

**The Mountain, the Main, and the Monuments: Representations of Montreal in the
Anglo-Quebec Novel, 1945-2014**

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Abstract

The social and political changes in Quebec since the end of the Second World War have gone hand in hand with the minoritization of English in the province. “The Mountain, the Main, and the Monuments: Representations of Montreal in the Anglo-Quebec Novel 1945-2014” explores the way in which Anglo-Quebec novelists’ growing awareness of their marginality has impacted their representation of Montreal, especially in reconfiguring the myth of two solitudes both thematically and spatially. Drawing on postcolonial theory as well as on key approaches to space, I argue that Anglo-Quebec novelists’ treatment of space, both urban and textual, is directly related to their cultural ideology, that is, to their conception of what English-French relations are or should be. The dissertation engages in a close reading of six novels: Hugh MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes* (1945), Scott Symons’s *Place d’Armes* (1967), Keith Henderson’s *The Restoration: The Referendum Years* (1987), Gail Scott’s *Heroine* (1987), Marianne Ackerman’s *Jump* (2000), and Heather O’Neill’s *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014).

In these novels, the city’s specific landmarks might be read as physical representations of social, racial, and religious divides, but they might also emerge as sites of encounter, dispute, and exchange. The way in which novelists and their characters negotiate these divides or take part in these encounters mirrors the way in which they perceive, experience, or replicate marginality in establishing and questioning their own identity as part of an ever-shifting minority. Those authors who represent the city as an inert container in which social processes take place tend to emphasize the cleavage and binarism between the two cultural and linguistic groups, often counterbalancing this representation with an impulse towards synthesis. The textual space of their novels is correspondingly static in its adoption of more traditional narrative modes, language use, and structure. Conversely, Anglo-Quebec novelists who are inclined to highlight

interdependence and interaction between French and English underscore the dynamic and dialectical nature of both urban and textual space.

Résumé

Les changements sociaux et politiques au Québec depuis la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale ont entraîné la minoritisation de l'anglais dans la province. “The Mountain, the Main, and the Monuments: Representations of Montreal in the Anglo-Quebec Novel 1945-2014” explore la manière dont les romanciers anglo-québécois ont pris conscience de l'évolution de leur statut minoritaire et examine quel impact cette prise de conscience a eu sur leur représentation de la ville de Montréal, tout spécialement dans leur traitement thématique et formel du mythe des deux solitudes. En prenant appui à la fois sur la théorie postcoloniale et sur les théories contemporaines de l'espace, cette thèse soutient que le traitement de l'espace urbain et textuel des romanciers anglo-québécois est directement lié à leur idéologie culturelle, c'est-à-dire à leur conception de ce que sont ou devraient être les relations entre francophones et anglophones, à la fois au plan local et au plan national. Les quatre chapitres de la thèse présentent une lecture analytique de six romans anglo-montréalais : *Two Solitudes* (1945) de Hugh MacLennan, *Place d'Armes* (1967) de Scott Symons, *The Restoration: The Referendum Years* (1987) de Keith Henderson, *Heroine* de Gail Scott (1987), *Jump* (2000) de Marianne Ackerman et *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014) de Heather O'Neill.

Dans ces romans, les monuments et points de repères de la ville symbolisent parfois les divisions sociales, raciales et religieuses, mais ils peuvent aussi être lus comme des sites de rencontre, de dispute et d'échange. La façon dont les romanciers et leurs personnages négocient ces divisions ou participent à ces échanges fait écho à la façon qu'ils ont de percevoir, vivre ou reproduire une certaine marginalité tout en établissant et en questionnant leur propre identité en tant que minorité linguistique et culturelle. Les auteurs qui représentent la ville comme un récipient inerte dans lequel prennent place des processus sociaux ont donc tendance à mettre

l'emphase sur la division et la bipolarité entre les deux groupes, palliant souvent à cette vision par un appel à l'unité. L'espace textuel de leurs romans correspond à cet état statique en adoptant des modes narratifs, un langage et une structure plus traditionnels. À l'inverse, les écrivains anglo-qubécois dont les romans mettent de l'avant l'interdépendance et l'interaction entre francophones et anglophones soulignent la nature dynamique et dialectique à la fois de l'espace urbain et de l'espace textuel.

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Introduction

In 1989, Linda Leith published “Quebec Fiction in English During the 1980s: A Case Study in Marginality” in *Québec Studies*, in which she sets out to uncover the causes for the “effective exclusion of the younger generation of English writers of Quebec from the English Canadian canon” (98). In arguing that because of a perceived “linguistic frontier between (English) Canada and (French) Quebec,” Quebec literature has come to refer only to writing in the French language and that English writers in Quebec are therefore “muted, made invisible, marginalized” (100), Leith also suggests that English Quebec fiction in the 1980s demonstrates a marked interest in marginality, both in its content and form.

This is the point of departure of my project, which begins from the premise that the interest of Anglo-Quebec fiction writers in marginality is not limited to the 1980s, but has in fact been consistent throughout the last sixty years, though it has, admittedly, been expressed in a variety of ways, both thematically and formally. This interest has evolved and changed as has the status and influence of Anglophones in Quebec. A powerful elite in the wake of World War II, they witnessed first hand the stirrings of the Quiet Revolution and the fervour of the movement for independence. With the election of the Parti Québécois, the introduction of the language laws in the late 1970s, and the 1980 referendum, the minoritization of Anglophones became more apparent, underscored, as it were, by the departure of many Anglo-Quebecers from the province. Following the 1995 referendum, and with an increased immigration rate to palliate the low birth rate in Quebec, Anglophones in the province became and have remained one of the several minorities to inhabit the province and to constitute the multicultural, multiethnic city of Montreal.

Accordingly, the concern with marginality in Anglo-Quebec fiction undergoes a turn inward, as postwar writers demonstrate an interest in the Francophone “other,” only to shift the focus toward the Anglophone community itself as an increasingly marginalized subject in the 1960s and 1970s. While the alienation associated with a certain type of marginal living seems to invigorate some practitioners of English fiction during this time, darker, bleaker representations of marginality constitute the central body of later fiction, in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, however, this interest in marginality seems to have shifted again, as other types of marginality, cultural, linguistic, and sexual, are depicted.

My project is thus to explore the ways in which the changing social, political, and legal position of Anglophones in Quebec has influenced English language novelists in their representation of the city, more specifically, how a growing awareness of their minority status has impacted their representation of urban space and their use of textual space. How is Montreal treated in their fiction? Is it simply an ideal setting for their story because of its symbolic qualities, both geographical (nested between the mountain and the river) and social (because of consistent perceptions of the Main as the ultimate divider between French and English)? How are specific streets or buildings ascribed meaning? Is the city a metaphor for the country or the province, in that it enacts the same kinds of linguistic and cultural tensions on a smaller scale, or is it rather aligned with the individual to serve his or her own purpose? Is there a relation between depictions of Montreal and formal experimentation? And finally, how do the characters’ identities get formed through their interactions in and with the city? These are some of the questions my dissertation aims to answer, while taking for granted that investigating a novel as a spatial text “must amount to more than simply considering how that text represents an interesting location” (Thacker 63).

In the following chapters, I engage in a close reading of six novels: Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1945), Scott Symons's *Place d'Armes* (1967), Keith Henderson's *The Restoration: The Referendum Years* (1987), Gail Scott's *Heroine* (1987), Marianne Ackerman's *Jump* (2000), and Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014). These novels are inscribed across a wide spectrum in terms of content, form, popularity, and critical reception, but the centrality of Montreal in each of them is undeniable. In these works, the city is more than a backdrop; it plays an active role in the formation of the characters' cultural, linguistic, and sexual identity, either as a container in which identities get formed or as an entity that actively contributes to identity formation. In other words, these are novels whose plot could not happen anywhere else. The authors are themselves greatly attached to the city, have expressed their fascination with its life, and have often participated in its broader cultural sphere. It is the way in which the authors treat both urban space and textual space, as more or less dynamic, and the way in which this impacts character formation, that varies. The authors themselves demonstrate varying degrees of comfort with openness, ambivalence, and uncertainty, often opting for homogeneous language and closed forms in their depiction of urban space as static or more open, fluid forms when representing the city as dynamic.

My goal with this project is therefore to think differently, that is, spatially, about the city in the Montreal novel. In doing so, I wish to examine more specifically the way in which the myth of two solitudes, because it is expressed first and foremost spatially (in representations of the city as well as in the language of the text), has both endured and been reconfigured in a variety of ways by Anglophone novelists, despite a growing awareness of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the city. I thereby aim to challenge both the assumption that the spatial configuration of the two solitudes as depicted by MacLennan was ever truly so, and the

commonly held view that we have somehow moved “beyond” two solitudes. While the emergence of voices from and scholarship on the multitude of “other solitudes,” both in Canadian literature and in Montreal more specifically, is undeniable, English language novels about Montreal continue to address the two solitudes trope. The expression and the idea it conjures both endure, but authors have engaged with the concept in different ways, embracing it, denying it, troubling it, expanding it, even as Anglo-Quebec fiction tends towards a depiction of Montreal as a city of difference rather than otherness. With this approach, I hope to shift somewhat the perspective of the criticism on Anglo-Quebec fiction away from ontological debates (on the existence of Anglo-Quebec literature and on its appellation) towards a discussion of culture and identity that is informed by the realization that the city is a product of and a process in social relations and practices. In so doing, I aim to open up new avenues for thinking about cultural and linguistic issues from a spatial perspective.

