 52

The analogy drawn by Bérénice Einberg between her own feelings of estrangement from society, and the group

⁵²Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés, p. 159.

alienation experienced by Quebeckers as a result of Confederation, is described with even less reserve by Roch Carrier in La Guerre, yes sir! Though they were strangers in the Corriveau home, the Anglo-Canadian soldiers forming the funeral cortege of the oldest Corriveau son who had died in action, promptly ordered all of the local inhabitants out into the snow when it appeared that the wake was getting rowdy:

[...] Les villageois songèrent qu'ils avaient été chassés par des Anglais de la maison du père de Corriveau, qu'ils étaient empêchés, par des Anglais, de prier pour le repos de l'âme de Corriveau, un fils du village, mort à la guerre, la guerre des Anglais. L'humiliation leur faisait mal comme une blessure physique. Des Anglais les empêchaient de se recueillir et de pleurer sur le cercueil de l'un des leurs. Chaque villageois, parce que dans le village la vie était commune, était un peu le père de Corriveau, chaque femme était un peu sa mère. Les femmes pleuraient à grosses larmes, les hommes attisaient leur colère. [...] Ils n'avaient plus froid. La colère les défendait contre le vent.⁵³

The type of fear associated with the experience of being abruptly estranged from one's historical past, as Quebec had been from France after the conquest, is another powerful emotion which can be made to work for the cause of Quebec independence. A characteristically symbolical reference to Quebec's historical experiences with France appears in L'Avalée des avalés. Bérénice Einberg suggests that, like the collective experience of Quebeckers throughout history, the deep-seated fears she experiences are probably an outcome of her being weaned away from her mother only two

⁵³Carrier, La Guerre, yes sir!, p. 93.

days after her birth.⁵⁴ Powerful emotions, such as fear and anger, are significant indicators of individual attempts to solve personality problems whose origins can be traced to undesirable events in the collective history of the group. Quebec separatism grew out of a common feeling of anger. Similarly, legitimate fears of being inundated by a quarter of a billion North-American anglophones means that different alliances have to be formed by a future independent Quebec, as Jasmin optimistically forecasts in Rimbaud, mon beau salaud!

Nous allons rejoindre et joindre fort les cent cinquante millions de baragouineux de Français de cette terre, gens de cent trente nations sur cette boule, et ce sera bien fini, par ici, de notre sentiment d'isolés, de cocus, d'orphelins perdus en marais et mares anglo-saxonnes.⁵⁵

The optimism about Quebec's future international role can be seen in the setting of many contemporary novels. Hubert Aquin is one author who favours juxtapositions between the city of Montreal and the province of Quebec, with foreign capitals and countries. In Prochain épisode, international significance is given to the acts of terrorism which occurred in Montreal during the early sixties, by incorporating Geneva and Lausanne, Switzerland into the intrigue. In Trou de mémoire, a rapprochement is made between the so-called Quebec revolutionary movement of the

⁵⁴"Quand je ne suis pas seule, je me sens malade, en danger. J'ai ma peur à vaincre. Pour vaincre la peur, il faut la voir, l'entendre, la sentir. Pour voir la peur, il faut être seul avec elle. Quand je perds ma peur de vue, c'est comme si je perdais connaissance. C'est peut-être parce que j'ai été sevrée deux jours après ma naissance. Ce sont eux qui m'ont sevrée." Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés, p. 15.

⁵⁵Jasmin, Rimbaud, mon beau salaud!, p. 50.

late 1960's and Nigerian revolutionaries based in Lagos. In L'Antiphonaire, warm vacation resorts, such as Santa Barbara and San Diego, California are juxtaposed with various Italian towns, whereas Montreal appears alongside less warm European cities such as Geneva, Switzerland, and Lyon, France. California is also mentioned in L'Avalée des avalés as a vacation spot, though the most significant foreign settings are New York City and the country of Israel. In the above examples, it appears that the prime intent of the author is to demonstrate that it is possible for individual Quebecers to act as "maîtres chez nous" while in a foreign environment. The measure of universality that international settings bring to the literature of Quebec, which has long been criticized for being too regional, is an additional benefit upon which many authors undoubtedly depended.