In light of the sheer amount of existing novels written in English and set in Montreal, Stephen Henighan’s claim that “we have an immigrant novel, a minority novel, but, as yet, little in the way of Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver novels” (“Reshaping” 208) is easily dismissed, yet critical interest in the literary representations of Montreal has been scant. Scholars have either treated Montreal as any other city in Canada in order to write about urban reality, or they have treated it in a less academic way, a means to foster interest in a wider public. This is the case for Brian Demchinsky and Elaine Kalman Naves’s *Storied Streets: Montreal in the Literary Imagination*, an entertaining and informative walk through the different neighbourhoods of Montreal whose approach is, of the authors’ own admission, “more eclectic than exhaustive” (215). Demchinsky and Kalman’s work is, significantly, the only monograph about Montreal literature written in English.

A number of essays have been written on specific novels set in Montreal,¹ but to date, no one has examined the representation of Montreal in the Anglo-Quebec novel in depth. Antoine Sirois's *Montréal dans le roman canadien* dates back to 1968. Sirois's study, while it covers many aspects of English-Canadian fiction set in Montreal between 1940 and 1960, alludes to a relatively limited number of works (twelve English novels as opposed to twenty-nine French novels) and rather aims at a comparative study of French- and English-Canadian novels than at a sustained study of the Anglo-Montreal novel. The study's date of publication also prevents it from covering the more than fifty subsequent years of growth and development in the city, and the literature this period yielded.² Finally, my approach differs substantially from Sirois's in that the latter treats works of fiction as "le reflet, le miroir de la vie profonde de son milieu comme aussi de sa société" while I take for granted that novels, though they are certainly informed by social changes, are not necessarily to be taken as "une saisie d'une totalité sociale par la littérature" (5).

Since the publication of Sirois's monograph, however, much has been written on the representation of Montreal in the French-Canadian novel. "Montréal imaginaire," a research group consisting of students and professors from the department of French Studies at Université de Montréal, was formed in 1986 and dissolved five years later. The group engaged in original

¹ These include "La ville fragmentée de Montréal dans *Son of a Smaller Hero* et *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* de Mordecai Richler" by André Dodeman; "Writing the Black Canadian City at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century: Dionne Brand's Toronto and Mairuth Sarsfield's Montreal" by Winfried Siemerling; "Lost in the City: The Montreal Novels of Régine Robin and Robert Majzels" by Domenic Beneventi; and "Writing the Montreal Mountain: Below the Thresholds at which Visibility Begins" by Lianne Moyes.

² The same can be said of Barbara Godard's M.A. thesis, written in 1967 and entitled "The City of Montreal in the English- and French-Canadian Novel." Godard argues that English-Canadian literature expresses itself along a horizontal axis while French-Canadian literature does so along a vertical axis: "For most English-Canadian novelists, the novel as artistic expression is more the description and analysis of a social situation than a plunging into the depths of the individual soul. In the French-Canadian novel, the characteristic tension is one between man and himself. More exactly it is a tension between the individual and his destiny" (3).

research on Montreal in literature, which resulted in the organization of several colloquia³ and the publication of a collection of essays, *Montréal imaginaire: ville et littérature*, in 1992, just in time for the 350th anniversary of the city. This anniversary also inspired the publication of *Montréal, mégapole littéraire*, a collection of the proceedings of the 1991 seminar organized by l'Université Libre de Bruxelles under the same title. Clearly, this wealth of criticism on Montreal demonstrates that the city was, in the 1980s and 1990s, a popular topic of French-Canadian literary criticism and gives credence to Pierre Nepveu and Gilles Marcotte's assertion that "il est évident que, sans Montréal, la littérature québécoise n'existe pas" (7).

It also seems evident, however, that by "littérature québécoise," Nepveu and Marcotte mean Quebec literature in French. As Antoine Sirois points out in his review of *Montréal imaginaire*, "on regrette l'absence [...] de l'importante contribution du roman anglophone depuis 1945 à l'imaginaire de Montréal dont, sauf erreur, le projet de recherche s'est aussi préoccupé" (182). If "Montréal imaginaire" had an interest in Anglo-Quebec literature, it was a marginal one, as the very limited mention of Anglo-Montreal novelists in the colloquia proceedings demonstrates.

It is the meaning and place of English writing in Quebec, rather than its thematic or spatial representation of Montreal, which has, for the most part, attracted attention from critics since Frank Davey first drew attention to the importance of nomenclature and territorialization in 1997. Davey suggests that the terms "English Canada" and "English Canadian" have increasingly become "territorialized, that is, they have been brought to act as antonyms to the province of Quebec and to signify the other nine provinces" ("Quebec" 7), whereas the territorialization of the French language has led critics to assert that the literature of Quebec

³ The proceedings of these colloquia were also published: *Lire Montréal: actes du colloque tenu le 21 octobre 1988 à l'Université de Montréal* (1989), *Montréal l'invention juive* (1990), *Montréal 1642-1992: le grand passage* (1994).

“consists (or ought to consist) only of French-language writing” (26). Shortly after the publication of Davey’s article, a round table organized as part of the conference “Le Québec anglais: littérature et culture” generated a special issue of *Québec Studies* entitled *Écrire en anglais au Québec: un devenir minoritaire*. Gilles Marcotte’s paper “Neil Bissoondath disait...” essentially exemplified the trend noticed by Davey. His strong views on the subject brought about much discussion around the legitimacy of the appellation and the very existence of Anglo-Quebec literature and has, in a way, fuelled the ongoing discussion on the subject ever since. For Marcotte, “il n’existe évidemment pas telle chose qu’une littérature anglo-québécoise, puisqu’il n’existe pas de littérature franco-québécoise” (6).⁴ Quebec literature, he argues, is necessarily French, and literature written in English in Quebec, if it must seek an affiliation, will perforce tend towards Canada. One might also argue, in light of an increasing trend towards postcolonial and postnationalist thought, that English fiction from Quebec could equally well dissolve in the category of Commonwealth literature or English literature more generally. For Marcotte, the differences between the English and French literary traditions are too great to group them under the category of Quebec literature, although the plea for a more inclusive definition of Quebec literature is rapidly gaining traction.⁵ My own discussion of representations of Montreal in the Anglo-Quebec novel, while it eschews questions about the legitimacy of Marcotte’s claim, does address affiliation more generally, in that it traces an evolution in the depiction of the city, from a representation of the country and relations between English Canadians and French Canadians

⁴ Marcotte’s claims and the conference during which they were first expressed can be said to have sparked a debate that is still very much active. Much of the recent critical discourse around Anglo-Quebec literature has been concerned primarily with either echoing or contradicting his argument. Several journals followed *Québec Studies* in the publication of special issues on English writing in Quebec: *Voix et images* (2005) and *Spirale* (2006) both published a special dossier on the subject. Jason Camlot edited a special issue of *Canadian Poetry* on Anglo-Quebec Poetry in 2009. Lianne Moyes organized a follow-up to the 1997 conference on Anglo-Quebec literature and a corresponding special issue of *Québec Studies* in 2007.

⁵ See Patrick Coleman’s “A Context for Conversation: Reading Jeffrey Moore’s *The Memory Artists* as Anglo-Quebec Literature” and Yan Hamel’s “Y a-t’il des romans québécois en anglais? L’exemple de *Barney’s Version* de Mordecai Richler.”

more broadly, one associated with a nationalist agenda, to representations of Montreal as a city state, with its own culture. Authors of the latter form of representations identify first and foremost as Montrealers.

In addition to the formal and thematic chasm between French- and English-language literature in Quebec, Marcotte writes, there is a second reason for refusing to include English works into “la littérature québécoise”: “l’expression ‘Québec anglais’ a quelque chose d’étrange, en ce qu’elle amène un certain nombre d’écrivains canadiens-anglais à entrer, de force plutôt que de gré, dans un ensemble où ils se découvrent obligatoirement minoritaires, sinon marginaux” (6). Ironically, the minority and marginality of English literature in Quebec might just be the reason why it has received critical attention by French-language scholars. The central claim of Lianne Moyes in her introductory remarks to the 2007 issue of *Québec Studies*, which takes a closer look at the state of Anglo-Quebec literature since 1997, is that “anglo-Quebec literature is increasingly a site of research for francophone scholars in the field of Québec studies” (“Conflict” 1). Moyes, like Catherine Leclerc and Sherry Simon in their introduction to a special dossier on the subject in *Voix et images* in 2005, attributes this new critical interest to a “change in attitude among Francophones toward the cohabitation of languages” brought about by “the transformation of Quebec into a French space following the Quiet revolution” (2).

If English writers in Quebec have effectively become “une minorité à l’intérieur d’une minorité” (“Postscript” 33), as Lianne Moyes argues, however, it is a minority rightfully designated by Gary Caldwell and Eric Waddell as a “minorité majoritaire” (30). Anglo-Quebec writers may write in a place where English is officially the language of a minority, but they do so in English, the language of the majority in North America and an international language. Nevertheless, the deterritorialization of English in Quebec is inherent in this paradox, which

illustrates how English is cut off from the sites of practice of this majority language. As writer Robert Majzels explains, this deterritorialization can and does foster creative opportunities. Majzels finds that English language writers in Quebec occupy or can occupy a stimulating position when embracing “la possibilité d’une littérature mineure dans une langue majeure” (“barbarophones” 18). English language in Quebec changes as a result of its constant encounters with French; it becomes, in a way, foreign to its practitioners. Writing in English in Quebec is therefore, for Majzels, “l’expérience de voir sa propre langue devenir étrangère” (19).