National liberation movements have historically been associated with specific middle-class intellectual groups in which the working class and the underprivileged poor have not been represented. In La Vigile du Québec, octobre 1970: l'impasse?, Fernand Dumont remarks that:

il faut que la nation devienne celle de tous. Pour qu'il en soit ainsi, pour que l'ouvrier aussi bien que l'intellectuel se reconnaissent dans un destin et des choix communs, ce n'est plus à l'Anglais mais à notre système de classes sociales que nous devons nous attaquer. Ici comme ailleurs, le nationalisme a masqué trop longtemps les problèmes posés par l'inégalité sociale [...].⁵⁶

⁵⁶Fernand Dumont, La Vigile du Québec, Octobre 1970: l'impasse? (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), pp. 55-56.

Authors engaged in promoting separatism demonstrate an eagerness in attacking the existing class structure and the social mores of Quebec. In Le Couteau sur la table, for example, Mathieu, a French-Canadian ex-soldier without means, rejects the traditional notion that his wealthy mistress, Patricia, should not use some of her substantial allowance to pay for the rent on the apartment they shared:

[...] Je m'étais mis à prélever le coût du loyer, cherchant à économiser le peu qu'il me restait en poche. Patricia en fut aussitôt ennuyée. [...] Bientôt, de toute façon, elle se mit à suivre des cours du matin, me laissant seul aulit, m'abandonnant la vaisselle sale sur la table du petit déjeuner. J'aurais pu me transformer en ménagère et ainsi sauver notre ménage.⁵⁷

The struggle for sexual equality with men is important to women of all social classes. In L'Avalée des avalés, the originality which Bérénice Einberg displays in her dealings with Dick Dong leads to a pact between them which assumes that each would play an equal role in the sex act. "Notre pacte stipule que je peux seule prendre des initiatives dans le domaine des caresses, et que seule la certitude que j'aurai qu'il a oublié que nous sommes garçon et fille m'autorisera à prendre de ces initiatives."⁵⁸ Institutional restrictions upon an individual's personal behavior are as widely condemned by contemporary authors as social taboos are. "The derogatory portrait of Père Antime (nicknamed l'Abbé Jaloux) which Marie-Claire Blais sketches in David Sterne serves as an example. Because he acts in the capacity

⁵⁷ Godbout, Le Couteau sur la table, p. 88.

⁵⁸ Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés, p. 185.

of spiritual counsellor for the young boys enrolled in the seminary as well as one of their teachers, the image of the Church, along with that of the school system, suffers when it is charged that because of "ces persécutions lentes" and "ces vives tortures",⁵⁹ Father Antime should be held responsible for the deaths of both David Sterne and Michel Rameau.

Contemporary novelists advocate a more tolerant attitude towards an individual's personal conduct. Arguments which favor tolerance frequently involve an endorsement of sexual permissiveness. There are numerous examples of characters who share the views of Einberg's mistress in L'Avalée des avalés regarding sex: "[...] elle traite son sexe comme elle traite son estomac. Quand l'un ou l'autre crie famine, elle lui donne à manger."⁶⁰ In L'Antiphonaire, Catherine concurs with the notion that sexual gratification is an essential aspect of life which should be enjoyed by everyone, even the physically handicapped like Robert, who is paralyzed and confined to a wheel chair.⁶¹ Society's official intolerance of drug users is another frequently examined contemporary phenomenon. Réjean Ducharme claims that "les sociétés qui condamnent l'opium devraient aussi, si elles étaient logiques, condamner l'orgasme, les religions

⁵⁹Blais, David Sterne, p. 112. Consult also p. 103.

⁶⁰Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés, p. 77.

⁶¹"Robert ne pourra jamais avoir une érection, ni par conséquent d'orgasme. Il faut accepter de le masturber afin qu'il jouisse quand même parfois, à l'occasion." Aquin, L'Antiphonaire, p. 236.

et autres voyages vers le haut."⁶² The number of characters in the French-Canadian novel who are described as having "le cerveau [qui] brûlait sous les drogues",⁶³ has increased significantly since 1960.

The transformation of the novel form during the past decade-and-a-half mirrors the changes which have been occurring in Québec society. The quiet revolution, spear-headed by Jean Lesage after Duplessis' death, heralded the important cultural, political and economical strides undertaken by Quebeckers since 1960. The distances covered are frequently described as being "[...] à ce point énorme que des sociologues l'ont comparée aux siècles qu'il fallut aux sociétés européennes pour passer du Moyen âge à l'époque moderne."⁶⁴

Some observers of the Quebec scene, for example Fernand Dumont, maintain that, "la 'révolution tranquille' a été d'abord d'elle-même une révolution culturelle."⁶⁵ If the word culture is defined, "[...] dans toute son extension: un ensemble de valeurs collectives, de façons de penser et de déterminer les idéaux de la société et, plus encore, une manière de vivre ensemble,"⁶⁶ then the literature, popular art, and the songs sung by the chansonniers of the sixties

⁶²Ducharme, L'Avalée des avalés, p. 231.