As Lianne Moyes points out, Majzels’s approach relies heavily on the precepts of *Kafka: vers une littérature mineure*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s seminal work. According to Deleuze and Guattari, “une littérature mineure n’est pas celle d’une langue mineure, plutôt celle qu’une minorité fait dans une langue majeure” (29). The deterritorialization of English in Quebec places it in a position to become just such a “littérature mineure,” in which tensions constantly oppose the “caractère opprimé” to the “caractère oppresseur” of the language. The perceived dislocation of Anglo-Quebec literature from the rest of English-Canadian literature ensures that “ce que l’écrivain tout seul dit constitue déjà une action commune, et ce qu’il dit ou fait est nécessairement politique, même si les autres ne sont pas d’accord” (31).⁶ In light of the high

⁶ Linda Leith’s essay, “Quebec Fiction in English During the 1980s: A Case Study in Marginality” (1989), has contributed to the perception of Anglo-Quebec fiction as dislocated from the centre of English-Canadian fiction by underscoring the lack of interest of editors and literary critics alike for English fiction from Quebec in the 1980s. Since then, David Solway has echoed her dismay, claiming that English-language writers in Quebec represent “the literary wing of a twofold hostage community”; they live in a kind of “relative segregation,” a “double exile” that sees them “cut off from an appreciative, or at least available, readership since they constitute only a tiny insular minority in the midst of a sea of five million French speakers (who pay little attention to works in the ‘other’ language” (80-81). Gail Scott, however, is categorical in her refusal to adhere to this model, which she sees as a victimization of Anglo-Quebec: “No, I am not in exile, nor in the alienating situation of a Kafka, writing in German, in Prague” (“Montréal” 5). Leith and Solway’s claims can seem somewhat dated, or simply unsettled, by the recent recognition of Anglo-Quebec fiction, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. David Solway’s *Franklin’s Passage* won Le Grand prix du livre de Montréal in 2004. Mavis Gallant won the Prix Athanase-David for the body of her work in 2006, and Rawi Hage won the Prix des libraires du Québec in the category “roman québécois” for *Cockroach* in 2008. Claire Holden Rothman was a finalist for the Governor General’s Awards in 2014 for *My October*. The 2014 Giller Prize featured four Montreal authors among its long list; the prize was ultimately awarded to Montrealer Sean Michaels for *Us Conductors*.

political charge ascribed to a littérature mineure, it is unsurprising that Francophone scholars have developed an increasing interest in Anglo-Quebec fiction.

Much of the recent criticism on Anglo-Quebec literature has relied heavily on this concept of “littérature mineure.”⁷ While it is loosely inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas, essentially by the claim that a littérature mineure is necessarily “branché sur l’immédiat politique” (31), my own theoretical framework is informed in different ways by linguistic concerns. My approach is situated at the intersection of two discourses: postcolonial theory and urban theory. Postcolonial theory has become popular in Canadian literature in the last fifteen years, but only fairly recently has there been a more general interest from literary critics in applying this theory to Quebec fiction.⁸ Such a delay is surprising because, as Amaryll Chanady has pointed out, a postcolonial conception of Quebec is hardly new.⁹ Quebec’s impetus towards self-determination in the 1960s was inspired by the anticolonial writings of Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi. Writers and poets of the Quiet Revolution depicted Quebec as a colonized nation dominated by the English. Pierre Vallières and Paul Chamberland are only two among the many

⁷ See Catherine Leclerc and Sherry Simons’s “Zones de contact: Nouveaux regards sur la littérature anglo-québécoise,” Robert Majzels’s “Anglophones, francophones, barbarophones: Écrire dans une langue rompue,” Linda Leith’s “Quebec Fiction in English During the 1980s: A Case Study in Marginality,” Lianne Moyes’s “Postscript” and “Conflict in Contiguity: An Update,” Gregory Reid’s “Constructing English Quebec Ethnicity: Colleen Curran’s *Something Drastic* and Josée Legault’s *L’invention d’une minorité: Les Anglo-Québécois*” and “Is There an Anglo-Québécois Literature?,” and Jason Camlot’s “Anglo-Quebec Poetry.”

⁸ In Marie Vautier’s *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction* (1998), both Quebec and English-Canadian fiction are discussed through the lens of postcolonial theory. In some cases, Canadian critics have demonstrated a peripheral interest in Quebec as postcolonial, rather focusing on Canadian literature more broadly as postcolonial. See specific essays on Quebec in Laura Moss’s *Is Canada Postcolonial?: Unsettling Canadian Literature* (2003) and Marta Dvorak and W.H. New’s *Tropes and Territories: Short Fiction, Postcolonial Readings, Canadian Writing in Context* (2007). In a few cases, Quebec fiction is at the centre of the discussion on postcolonialism: Amy Ransom’s *Science Fiction From Québec: A Postcolonial Study* (2009), Charles Forsdick and David Murphy’s *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (2009), Rosemary Chapman’s *Between Languages and Culture: Colonial and Postcolonial Readings of Gabrielle Roy* (2009). All of these works, with the exception of an essay by Pam Perkins in Laura Moss’s book, entitled “Imagining Eighteenth-century Quebec: British literature and colonial rhetoric,” deal exclusively with Quebec fiction in French.

⁹ Chanady enumerates the following texts to prove her point: André d’Allemagne’s *Le colonialisme au Québec* (1966), Pierre Vallières’s *Les Nègres blancs d’Amérique* (1968), Max Dorsinville’s *Caliban without Prospero: Essay on Quebec and Black Literature* (1974), Maurice Arguin’s *Le Roman québécois de 1944 à 1965; Symptômes du colonialisme et signes de libération* (1989), and Sylvia Söderlind’s *Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction* (1991).

who refer to Québécois as “colonisés” in the 1964 special issue of *Parti pris* entitled *Portrait du colonisé québécois*.

In a 2003 special issue of *Québec Studies* dedicated to *Quebec and Postcolonial Theory*, Vincent Desroches writes, “Il ne fait aucun doute que les Canadiens français, puis les Québécois ont subi une oppression coloniale, explicite par exemple dans le rapport Durham, dans lequel l’assimilation de l’élément francophone est jugé nécessaire à la stabilité de la colonie” (3). If, as Desroches argues, postcolonial theory is useful in examining and questioning ideas about nationalism and “toute la dynamique identitaire et culturelle” (7) in Quebec literature, how may it also help us examine the smaller body of literature that is Anglo-Quebec fiction, a corpus produced by those who have embodied the colonizers in the province until the 1960s and 1970s? In the years after the election of the Parti Québécois and the introduction of Bill 101, the Anglophones of the province who decided against exile on the 401 found themselves in a double bind, still often looked upon as the embodiment of English domination but now subject to a new social and political framework that effectively cast them in the role of a minority whose assimilation was also, in many ways, “necessary” to the “stability” of the province. Perforce, these power dynamics found their way into their writing.

The unique position of Quebec in postcolonial discourse stems from the fact that Canadians represent what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin describe as “Settler invaders” in that they became over time a “majority non-indigenous population” (211). If French settlers enacted a kind of colonialism that was characterized by economic interdependence and intermarriage, however, the province of Quebec became, after 1759, a “colony of occupation” under the British regime, as the French, now perceived as the “indigenous,” “remained in the majority but were administered by a foreign power” (211). Marie Vautier argues that this

reversal has had specific and interesting consequences on the relations between First Nations and Quebec political powers (“nouveau” 14). I agree, and I would take this argument one step further in asserting that the postcolonial thrust that led to the independence movement in the 1960s and the election of the Parti Québécois in the 1970s, as well as the subsequent language laws and referenda it put forth, have had a great impact on the relations between the Quebec government and *all* its minorities, especially its English-speaking one.¹⁰ To become “Maîtres chez nous” was to reconfigure the power dynamics inherited from a time when imperial powers fought halfheartedly over “quelques arpents de neige.”

Because it places these power dynamics at the centre of its discourse, postcolonial theory is therefore a pertinent lens through which to read the evolution of Anglo-Quebec fiction. Very generally put, this study envisions Quebec as “colonial” up until the rise of Quebec nationalism, the election of the PQ in 1976 and the ensuing language laws that participated in the “reconquest,” that is, the francization, of Montreal (Levine 2). It does so less with the conviction that there was indeed “settlement of territory,” “exploitation of resources,” and an “attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands” (although, as Desroches emphasizes, the Durham report effectively supports all three points) than with the recognition that the province has always dealt with the “unequal relations of power which colonialism constructs” (Boehmer 2). That Quebec has, since the 1970s, undergone a governmental power shift is clear. While it has not officially achieved independence, despite two referenda, it has enacted enough provincial laws (federally contested though they may sometimes be) to claim a certain independence, if not constitutionally, then both linguistically and culturally. Thus, though we might think of Quebec as no longer subject to imperialism in the way it may once have been, a postcolonial approach

¹⁰ Recent social and political tensions around the Parti Québécois’s proposed “Charte de la laïcité” throw into relief the extent to which relations between the Quebec government and all its minorities, whether cultural, linguistic, or religious, are in fact fraught with postcolonial power dynamics.

will help us remember that “colonial values do not simply evaporate on the first day of independence,” as “colonialism’s representations, reading practices and values are not so easily dislodged” (J. McLeod 32).