⁶³Blais, David Sterne, p. 18.

⁶⁴Pierre Vallières, L'Urgence de choisir (Montréal: Editions Parti-Pris, 1971), p. 97.

⁶⁵Dumont, La Vigile du Québec, Octobre 1970: l'impasse?, p. 92.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 140.

must be taken into account along with organized religion, the school system, and the French language. It is important to recognize that:

Au cours de la dernière décennie [1960-1970], un changement profond a commencé de se produire dans l'homme du Québec qui affectera de plus en plus sa manière d'être et de vivre, son humanisme et sa culture, toutes choses que l'on désigne parfois par les mots: civilisation canadienne-française. Notre société a changé de bases. Nous l'avons vu par le mouvement de sécularisation. Le même phénomène apparaît au plan socio-culturel.⁶⁷

It is equally imperative that one give credit to the generation of the late forties and the fifties for their struggle to acquire personal values, for without them the quiet revolution would never have materialized.

Though "le désir d'adopter de nouvelles attitudes"⁶⁸ is not a modern innovation in Québec, a yearning by the masses to evolve beyond the popularized, false stereotype tolerated by French Canadians in the past is a recent social phenomenon. As the process of change began,

rapidement s'en sont allées les idéologies toutes formelles où nous avons trouvé notre identité. Par exemple, en un temps relativement court, le catholicisme a cessé d'être l'ossature de notre nationalité. Beaucoup de croyants [...] s'en réjouissent; pensant que le pluralisme est une heureuse conquête.⁶⁹

Once the clamour for cultural change became a social reality in Québec, it was already too late for the Catholic Church to curb the onslaught which bombarded it from all sides.

⁶⁷ Bernard Lambert, "Nouvelles frontières de l'Eglise du Québec au seuil de la décennie 1970-1980," Le Québec qui se fait, Claude Ryan (ed.) (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 277.

⁶⁸ Dumont, La Vigile du Québec, Octobre 1970: l'impasse?, p. 62.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

However, this does not mean that Quebecers became anti-clerical or that they were suddenly opposed to organized religion. Rather, it indicates that demands were made for a transformation of the social institutions, despite the Church's influence over them. "L'éducation, la culture, l'hospitalisation, l'assistance, les loisirs, l'économie, voire même la politique parfois, ont agréé la présence [de l'église]." ⁷⁰ Massive opposition to the Church's traditional control over society became formidable, with the result that: "le réseau de présence et d'action catholique construit en cent ans avait été démantelé en quelques années à peine." ⁷¹

One can also look upon the diminished rôle of the Church in Quebec society as "une modification du système." ⁷²

Nevertheless, even optimistic Quebecers do not ignore that the single most powerful force in Quebec society, until very recently, is on the wane. As Bernard Lambert remarks in "Nouvelles frontières de l'Eglise du Québec au seuil de la décennie 1970-1980," "Reconnaissons-le, l'Eglise dans cette province est en perte de vitesse et de crédibilité." ⁷³

The second most important cultural transformation taken place in the area of education. Here too, one

⁷⁰ Lambert, "Nouvelles frontières de l'Eglise du Québec au seuil de la décennie 1970-1980," Le Québec qui se fait, p. 271.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 274.

⁷² "Par système on entend le réseau cohérent qui avait été tressé entre l'Eglise et le Québec jusque vers 1960 et qui avait nom: l'enseignement catholique, les hôpitaux catholiques, les institutions catholiques d'assistance, les syndicats catholiques, etc." Ibid., p. 273.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 282.

not only finds that the whole system has been vastly liberalized, but that, "absolute clerical control of the educational world, once so characteristic of Quebec, has become a dead letter [...]." ⁷⁴ During the past decade, it has been the recommendations of the Parent Report (1964, 1966) which have had the most significant impact upon the Quebec educational system. However valuable the report is in its ensemble, as political realities will have it, the most highly visible recommendations favorable to local politicians have been acted upon first. And these have received the most attention, especially from critics who believe that:

Il faut vraiment être encrassé dans une bourgeoisie aveugle pour s'imaginer qu'une belle grosse école de deux mille ou deux mille cinq cents élèves constitue une solution aux problèmes scolaires d'un milieu défavorisé. ⁷⁵

A comparative examination of the views of educational critics of the early sixties with those of the seventies is also very revealing. For example, Frère Jérôme writes in Les Insolences du Frère Untel (published in 1960) that: "la crise de tout enseignement, et particulièrement de l'enseignement québécois, c'est une crise d'enseignants. Les enseignants ne savent rien. Et ils le savent mal." ⁷⁶ The emphasis which is placed upon teaching methods is particularly condemned by Frère Jérôme:

⁷⁴ Wade, The French Canadians, p. 1118.

⁷⁵ Emile Robichaud, Ce pour quoi il faut contester (Montréal: Librairie Beauchemin limitée, 1970), p. 83.

⁷⁶ Laurendeau (ed.), Les Insolences du Frère Untel, p. 48.

Les institutions pédagogiques les plus valables s'enracinent dans l'excellence des connaissances académiques et non dans la connaissance et la maîtrise des trucs de métier. Le parfait professeur de maths ou de français, c'est d'abord celui qui connaît à fond son français ou ses maths et non celui qui a accumulé les trucs d'enseignement.⁷⁷

In Ce pour quoi il faut contester (published in 1970), Emile Robichaud claims that, on the contrary, "pour former de véritables maîtres, il faudrait leur faire acquérir non pas des connaissances, mais des attitudes."⁷⁸ Robichaud contends:

[que] le rôle [de l'école secondaire] n'est plus de faire acquérir par les étudiants le plus de connaissances possible mais bien plutôt d'utiliser un minimum de connaissances pour développer, chez eux, un processus mental, bref, de leur apprendre à apprendre, de les aider à se donner des "outils" qui leur permettront ensuite d'aller plus loin et de se recycler le moment venu.⁷⁹

The school of thought that rejects the traditional educational values by promoting the development of the student's comprehensive skills, rather than his acquisition of facts, is in line with "l'acception scientifique du mot éducation."⁸⁰ By supporting change, Robichaud and others in Quebec have not only allied themselves with the supporters of the Hall Dennis Report in Ontario. They have spiritually affiliated themselves with a whole generation of progressive educators "qui donnent ce qu'ils sont, et non ce qu'ils ont."⁸¹

The cultural issue most emotionally contested in recent years has centered on the use of the French language.

⁷⁷Laurendeau, Les Insolences du Frère Untel, p. 105.

⁷⁸Robichaud, Ce pour quoi il faut contester, p. 84.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 80.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 81.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 84.

The dispute dates back many decades; however, it did not become a popular topic of debate until the early sixties. In a 1963 F.L.Q. manifesto, reproduced in Claude Savoie's La Véritable histoire du F.L.Q., bitter indignation over the dominance of the English language in Quebec is forcefully expressed:

Nous sommes 80% de la population et pourtant la langue anglaise domine les domaines les plus divers. Peu à peu le français est relégué au rang du folklorisme alors que l'anglais devient la langue de travail. Le mépris des Anglo-saxons envers notre peuple demeure constant. Les "Speak White!", Stupid French Canadians, et autres épithètes du même genre sont très fréquentes. Dans le Québec même, des milliers de cas d'unilinguisme anglais sont arrogamment affichés. Les colonialistes nous considèrent comme des êtres inférieurs et nous le font savoir sans gêne.⁸²

A mere decade after publication of Savoie's book saw the passage of "Bill 22" by the National Assembly. This 1974 legislation makes French Quebec's official language, as well as the language of work.

Since 1960, the most noticeable changes in Quebec have taken place in the realm of politics. A radical transformation from the authoritarian Duplessis style of governing to a more democratic political process came remarkably swiftly, but not without violence. As Dumont remarks in La Vigile du Québec, Octobre 1970: l'impasse?

La politique naît de la violence: des luttes entre des forces économiques, entre des privilèges et des esclavages. Bien loin de se trouver devant des individus égaux en droit et en conscience, le projet politique émerge de puissances et de luttes où il vient introduire une puissance et une lutte d'un type nouveau.⁸³

⁸² Claude Savoie, La Véritable histoire du F.L.Q. (Montréal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1963), p. 44.

⁸³ Dumont, La Vigile du Québec, Octobre 1970: l'impasse? p. 203.

The young activists of the early sixties, feeling that they had been excluded from the political process for too many years, created their own vehicle by which they would make their presence felt. The result was the "Front de Liberation du Québec". In a 1963 communiqué, which was meant as a warning to the population of Quebec, the "Information Cell" explained that the F.L.Q. existed because of a deep-seated collective desire "de continuer, d'accélérer et d'approfondir le processus de l'Indépendance nationale."⁸⁴ Their notion of independence can be seen as an historical yearning to be freed from the domination of Anglo-Saxon economic and political policies which are regarded as a form of colonialism,

[car] colonisés, nous le sommes [...]. Politiquement, parce que nous ne possédons pas les leviers politiques vitaux à notre survie. Le gouvernement colonialiste d'Ottawa possède en effet toute juridiction dans les domaines suivants: économie, commerce extérieur, défense, crédit bancaire, immigration, droit criminel, etc. De plus, toute loi provinciale peut être refusée si Ottawa le juge bon.⁸⁵

Seven years of violence followed, culminating with the abduction of a foreign diplomat, James Cross, and the assassination of the Quebec Minister of Labour and Manpower, Pierre Laporte.

In L'Urgence de choisir, published at the end of 1971, Pierre Vallières remarks that:

La crise d'octobre 1970, comme on l'a vu, nous a dévoilé dans ses orientations fondamentales la stratégie de force du pouvoir central. Mais elle nous a également permis de prendre brutalement conscience des limites, des dangers et du caractère désormais objectivement contre-révolutionnaire de l'agitation armée.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Savoie, La Véritable histoire du F.L.Q., p. 41.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 43.

⁸⁶Vallières, L'Urgence de choisir, p. 133.

Hence, it can be claimed that the violent birth of a more democratic form of politics was realized in Quebec by the end of 1970. Having achieved most of what it set out to do, the P.L.Q. had to be replaced by another form of struggle.

Le P.L.Q. est dépassé, parce que la situation a changé et que l'agitation armée n'est pas adaptée à la situation présente. Mais la lutte, elle, continue. Et c'est parce qu'elle DOIT conduire tout un peuple à la victoire et non à la défaite qu'aujourd'hui la responsabilité, le devoir politique des feiquistes est de faire cesser le feiquisme sous toutes ses formes, y compris le feiquisme verbal, et de poursuivre la lutte dans le meilleur intérêt du peuple québécois.⁸⁷

The emergence and growth of the Parti Québécois contributed most significantly to the virtual extinction of political violence in Quebec, for an acceptable political party came into being which could influence the political process. The Parti Québécois succeeded in attracting the support of a number of groups which, heretofore, had not been adequately represented by traditional politicians. Initially, those who advocated the independence of Quebec from Canada rallied around the Parti Québécois. As Robichaud remarks in Ce pour quoi il faut contester:

La question n'est pas de savoir si les Anglais nous ont bien ou mal traités: le problème fondamental réside dans le fait qu'un Autre a pris, à notre place les décisions que nous aurions dû prendre. Un Autre a joué à notre place sur la scène internationale et même sur la scène continentale.⁸⁸

Pierre Vadeboncoeur, in a speech delivered at the founding convention of the "Front d'Action Politique" on August 28, 1970, articulates the aims of a specific urban group of

⁸⁷ Vallières, L'Urgence de choisir, p. 130.

⁸⁸ Robichaud, Ce pour quoi il faut contester, p. 16.

Parti québécois supporters--those who believe in a new form of democracy. This group seeks to ensure that elected civic representatives will act in the best interest of the electorate, regardless of the financial concerns of powerful monied groups.

La démocratie officielle, celle des politiciens régnants, continue d'élire des sortes de princes, au nom d'une démocratie qu'ils ont trahie depuis longtemps. La démocratie, ce n'est pas cela. La démocratie, c'est d'abord, c'est essentiellement le peuple solidement organisé, le peuple organisé, par lui-même, et qui envoie ses propres délégués à lui, non pas pour le "gouverner" mais pour exécuter ce qu'il décide.