This is not to say that Anglo-Quebec novels consciously perpetuate a colonialist mindset throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Not exactly, that is. However, the Canadian nationalism that emerged after the Second World War seems not only antithetical to the emancipation of Quebec and the development of its own form of nationalism, but is often the vector of certain colonial attitudes, especially in the novels of Hugh MacLennan, Scott Symons, and, to a certain extent, Keith Henderson. As a result, those authors who were the most ardent initiators and defenders of Canadian nationalism also seem, though unwittingly, to be those who convey most clearly colonial values such as binarism, othering, or nostalgia. This observation underscores the unsettling similarities between colonial discourses and nationalist representations, in their shared tendency towards homogenization. (The totalizing nationalism bears resemblance to the colonial conception of the “other” as a homogeneous entity.) But it also helps explain why postcolonial theory might help shed light on the inherent cultural tensions with which Anglo-Quebec literary representations of the city are fraught. It is therefore more fruitful to discuss Anglo-Montreal fiction as embodying and depicting issues of identity that are best understood and expressed through the use of postcolonial concepts rather than focusing on what may or may not be constituted as colonial or postcolonial.

My decision to focus on representations of Montreal is inspired by two facts. Firstly, it is fairly evident that, despite the presence of a number of English writers in Quebec City, the Eastern Townships, and the Gatineau region, Anglo-Quebec fiction is and has been produced mostly in Montreal. To say that Anglo-Quebec fiction is Anglo-Montreal fiction may not be

entirely warranted, but it is safe to say that without Montreal, there would not be any Anglo-Quebec fiction to properly speak of. Secondly, as Jane Jacobs explains in *Edge of Empire*, cities are the places where the tensions inherited from colonial histories are crystallized because they provide a place to meet the “other.” This is a meeting “not simply augmented by imperialism but still regulated by its constructs of difference and privilege” (4). Because cities offer a space of meeting, however, they are also “places which are saturated with possibilities for the destabilization of imperial arrangements” as manifested through the “negotiations of identity and place” (4). Therefore, the politics of identity and difference “established under colonialism and negotiated through a range of postcolonial formations” are not merely enacted in an urban setting; rather, as Jacobs explains by drawing on the theories of Doreen Massey, urban space becomes part of “an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification in which the material and ideological are co-constitutive” (5).

Underlying this dynamic view of the city is also the notion that cities are places of “spatial struggle” (5). In Montreal, this struggle has been both implicit and explicit. It has taken place in the often reproduced east/west up/down binaries superimposed onto the geography of the city, the decisions behind urban renewal, and the efforts to protect historical buildings. But these spatial struggles have also come to the fore, have been made tangible through what Marc Levine has termed the “reconquest” of the city: a succession of laws that effectively changed its visage (2). If postwar Montreal was essentially, as Jane Jacobs describes, “an English city containing many French-speaking workers and inhabitants” (*Question 12*), Bill 101, which affected not only education, but also commercial signage, street names, and language of business, effectively became the political symbol of a new era in Montreal’s history by changing

its linguistic character. The spatial struggle shaping the linguistic landscape of the city accounts for the recurrence of Montreal in Quebec English fiction.

While the city itself may have been a topic of interest for quite some time, literary criticism has often “subjugate[ed]” the spatiality of texts “to that of an aesthetic theme or trope” (Thacker 56). Postcolonial theory, especially, makes use of spatial references in a predominantly metaphorical sense, in invoking the margin/centre dichotomy, for example. According to Andrew Thacker, these spatial metaphors operate “at the expense of analysing the material spaces of, for example, the city” (62). Thus, postcolonial theory offers some interesting concepts that relate to space, but, because they assume as given an “absolute space,” which acts as a “field or container,” as Neil Smith explains, these “spatial metaphors tend to reinforce [...] deadness of space” (99). Smith does not reject metaphorical space, however, because “the material and metaphorical are by definition mutually implicated” (98). Therefore, my discussion of space will take on a double meaning, as I explore both representations of urban space (in a more literal sense) and treatments of textual space (a more figurative expression that mainly alludes to a novel’s formal characteristics, that is, language, structure, mode, and genre, but that may also include its physical use of space – in terms of layout, typeface, etc.).

New understandings of space as both product and process have emerged in recent years. It may sound reductive to state that the central (and revolutionary) idea of Henri Lefebvre’s analysis of the urban, synthesized in *The Production of Space*, is that “(social) space is a (social) product” (26). And yet, this statement is deceptively simple. It contradicts earlier conceptions of space as an empty receptacle for social processes, instead positing that space, like money, commodities, or capital, is a product that has taken on a “sort of reality of its own” (26). The space socially produced in turn serves as a “tool of thought and of action” and is thus both a

means of production and a means of control, that is, “of domination, of power” (26). But Lefebvre also claims that this produced space “escapes in a way from those who would make use of it” (26). Thus, the very forces that produced this space are unable to completely master it. These forces, in turn, are influenced and even, in a way, controlled by the very space they actively produce.

Edward Soja’s approach echoes Lefebvre’s writings. Like Lefebvre, Soja emphasizes the “constructed” or “produced” nature of space, but he is clearer about defining spatiality as an inherent component of social struggle:

Spatiality is not only a product but also a producer and reproducer of the relations of production and domination, an instrument of both allocative and authoritative power. Class struggle, as well as other social struggles are thus increasingly contained and defined in their spatiality and trapped in its grid. Social struggle must then become consciously and politically spatial struggle to regain control over the social production of this space. (“Spatiality” 110)

Implicit in both Lefebvre and Soja’s articulations of the dialectical relationship between social processes (or social struggle) and space is the notion that by space, we mean urban space.

Lefebvre writes as early as 1968 that “the development of society is conceivable only in urban life, through the realization of urban society” (*Droit* 158). David Harvey makes this notion explicit in his 1997 essay “Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form.” He argues that it is important to reconceptualize the urban as “the production of space and spatio-temporality, understood as the dialectical relationship between process and thing” (23). Harvey thus assimilates Lefebvre’s ideas about space but, like Soja in *Postmetropolis* (2000), grounds them in a more specific urban vocabulary. Harvey explains that social processes actively shape the

city, and, in turn, are shaped by it. Therefore, it is important to consider the city not as a container of social action, but as a set of processes that both produce built forms and are, in turn, influenced by these very forms (23). This dialectical relationship is not understood as a Hegelian one, by which thesis and antithesis are resolved by means of a synthesis, but rather relies on the inextricability and mutual influence of two different, and often seemingly opposite, entities. Harvey's definition is at the centre of what Soja calls "cityspace" and what Lefebvre refers to as social space.

These new understandings of social space allow me to draw parallels between representations of urban space as predominantly static or dynamic and representations of relations between French and English in Montreal. Those who treat space as a container in which social processes take place also tend to revert to the two solitudes trope by which English and French, separated both spatially and socially, are called upon to unite under an overarching synthesizing notion and appellation. Conversely, those who depict space as a set of dialectical processes tend to assume not only the interactions but also the inextricability and mutual influence between French and English.

As Lefebvre, Soja, and Harvey contend, social space is both a product and a process, enacting a dialectical relation between social processes and the city. In a similar fashion, a dialectical relation may be assumed between social space and textual space. This represents a third axis to my theoretical framework and in a way binds the two previous ones. It takes its roots in Terry Eagleton's argument, according to which "the category of the aesthetic assumes the importance it does in modern Europe because in speaking of art it speaks of other matters too"; that is, "the construction of the modern notion of the aesthetic artefact is inseparable from the construction of the dominant ideological forms of modern class-society" (3). While this study

does not adopt Eagleton's Marxist approach (although Marxism and postcolonial theory are invested in similar projects), it does take for granted Eagleton's equation between "the internal complexity of the aesthetic," which in this context I will refer to as form, and "a direct set of ideological functions" (4). Thus, as I explore the content of some Anglo-Quebec novels written since 1945, I will also allude to form, or use of textual space, as a corollary of the kind of ideology it conveys.

In his essay entitled "The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography," Andrew Thacker makes clear the possibilities that such an approach to form and ideology entail. He insists that "social space intrudes upon the internal construction of spatial forms. Literary texts represent social spaces, but social space shapes literary forms" (63). Thacker's argument sustains my own approach, which considers textual space, or the space of the novel, as one that both informs and is informed by the social space represented in the text. Thacker writes,

The term textual space could then refer to this interaction between spatial forms and social space in the written text. Emphasis should be devoted to spatial features of literature such as typography and layout on the page; the space of metaphor and the shifting between different senses of space within a text; or the very shape of narrative forms, found in open-ended fictions or novels that utilize circular patterns for stories.

(63)

The formal features of the novels discussed here, I argue, go hand in hand with social and historical circumstances as well as with conceptions of the city as either dynamic or static. Novelists who tend to treat space as a receptacle in which social processes take place tend to adopt traditional narrative techniques, closed forms, and omniscient point of view, while those who represent urban space as dynamic adopt a correspondingly process-oriented form and

language. For example, the use of what Catherine Leclerc describes as “colinguisme,” that is, the cohabitation of languages and the mutually destabilizing effect of each on the other, is one instance of a dynamic use of language evidenced by both Scott Symons and Gail Scott. The links between space, geography and literary form are, as Thacker concedes, “tentative” (63), but the dialectical nature of social space invites a similar dialectical perspective on textual space. It is important “not only to discuss space and geography thematically, but also to address them as questions with a profound impact upon how literary and cultural texts are formally assembled” (Thacker 63). In other words, in exploring the concept of space, I am interested both in the representation of space in the novel and in the novel itself as a space of representation.