La démocratie de l'autre système a atteint à un tel degré de corruption ou d'inconscience, elle a si profondément trompé les espérances du peuple, elle a hypocritement servi tant d'exploiteurs, elle s'est alliée et liée à tant de puissances financières, cette démocratie traditionnelle, qu'on doit aujourd'hui la considérer comme à rebâtir de fond en comble, sur des assises complètement nouvelles, et avec d'autres visées.⁸⁹

There are also socialist-minded individuals who support the Parti Québécois for its social programmes. As well, there is a faction of P.Q. supporters which is discontent with the existing provincial and federal bureaucracies:

[...] L'administration n'est plus au service des hommes qu'elle sert, ce sont ces derniers qui deviennent les instruments dont elle se sert pour instaurer sa domination. Des fonctionnaires se créent ainsi des empires dont ils se couronnent eux-mêmes empereurs, à l'exemple du petit Corse, et leur tyrannie n'a d'égale que leur fatuité.⁹⁰

The traditional political parties in Quebec, especially the Union Nationale, have been on the wane since the beginning

⁸⁹Front d'Action Politique, Les Salariés au pouvoir! (Montréal: Les Presses Libres, 1970), pp. 133-134.

⁹⁰Robichaud, Ce pour quoi il faut contester, p. 41.

remains an intensely individual endeavor which must be reconciled by each human being during the development of his personality. Hence, future generations of Quebeckers will continue the quest, for personal values reflect the way each individual copes with the prevailing cultural, political, and economic conditions of society.

Economists writing in the seventies, such as Louis Riopel who acted as an industrial advisor to Robert Bourassa, when he first became Premier at the beginning of the decade, do not usually discuss the province's economy in terms which might prove hostile to forces outside Quebec. However, comparisons drawn between Quebec and its principal rival, Ontario, and the rest of the country, particularly with regard to the standard of living, the level of investments, and the number of jobs created annually, indicate that French Canadians are being exploited to some degree. For example, "[...] le niveau de vie actuel [1971] au Québec est inférieur de 11 pour cent à celui de la moyenne canadienne et de 27 pour cent à celui de l'Ontario [...]." ⁹³

Investments are another important indicator of economic prosperity. "En 1964, les investissements au Québec représentaient 75 pour cent des investissements réalisés en Ontario contre seulement 52 pour cent en 1969." ⁹⁴

Finally, "au cours des années 1967, 1968 et 1969, en moyenne 40,000 emplois furent créés au Québec, contre une moyenne annuelle de 100,000 pour l'Ontario." ⁹⁵ The reluctance of Quebec's present-day economists to blame outsiders totally for their economic woes stems from a recognition that the province's own policies, which have

⁹³ Louis Riopel, "Les Objectifs d'une politique de croissance économique pour le Québec," Le Québec qui se fait, Claude Ryan (ed.) (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise-HMH, Ltée., 1971), p. 266.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

resulted in economic disparity between the different regions of the province,⁹⁶ are also inadequate. For example, the economic inequalities between individuals in a given social milieu are frequently blamed upon the policies of community leaders. It is charged in Peuple de la nuit, that in Quebec,

il y a une "élite" bourgeoise qui ne s'intéresse qu'à l'argent et aux cocktails... Puis une minorité d'ouvriers intégrés à la grande industrie anglo-saxonne. Et ensuite, l'immense masse des cultivateurs et des chômeurs dont personne ne s'occupe. L'"élite" qui avait pour mission de faire progresser le peuple, s'est moquée de sa mission, et le cri des pauvres monte vers elle.⁹⁷

However, the inequalities examined above do not detract from the highly significant developments which have occurred in the Quebec economy since 1960. In an article entitled: "Les Objectifs d'une politique de croissance économique pour le Québec," Louis Riopel writes:

Le changement de structure dans l'économie du Québec apparaît, du moins en partie, dans le nombre de travailleurs employés à la production de biens et de services. Pour les besoins de l'analyse, les manufactures, les mines, l'agriculture, la forêt, la pêche et la construction peuvent être classifiées comme des industries de production de biens. Celles-ci employaient environ 785,000 personnes en 1966, soit à peu près le même nombre qu'en 1956. Par conséquent, l'augmentation totale de l'emploi, soit environ 500,000 entre 1956 et 1966, provenait surtout des industries des services: services publics, finances, administration publique et services généraux.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ See Guy Demers, "L'Impasse du développement régional au Québec, une crise provoquée par l'analyse trop exclusivement économique du problème québécois," Le Québec qui se fait, Claude Ryan (ed.) (Montréal: Editions Hurtubise HMH, Ltée., 1971), pp. 129-136.