I thus associate a representation of urban space as static with the realist mode (but one that often carries allegorical overtones), linear structure, and confident third person narration of Hugh MacLennan and Keith Henderson. Conversely, the dynamic depictions of the city in the novels of Scott Symons, Gail Scott, and Heather O'Neill find echo in these novelists' formal experimentation with language, structure, and mode. The exception here is Marianne Ackerman, whose treatment of space is thematically dynamic but formally static, a discrepancy all the more intriguing in light of the novelist's experimental endeavours with theatre. These authors' treatment of space also seems to parallel their political ideology. Thus, MacLennan and Henderson's treatment of urban and textual space is aligned with their political views, and brings to the fore their perception of Canadian nationalism as one that seeks to unite two opposing peoples, cultures, and languages. As Benedict Anderson explains in *Imagined Communities*, the realist novel provides the “technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation,” as its structure implies the simultaneity and emptiness of time and space, that is, the “presentation of simultaneity in homogeneous, empty time, or a complex gloss on the

word ‘meanwhile’” (25). Characters who may not even be aware of each other are connected and embedded in the mind of the omniscient reader; they engage in different actions simultaneously and in different locations, but share the imagined world conjured by the author (26). In these novels, the city therefore occupies a symbolic role in discussing the nation; here, landscape is metaphor, and the authors often revert to a binary representation of the city as a representation of the country. Conversely, the focus on urban space and textual space as dialectical in the novels of Gail Scott, Marianne Ackerman, and Heather O’Neill throws into relief the inextricable, dialectical relationship between French and English in Montreal. In doing so, it also reveals the city as a metaphor for the individual rather than the country, thereby evoking a more literal engagement between the individual and the city. This shift or evolution is not a linear one, however. For all its depiction of urban space as dynamic and celebration of openness and experimentation, and despite its insistence on the mutually inclusive nature of English- and French-Canadian identity, Scott Symons’s *Place d’Armes* still features a confident voice, one calling for a renewed Canadian nationalism.

The risk of following a chronological structure in this study is, of course, to suggest that there is a teleological progression of Quebec fiction in English since WWII, that Anglo-Quebec literature has somehow followed a clear trajectory in which formal and thematic shifts coincide neatly with specific time periods. The realist mode has consistently guided the majority of English writers in Quebec, and thus cannot be exclusively associated with postwar writers such as Hugh MacLennan, Gwethalyn Graham, and Morley Callaghan. In turn, experimentation in form and style is hardly confined to the 1960s, as contemporary writers such as Robert Mazjels and Lance Blomgren demonstrate. Likewise, while different depictions of Montreal emerge in the second half of the twentieth century, there has been a steady production of novels that depict

the city as one divided between the French to the East and the English to the West. Nevertheless, it is necessary to acknowledge the correlation between social and political changes in the city and the reconceptualization of literary form. Thus, as Richard Lehan writes, “as literature gave imaginative reality to the city, urban changes in turn helped transform the literary text” (xv). For this reason, it seems appropriate to ground my study in a historical context, all the while refraining from assuming too strong a causal relation between social and political circumstances and thematic and stylistic trends.

Quebec writing in English consists in writing from several minorities, including but not limited to Italian, Greek, African-Canadian, Chinese, and Jewish. The marginal status of these minorities is evident and should be addressed, though it is also beyond the scope of this study to do so. My own focus on Anglo-Quebec fiction by writers who trace their origins back to the British Isles is motivated by the complicated, at times counter-intuitive nature of their marginal status and the residual colonial values or attitudes that might be re-activated by this status. Focusing on these writers also allows my project to loosely trace the evolution of Anglo-Quebec depictions of the different configurations of the two solitudes. These writers stem from a community that long embodied the marginalizers rather than the marginalized. My interest in Anglo-Quebec fiction therefore lies not merely in its marginal status, but rather in the unlikelihood of that status and the resulting attitude with which English writers negotiate the representation of urban space as static or dynamic, as a space of otherness or as a space of difference.

The central argument of this thesis is that there exists a correlation between Anglo-Quebec novelists’ depiction of urban space, their use of textual space, and their treatment of English-French relations (and marginality more broadly) in Montreal, but each chapter of the

thesis adopts a slightly different angle to investigate this correlation. In the first chapter, I focus on Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1945) and explore how the novel has provided the thematic, lexical, and spatial vocabulary in discussing English-French relations. I argue that although MacLennan's novel purports to lay the bases for an inclusive Canadian nationalism, his portrayal of French Canadians is as much a construction of the "other" as it is a consolidation of Anglophone supremacy. This dichotomy between self and other is mirrored in the novel's portrayal of Montreal as a stilted, divided city, and, to a certain extent, in its conservative formal features. MacLennan's confident narration, his plea in favour of Canadian nationalism, is, however, occasionally prone to slippage and in some ways heralds the social, political, and formal changes discussed in the second chapter.

This second chapter investigates Scott Symons's tendency to self-marginalize in empathizing with the Quebec nationalist movement, as well as the seemingly paradoxical Canadian nationalism put forth by his novel *Place d'Armes* (1967), one that values openness or plurality in its evocation of cultural and linguistic antitheses engaged in a dialectical process that eschews synthesis. Symons's portrayal of Montreal's Place d'Armes as a social space with which the individual literally interacts not only mirrors his convictions about relations between French and English Canadians, but it also informs the experimental, open nature of his work.

In the third chapter, I explore the after-effects of the minoritization of English in Quebec by discussing two novels opposed in their reactions to the phenomenon: Keith Henderson's *The Restoration: The Referendum Years* (1987) and Gail Scott's *Heroine* (1987). Both Henderson and Scott allude to the "reconquest" of Montreal in their depiction of the city as enacting different relationships between centre and margin. Both authors depict Montreal as a layered city of sorts, but whereas Henderson's novel is both the formal and thematic inheritor of

MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* in its treatment of the fictional Mercer-Granville building as the sum of its (static) layers, Scott's Montreal is also a process by which these layers are in constant interaction with one another, always threatening to erupt at the surface of the city and the narrative. Scott's novel, her heroine, and her city are all in the "process of becoming" (Scott "Feminist" 134). While a clear dichotomy between English and French is at the centre of *The Restoration*, with English Quebec culture and architecture presented as marginal, *Heroine* presents a multitude of centres and margins not exclusively related to culture, but also to sex, gender, and class.

The many negotiations between centre and margin depicted in Scott's novel lead into the fourth chapter, in which I argue that Marianne Ackerman's *Jump* (2000) and Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014) both demonstrate a tendency to portray Montreal as what Mary Louise Pratt calls a "contact zone," one in which power dynamics are enacted through interaction and where transculturation may lead to new phenomena. Both novels exemplify to what extent depictions of Montreal as a seemingly independent geographical and political entity aligned with the individual have overtaken depictions of the city as a metaphor for Canada. While Ackerman and O'Neill are rather successful in representing urban space as both informing and informed by the individual, O'Neill's use of voice appropriation and magical realist mode suggests that other methods than "colinguisme" may be used to treat textual space dynamically, while Ackerman's novel, though formally static, points to theatre as the ideal dialectical space.

MacLennan's novel was an evident choice because it has dictated the way in which we think about English-French relations, specifically but not exclusively in Montreal, and because it has also influenced, perhaps even more strongly than historical or sociological studies, our

common conception of the city as one divided along an east-west axis. In other words, it was the first and certainly the most popular novel to express a social situation in spatial terms. Some will wonder that *Place d'Armes*, and not Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* (1966), is the focus of the second chapter. Certainly, Cohen's novel is the most well known and celebrated of the two. It is also the better work, more finely crafted and broader in range. But the centrality of Cohen in discussions about 1960s Montreal fiction in English has all but eclipsed any in-depth treatment of a variety of works which, despite their weaknesses, contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between socio-political change, and representations of the city. The pairings in chapters three and four seek to either throw into relief opposing treatments of urban and textual space (in the novels of Henderson and Scott, who published the same year) or to broaden the thesis's scope by comparing two novels that gesture towards dynamic treatments of textual space in other ways than through use of language (Ackerman's depiction of theatre and O'Neill's use of magic realism and voice appropriation).

Montreal has not only provided a backdrop for the stories of Anglo-Quebec writers; it has been used as an ideological tool. It has consistently been read as a site of spatial struggle replete with emblems of identity and difference: its streets are boundaries that may or may not be crossed, its buildings are symbols of the legal and social changes that conspire to marginalize characters, its statues and monuments render concrete the forces of history and public memory. In their representation of Montreal, Anglo-Montreal novelists of the last sixty years display, through their characters, a marked interest in marginality and respond in different ways, from curiosity to anxiety, to a sense of alienation, towards an emancipating province. The city's specific landmarks, such as Mount Royal, the Saint Lawrence River, or Sherbrooke Street, might be read as physical representations of social, racial, and religious divides, but they might also

emerge as sites of encounter, dispute, and exchange. The way in which novelists and their characters negotiate these divides or take part in these encounters mirrors the way in which they perceive, experience, or replicate marginality in establishing, constructing, and questioning their own identity as part of an ever-shifting minority.

Chapter I

Montreal, City of Binaries: Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*

Introduction

In *Creative Writing in Canada*, Desmond Pacey writes that “until the fifties, the task of interpreting the modern urban life of Canada [was] largely left to the poets” (229). As early as the 1940s, however, fiction writers such as Hugh MacLennan and Gwethalyn Graham began to take an interest in the city and to converge on Montreal. Their success encouraged other English-Montreal writers such as Grace Campbell, Joyce Marshall, and Dorothy Duncan (MacLennan’s wife). These and other novelists writing in or about Montreal rose to prominence and attracted sufficient attention to prompt William Arthur Deacon, literary editor of the *Globe and Mail*, to write, after a short stay in Montreal in 1946, of his excitement at the “growing realization that Canadian literature has arrived” (8).

Deacon’s excitement at witnessing the emergence of so many young fiction writers in Montreal was great:

As a group and as individuals, their chief trait is [a] marked growth in intellectual maturity and in artistry. They all have their minds set on big, strong books. Nobody is satisfied with what he has done before; all feel they are in the big time and are out to beat the best. This harvest is rich beyond anything we have known in Canada, beyond what many dared hope for. (8)

While in the past, writers such as Frederick Philip Grove, Mazo de la Roche, and Morley Callaghan had been “solitary phenomena,” these “Montreal folk” were friends and took an interest in each other’s work (8). Deacon does not elaborate on the specifics of their “artistry”; in fact, they had little more in common than ambition, but for Deacon, the effervescence they

embodied was a sign that they were “immersed selflessly in the task of creating a great national literature” (8). Through their interactions and output, those whom Deacon referred to as the “Montreal group” (8) were “writing Canada into a new phase of our history” (8).

Echoing Deacon more than forty-five years later, Linda Leith asserts that “any discussion of the English-Canadian literary tradition in the period at least since the 1940s will reveal the centrality of the older generations of writers who lived in Quebec” (“Marginality” 96). This centrality is demonstrated by the number of times that an English Quebecer won the Governor General’s Award for fiction in the postwar years. Clearly, issues concerning Montreal appeared relevant to the juries.¹¹ If it is true, as Leith asserts, that “the fiction of English Canada came of age in the Quebec of the 1940s” (96), then it came of age in Montreal more specifically. Some (Leith among them) have referred to this time period as the Golden Age of Anglo-Quebec literature, but much of the fiction written about Montreal in those years was essentially nationalist in aim; it did not concern itself with the way in which Anglophones living in Quebec might experience the quotidian differently from the rest of Canada, but rather portrayed them as representatives of English Canada more generally. This fiction, which predates the very term “Anglo-Quebec,”¹² accordingly often features Montreal as a smaller scale representation of Canada, so that relations between French and English in the city are often representative of relations between French and English Canadians on a national level.

¹¹ In fact, between 1944 and 1951, four of the eight books to win the Governor General’s Literary Award for fiction were set in Montreal: Gwethalyn Graham’s *Earth and High Heaven* (1944), Hugh MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes* (1945), Gabrielle Roy’s *The Tin Flute* (1947), and Morley Callaghan’s *The Loved and the Lost* (1951). Two decidedly Montreal-centred books would win the Governor General Award a few years later: MacLennan’s *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959) and Brian Moore’s *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960). The centrality of Montreal in the production of postwar fiction is further exemplified by the fact that Colin McDougall’s *Execution*, which won the award in 1958, was written, though not set, in Montreal.

¹² As Gregory Reid writes, the term “Anglo-Quebec” or “Anglo-Québécois” “cannot predate the term ‘Québécois,’ which emerged in the 1960s and became the accepted appellation for residents of the province (as opposed to Quebec City) only in the 1970s” (“Anglo-Québécois Literature” 63). I will therefore use the term English-Canadian in this chapter but will use Anglo-Quebec beginning in the second chapter.

Deacon's comments also highlight the extent to which nationalism and literature are inextricably bound in Canada after the Second World War, echoing A.L. McLeod's argument that "the genesis of a local literature in the Commonwealth countries has almost always been contemporaneous with the development of a truly nationalist sentiment" (8). But these writers' convergence on Montreal suggests that their expression of Canadian nationalism was informed by the proximity of French Canada; in Montreal, the rise of Canadian literary nationalism may very well have been effected through a proximity if not a contact with French Canadians. This nationalism, however, engendered, as it often does, a complex relationship between those who did not necessarily share a sense of "deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7). In developing a Canadian nationalism that effectively sought to act as a counterweight against the colonial legacy of Britain, English Canada constantly struggled with the possibility of "seeing [a] nationalism of liberation turned into [a] nationalism of domination" (Balibar and Wallerstein 46), as "nationalist representations might contribute to the continued oppression of some groups within the national population who have not experienced liberation in the period of formal independence" (J. McLeod 103). Thus, the nationalism envisioned by English-Canadian novelists writing about Montreal is informed by a totalizing, homogenizing impulse that competes with residual colonial attitudes towards French Canada.

Perhaps the most prominent writer to emerge in these years, Hugh MacLennan held a great attachment to Montreal. MacLennan was raised in Nova Scotia, but, after completing his studies at Oxford and Princeton, found that employment prospects in academe in 1935 were rather bleak. Out of sheer desperation, he accepted a teaching job at Lower Canada College in Montreal. He and his wife Dorothy Duncan ultimately spent their entire lives in Montreal. MacLennan developed a true liking for the energy of the city. A few years after the publication

of *Two Solitudes*, he wrote, “I am more or less free to live wherever I choose, but I stay in Montreal because no other place I know is quite like it. It is wonderful and utterly deplorable. It is magnificent and ridiculous” (“City” 64). MacLennan thus held a great attachment for the city of Montreal, and believed that it provided an ideal setting for his treatment of national questions. In an unpublished memoir he never completed, the novelist reminisces about 1940s Montreal: “Strange years those were, but out of them, and out of the Silent Revolution of the Fifties, and the noisy one of the Sixties, Montreal was surely Canada’s catalyst. I think she still is” (3). It is debatable whether 1980s Montreal “still was” the catalyst MacLennan believed it to be, but his claim about the “strange years” of the postwar era rings true. The choice of so many postwar English-Canadian novelists in setting their stories in Montreal may have stemmed from a genuine appreciation of the city, but it is undeniable that the city also held a significant symbolic potential.

The symbolic value of the city, enhanced by its role as a crucible of Canadian affairs, encouraged MacLennan to use it as a setting for his novel *Two Solitudes*, published in 1945. In this chapter, I argue that in *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan portrays Montreal as symbolic of social divisions in Canada, thus adding a spatial dimension to his plea for unity. The metropolis is therefore represented as a city of binaries whose geographical divisions mirror social ones and underscore the process of “othering” MacLennan’s novel engages in. Urban space in MacLennan’s novel is predominantly represented as a container in which separate peoples undertake a separate set of social processes, just as the textual space of the novel reveals itself as a container in which different formal elements are developed. *Two Solitudes* presents itself, as in Edward Said’s conception of Orientalism, as authoritatively adopting a mode of knowing the “other” when in fact it is complicit in the construction of that “other.” The protagonist Paul

Tallard's own problematic notions about identity are framed by his movement through the city and among symbolically charged landmarks. MacLennan's efforts exhibit the desire to reach out, as a representative of English Canada, to the French-Canadian minority (a minority in Canada, that is, albeit a majority in Montreal) by portraying a character who ultimately succeeds in bridging the socio-geographical divisions he encounters. But in depicting Montreal as a city of binaries, MacLennan undermines his own endeavour: although his novel emphasizes reconciliation, it ultimately reasserts division. By exaggerating the stilted nature of Montreal's built forms and the homogeneity of its residential patterning in order to better throw into relief the difficult situation of his characters, he inevitably allows the binaries he created to upstage the acts of reconciliation that purport to overturn those binaries. His strong emphasis on social and geographical division singles out his characters as exceptions and thus not only prevents his novel from transcending the very binary he denounces, but effectively perpetuates and strengthens received ideas about relations between French and English in the 1940s in Montreal. In his attempt to unify conflicting aspects of Paul Tallard, MacLennan ultimately subsumes Paul's French-Catholic Québécois heritage under an overarching English-Protestant Canadian identity.

In *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan's depiction of the social isolation of a wealthy Anglo-Montreal minority (what Martha Radice refers to as a "dominant minority" with a "majority status" in that it is allied with the "majority Anglo population of Canada" [32]) is translated into geographical terms. This spatial perspective also encompasses the protagonist Paul Tallard's evolution. MacLennan repeatedly references existing and well-known locales, but also provides information as to exactly where his characters are at any given time and pays special attention to where, how, and with what ease these characters move through the city, where they choose to go,

and where they can or cannot go. In so doing, MacLennan contributed to the common yet skewed conception of postwar Montreal as a divided city; he helped perpetuate the notion of division between French and English, wealthy and poor, Catholic and Protestant, even as he ignored the multitude of other minorities in the city. But in choosing Montreal as a central setting for *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan also aimed to transcend the local in order to discuss the national. In the national project that was his novel, he used Montreal as a representative of Canada to explore the possibility of developing a distinctly Canadian identity.

In *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan depicts the Anglophone community in Montreal in a state of self-perpetuating isolation and its values as binding and often stifling. His intentions in denouncing the isolation of an Anglophone minority and reaching out to those whom he constructs as the “other” may be well intentioned, but ultimately, he, like many of his peers, undermines his own efforts. His portrayal of the wealthy Anglophone community in Montreal as an urban garrison of sorts and the French as a working-class majority demonstrates an ignorance of or an unwillingness to engage with the heterogeneity of ethnic groups, whether on a basis of class, religion, or residential patterning. It bespeaks a tendency towards the homogenization of “us” and “them” that Edward Said underscores in *Orientalism*. MacLennan’s approach pits one group against another: wealthy English-Canadian Protestants against poor Catholic French Canadians. In conflating race, language, and class in this way, it fails to acknowledge the multiple urban zones of contact in which these three markers of identity adopt different configurations (among the Irish population of Griffintown, the Jewish community of the Mile End, or the Black community in Little Burgundy, for example).