⁹⁷ Joseph Costisella, Le Peuple de la nuit (Montréal: Editions Chénier Inc., 1965), p. 115.

⁹⁸ Riopel, "Les Objectifs d'une politique de croissance économique pour le Québec," Le Québec qui se fait, pp. 268-269.

These figures have changed considerably during the past half-decade as a result of construction projects of gigantic proportions undertaken in Quebec by the three levels of government; i.e. Mirabel Airport (federal), The James Bay Hydro-Electric Project (provincial), and the construction associated with the 1976 Olympic Games (largely municipal). Combined with the opening up of service industries to Quebeckers, the recent economic changes have contributed significantly to the short-term welfare of the worker, for construction jobs are high paying, and the conditions of employment in service industries are generally superior to the traditional treatment received by employees in the production industries. It can be concluded, then, that what may be good for the ordinary worker may be detrimental to the Quebec economy as it is presently structured. Another recent economic change involves the amount of money which Quebec diverts from capital investments in the the manufacturing sector of the economy to pay for the social service programmes initiated largely by the federal government. Some economists complain that:

[...] le Québec est amené à procurer à sa population des avantages sociaux comparables à ceux des autres provinces jouissant d'un niveau de vie plus élevé. En 1969, le Québec consacrait 38 pour cent de son budget aux services de la santé et du bien-être alors que l'Ontario y consacrait 24 pour cent.⁹⁹

⁹⁹Riopel, "Les Objectifs d'une politique de croissance économique pour le Québec," Le Québec qui se fait, p. 269.

That a basic conflict may exist between the interests of workers and the traditional concept of an orderly economy has led some concerned individuals to question the emphasis which has been placed upon the economic development of the province. For example, Guy Demers in an article entitled: "Une crise provoquée par l'analyse trop exclusivement économique du problème québécois", writes:

La primauté accordée au développement économique présuppose que l'idéal collectif doit être cette société d'opulence et d'abondance de biens matériels qui caractériserait la société occidentale et en particulier la société nord-américaine. [...] Ne serait-il pas plus rentable pour la société québécoise, à l'instar de la société suédoise, de faire preuve d'excellence, même au niveau des activités économiques, par sa contribution à une humanisation des conditions de vie en société--éducation, coopération, aménagement du tissu urbain, etc. [...].¹⁰⁰

The position presupposes that it is possible for the economy of Quebec to develop according to a set of values that reflects the humanistic concerns of the entire community, rather than well-established attitudes which serve the materialistic interests of a small ruling élite. Proponents of a more equitable and humane form of economic development believe that these same values will ultimately play a significant role in determining the economic direction which Quebec will take in the future.

Though the search for personal values is a very individual quest, it is often identified with the collective idealism of groups which are concerned with changing the way

¹⁰⁰Demers, "L'Impasse du développement régional au Québec, une crise provoquée par l'analyse trop exclusivement économique du problème québécois," Le Québec qui se fait, p. 132.

society functions. History reveals that conflict frequently becomes a motivating force for change. The forties and fifties in Quebec were troublous times; firstly, because of Canada's involvement in the Second World War and the ensuing conscription crisis, and secondly, because of the antagonism which developed between Maurice Duplessis' ruling élite and the population of Quebec. Because the government had resisted change for so long, it appeared as if a "quiet revolution" had taken hold when the Quebec society finally began to evolve during the early sixties. The cultural changes which have taken place since are reflected in the literature of recent years. The influence of the Church has been drastically reduced, and the educational system has been restructured and modernized. Legislation proclaiming French to be Quebec's official language is the latest and perhaps the most significant cultural change. Politically, the province of Quebec is more democratic now than in the past. Political change was speeded up during the sixties by violent means, leading the government during the seventies to be more attentive to attitudinal changes within the electorate. In matters concerning economic growth, the emphasis in recent years has been placed upon how development affects the individual. It has been suggested that economic policies which are advantageous for the individual in Quebec may be unsuitable for the long-term orderly growth of the provincial economy. Though attitudinal changes on a large scale hastened the cultural, political, and economic transformation of Quebec society, the search for personal values

remains an intensely individual endeavor which must be reconciled by each human being during the development of his personality. Hence, future generations of Quebeckers will continue the quest, for personal values reflect the way each individual copes with the prevailing cultural, political, and economic conditions of society.

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