Edward Said defines Orientalism as

a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (3)

What Said alludes to is first and foremost a discourse that relies on a binary division between a general conception of European culture and what it constructed as “the Orient.” In addition to this notion of constructedness as it relates to the identity of the “other,” Said emphasizes the role of Orientalism in defining the West itself as “its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (2), so that European culture ultimately “gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self” (3).

MacLennan’s novel enacts a discourse about French Canada that adopts some of the same attitudes as Orientalism. His description of Anglophones and Francophones in Montreal reasserts the “binary logic of imperialism” as it exhibits a tendency “to see the world in terms of binary oppositions that establish a relation of dominance” (Ashcroft et. al. 24). As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin write, such binaries “entail a violent hierarchy, in which one term of the opposition is always dominant” (24). In fact, this hierarchy is so deeply ingrained in the binary model that “the binary opposition itself exists to confirm that dominance” (24).

MacLennan’s dichotomous representation of Anglophones and Francophones as two solitudes, one that presupposes the homogeneity of both groups, invokes the authority of the discourse it participates in. Just as “the imaginative assumptions of Orientalism are often taken as hard facts” and ultimately “find their way into, and make possible, a whole institutional structure where opinions, views and theses about the Orient circulate as objective knowledge, wholly reliable truths” (J. MacLeod 42), *Two Solitudes* purports to present French Canadians as knowable

subjects and, even today, despite its failing popularity, continues to represent a reference in terms of English-French relations, as evidenced in the enduring popularity of its title as a quintessentially Canadian expression.

MacLennan's insistence on a binary structure brings to light the way in which the process of "othering" occurs in his novel. If, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has suggested, echoing the writings of Edward Said, Europe "consolidated itself as sovereign subject by defining its colonies as 'Others'" (199), then the way in which MacLennan constructs the French-Canadian "other" also establishes and confirms the reality and dominance of English Canada. Thus, while MacLennan portrays characters who attempt to transcend the socio-geographical divisions of the city, his novel ultimately reasserts the dominance of a small, powerful Anglophone elite, howsoever he may criticize that very elite.

MacLennan's interest in the French-Canadian minority was directly related to his awareness of his own status as a rather wealthy member of the Anglophone minority in Montreal. Though not exactly rich, his studies at Oxford and Princeton as well as his job as a teacher at Lower Canada College certainly labelled him as comfortably middle-class. We perceive, through his conviction of the possibility of knowing the "other," the invocation of an authority that not only pervades his discourse but that is also evidenced by the form of *Two Solitudes*: the realist mode, the omniscient narration, and the epic overtones. Nevertheless, while MacLennan represents a generation of English-Canadian novelists who convey the kind of confidence that is inherent in the developing Canadian nationalism, his novel does on occasion exhibit a certain degree of anxiety towards the possibility of an emerging Quebec nationalism, as evidenced in the figure of Marius Tallard, who voices what will become a central concern of the English community in the next years: "Did you ever stop to think how comparatively few

English live in Montreal?” (180). This fear is concomitant with the underlying ambivalence of MacLennan’s discourse in *Two Solitudes*. On the one hand, the novel constructs French Canadians as the “other,” but on the other hand, it attempts to abolish this “otherness” and bring them into a larger Canadian understanding, so that, as Homi Bhabha explains, this kind of representation “produces the colonised as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible” (71). As a result, the colonized subject is always oscillating between the polarities of similarity and difference. The result is an undermining of the novel’s authority, as the instability of MacLennan’s system (both positing and attempting to lessen “otherness”) threatens to collapse its appeal to a Canadian nationalism.

MacLennan’s choice of setting as well as his depiction of the city was inspired by Montreal’s strong symbolic value, which stems in part from the numerous contrasts that constitute it. In the 1940s, it was still the demographic and economic centre of Canada, though Toronto would soon divest it of its status as Canadian metropolis (Linteau, *Montréal* 425). It was thus a choice setting to address national issues; it could be presented as a microcosm of Canada, as it featured, on a smaller scale, some of the same social tensions between English and French Canadians that seemed to oppose the province of Quebec to the rest of Canada. Geographically, of course, Montreal is rife with symbolic features. It is located on an island that sits at the confluence of the Ottawa River and the Saint-Laurent River, and begins exactly where those two rivers merge. Topographically, the city is arranged around Mount Royal, with the city’s oldest neighbourhood nestled between the mountain and the river. To literary critic Brandon Conron, the contrasting features of Montreal are particularly appealing to novelists:

Situated on an island, it is a city of strong contrasts. Even to a tourist its geographical and sociological features – mountain and river, feudal French architecture and modern

buildings, and its sharp division of population by districts as well as by its two cultures – are full of rich symbolic suggestion of man's isolation and conflict. (128)

Conron's description suggests an association, or at the least a parallel, between the social and geographical contrasts of Montreal. This parallel is made explicit in *Two Solitudes*, where the geographical and topological features of Montreal are read as symbols of the social and ideological divisions that the characters must overcome. As we will see later in the chapter, the socio-geographical divisions of Montreal in the 1940s existed but were in no way as decisive as MacLennan's novel suggests.

While *Two Solitudes* is essentially a thesis novel and functions in the realist mode, it is also highly symbolically charged. MacLennan's novel is not, as André Sirois suggests in *Montréal dans le roman canadien*, "le reflet, le miroir de la vie profonde de son milieu comme aussi de sa société et de son époque" (5). MacLennan reads and writes the city as a set of contrasting, immutable symbols; his depiction of urban space as static allows for the stability and durability of these symbols. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, differentiates between "voyeurs," who, because of their elevated position, are "lifted out of the city's grasp" and are thus capable of "seeing the whole," of "looking down on, totalizing the most immoderate of human texts," and walkers, the "ordinary practitioners" of the city whose bodies "follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (383-84). As they walk through Montreal, the characters of *Two Solitudes* actively contribute to the symbolic value of built forms. Their agency can be evaluated not only by the degree of freedom they exhibit in moving across the city, but also by their ability to "read" the very city they contribute to writing. Those who, like Paul Tallard, combine the ability to read and to write the city are those who ultimately best understand themselves as individuals and citizens.

Urban space thus becomes a metaphor to explore issues of identity, both individual and national, in *Two Solitudes*. As MacLennan himself wrote shortly after the publication of his novel, “in writing the book I had to remember that a novelist is not primarily a sociologist, a historian or a psychologist. I had to rely on emotional impact resting on a factual basis” (“Why” 13). Yet the “emotional impact” of *Two Solitudes* was significant. In many ways, it has influenced the way Canadians conceptualize the relationship between French and English in Canada, and it has dictated the way they think about postwar Montreal, overriding more nuanced accounts of the city during that period by historians and sociologists alike.

Most of the criticism on *Two Solitudes* produced before the 1980s is either concerned with a qualitative appreciation of the work or with a biographical approach, and much of it is plot-driven. More recent works have engaged in more significant ways with the novel by placing it in its socio-historical context, beginning with Elspeth Cameron’s *Hugh MacLennan: A Writer’s Life* (1981). Works that followed include Linda Leith’s *Introducing Hugh MacLennan’s Two Solitudes* (1990) and *Hugh MacLennan* (1994), a collection of essays edited by Frank Tierney, but since the 1990s, critical attention towards *Two Solitudes* has flagged, as has interest in such central male voices as MacLennan’s, with the rise of postcolonial theory.¹³ However, the use of postcolonial strategies in reading *Two Solitudes* might help provide a fresh perspective on the power dynamics featured in the novel, and may also bring to light the underpinnings of a marked interest in marginalized groups shared by MacLennan and his Anglo-Montreal contemporaries.

¹³ The publication of Coral Ann Howells’s and Lynette Hunter’s *Narrative Strategies in Canadian Literature: Feminism and Postcolonialism* (1991), Julia Emberley’s *Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women’s Writings, Postcolonial Theory* (1993), and Marie Vautier’s *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction* (1998) coincides with the publication of the last critical works on *Two Solitudes* and MacLennan more generally.

This chapter will first provide a brief overview of the residential patterning in postwar Montreal, laying out and refuting commonly held views about divisions and social tensions in the city. I will then turn to MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* in order to demonstrate how this novelist's representation of urban and textual space as both static and highly dichotomized allows him to bring to the fore his protagonist's search for identity, though it ultimately overwhelms the novel and thus obfuscates his central message of unity.

Montreal in the 1940s and 1950s

Common conceptions of Montreal in the 1940s and 1950s stress the rigidity of the city's residential patterning and the homogeneity of its ethnic distribution. They emphasize the social tensions that resurfaced periodically after the first conscription crisis and speak of an unbridgeable gulf between English and French Montrealers, visible not only in their open disregard for each other but also, and perhaps more importantly, in the physical and spatial divisions of the city, as if there were two cities instead of one.

In *The Lure of Montreal* (1945), the Deputy Minister of Education and minor poet W.P. Percival underscores the geographical differences between French and English but stresses the social exchange between them:

Now French and English Canadians live in adjoining houses and own adjacent office buildings. East of St. Lawrence Boulevard is chiefly French. West of Bleury Street, English-speaking people greatly predominate, as they do in Westmount, Town of Mount Royal, Hampstead and several other surrounding cities. But neither group is free from the influence of the other. (2)

While it acknowledges that there is some form of mutual influence between the two groups, Percival's description of Montreal completely ignores the Jewish population, as well as other

cultural minorities in the city. Percival's overly-simplified view of Montreal is representative of the mid-century nationalist tendency to minimize diversity and social tensions in favour of the overarching myth of the two founding nations. Such a myth-making endeavour is clearly visible in Percival's quotation of a passage of the historical introduction to the pageant of the 300th anniversary of the founding of Quebec in 1908. In this excerpt, minorities are ignored and quarrels are made a thing of past, as the future of the country is ensured by the *bonne entente* between the two races: "What perished in the capitulation of Montreal was the Bourbon monarchy and the narrow absolutism which fettered the life of New France throughout the Old Régime. What survives today is the vigour of two races striving to make Canada strong and free and reverent of law" (qtd in Percival 4).¹⁴

Writing at the close of the Second World War, Percival may also have been eager to downplay the social fracture engendered by two conscription crises. Montreal witnessed violent protests in the months leading up to the passing of the Military Service Act on August 29th, 1917. These protests culminated in the riot of August 29th, when the police tried to disperse the protesters and violence escalated. One man was killed and four policemen were injured (Armstrong 223).¹⁵ This riot coincided with the bombing of the country residence of Lord Atholstan, a rich Anglo-Canadian magnate who resided in the Golden Square Mile and publicly supported conscription. During the Second World War, tensions resurfaced around the national plebiscite of 27 April 1942, in which 64% of Canadians voted to release the federal government from its pledge not to impose conscription for overseas service while 85% of Quebec

¹⁴ Percival wrongly attributes the quotation to historian Francis Parkman. In fact, it is taken from the *Historical Souvenir and Book of the Pageants of the 300th Anniversary of the Founding of Quebec* (16), published by the National Battlefields Commission in 1908. William H. Atherton was the first to wrongly attribute the quotation to Parkman in his book *Montreal 1535-1914* (1914), a source Percival most likely consulted in writing *The Lure of Montreal*.

¹⁵ The provincial violence in fact culminated in the Quebec Easter riots, which took place from March 28th to April 1st, 1918 and totalled over \$300,000 in damage and 150 casualties, including four deaths (Auger 519-20). In Montreal, violent protests were more frequent but resulted in fewer casualties.

Francophones voted against the motion (Conrad and Finkel 423). When Mackenzie King decided to send conscripted men overseas in 1944, there were a few riots in Montreal, but they were neither as frequent nor as violent as the First World War riots. Socio-politically, however, the Second World War conscription crisis did have important repercussions for the city: the provincial government of Duplessis was re-elected and, while King himself was re-elected as Prime Minister, “many [French Canadians in Quebec] would feel betrayed for years” (Granatstein and Hitsman 235). W. P. Percival, like many Anglophone officials, aimed to present a unified city to the outsider. In so doing, he streamlined the social and geographical complexity of Montreal.

The division of the city into two ethnic blocs, and the occasional mention of the important Jewish community that stood between them along boulevard Saint-Laurent, has become emblematic of Montreal. And yet, the kind of homogeneity presupposed by this schematized description has been disproved by numerous historians and sociologists. One of the main criticisms directed towards it is that it conflates ethnic groups with social classes and avoids addressing discrepancies in either group. It is undeniable that economic factors as well as ethnic ones determined the establishment of residential patterning in the city. But race and class are too often conflated both in past and present accounts of Montreal in the 1940s. Writing in 1946, Mason Wade presents a prime example of this conflation in *The French-Canadian Outlook*: “the submerged eight-ninths of the social iceberg, the great mass of the French-Canadians, are underprivileged economically and intellectually. Their standard of living is well below the North American norm” (171). Conversely, but obeying the same logic, William Weintraub recently wrote that in 1940s Montreal, “big business was almost entirely in the hands

of the English” (*Montreal* 179). To be a unilingual Anglophone, he explains, meant earning on average “37 percent more than a bilingual Francophone” (179).

This tendency to conflate race and class, to equate French Montrealers with the working class and English Montrealers with business, is rather common among contemporaries and historians. It is representative of the same kind of treatment of urban space that MacLennan’s novel engages in, and it led to the common conception of Montreal as a city divided along two axes: an east-west dichotomy allegedly separated the French from the English, matched and reinforced by a north-south opposition, wherein the rich English moved further up north, on the flanks of Mount Royal and into the Golden Square Mile and Westmount, away from the industries they owned and from their predominantly French employees, who lived in underprivileged neighbourhoods such as Griffintown, Saint-Henri, and Little Burgundy. The French sector of the city mirrored this move up and north, as the French elite ultimately congregated in Outremont. For members of the French working-class in the 1940s, William Weintraub explains, “the aim was to move up from *en bas de la côte*, away from the decrepit, slummy houses of the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve area, away from the river and the factories and up the slope toward Sherbrooke Street East and, preferably, beyond – the farther north the better” (171). In addition to its emphasis on an east-west divide between French and English, then, the common image of Montreal also developed in relation to the mountain. It became known as an entity divided into what was often described as “the city above the hill” and “the city below the hill” (Ames 6).¹⁶

These accounts, which depict the city in a state of socio-geographical stasis, nevertheless seem at odds with the numerous accounts of Montreal as a thriving and buoyant city, in which exchange and interaction constantly take place. Indeed, in the 1940s and 1950s, few cities in

¹⁶ Although this expression was coined by Herbert Ames, a prominent businessman and reformer writing in the late 1800s, the latter was in fact adamant about the plurality and diversity of both “cities.”

North America held a reputation for debauchery and decadence comparable to that of Montreal. In *City Unique: Montreal Days and Nights in the 1940s and 1950s*, William Weintraub describes the magnetic aura of the city at the time and refers to Montreal as a “wide-open town, uniquely sinful in strait-laced Canada” (61). The corruption of city officials and policemen ensured that gambling and prostitution had free reign. It is estimated that in the mid-1940s, there were approximately two hundred gambling establishments in Montreal and many more brothels peppered along De Bullion Street and around the red-light district, which was nestled between the old port and Sherbrooke Street, and bordered by Bleury Street to the west and Saint-Denis Street to the east (Weintraub 62). Montreal also attracted tourists because it was closely associated with alcohol consumption, Quebec having been the first province to dispel prohibition.¹⁷ It was a prized vacation destination, though it may have been known as the “sinkhole” of North America” (Hallowell 1765). For the North American traveller especially, Montreal’s more than fifteen nightclubs, with their drinking and dancing, were a welcome distraction from the United States or the rest of Canada.

Pulp novels of the 1940s and 1950s exploit this setting to provide cheap thrills, yet, surprisingly, acknowledge the city centre’s diversity in a way that Percival and others fail to do. They usually feature a hard-boiled detective who searches for answers amidst the drugs, gambling, corruption, and prostitution of Montreal’s city centre. The most well-known of these novels include David Montrose’s *The Crime on Côte des Neiges* (1951), *Murder over Dorval* (1952), and *The Body on Mount Royal* (1953); John Edward Buell’s *The Pyx* (1959); Martin Brett’s *Hot Freeze* (1954) and *The Darker Traffic* (1954); Brian Moore’s *Wreath for a Redhead*

¹⁷ In fact, prohibition was lifted in most other provinces by 1930 (with the exception of Prince Edward Island, which held out until 1948), and there, alcohol was sold to individuals and in some private clubs, but it was not served in public places (Hallowell 1765). In the province of Quebec, prohibition came into effect on May 1, 1919, but only affected spirits and was dispelled later that year (Lacoursière 136).

(1951) and *The Executioners* (1951); Ronald J. Cooke's *The House on Craig Street* (1949) and *The Mayor of Côte St. Paul* (1950); and Al Palmer's *Sugar-Puss on Dorchester Street* (1950).

Most of these novels feature the same kind of dichotomy exploited by MacLennan in *Two Solitudes*. For example, Russell Teed, David Montrose's private eye, remarks on the social status of those who live on the mountain: "the greater the altitude, the deeper the tone of awe in the realtor's voice. Social eminence is measured by how much of the city flows like a pasteboard panorama out under the drawing room windows" (*Crime* 11). However, while a few of these novels also reassert the east-west binary, most of them acknowledge the mixed nature of the city centre. The vice and corruption, drugs and prostitution of downtown Montreal are shared by all ethnic groups. The city's underbelly, which thrives south of Sherbrooke Street between Guy Street and Berri, comprises English and French, as well as other minorities.

These pulp novels offer a first, imperfect glance at the city centre, one of the major zones of contact between French and English. Since then, historians and sociologists have also troubled, in a more systematic way, the city's clear division along ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines and have asserted that the social divisions of the city did not match its geographical patterning exactly. They found that "in the social life and spatial patterning of the city, language, social class, religion and ethnicity did not overlap to the same extent as received accounts of Montréal's history and geography had implied" (Germain and Rose 214). Montreal may have been roughly geographically divided according to north-south and east-west axes, but things did not begin and end at Saint-Laurent or Sherbrooke. In fact, as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, Herbert Ames asserted that "the city below the hill has a mixed population. [...] 42 per cent of the population (taken by families) is French-Canadian; 34 per cent is Irish-Canadian; 21 per cent is British-Canadian; and 32 per cent is of other nationalities" (88). In *The*

Anatomy of Poverty (1974), historian Terry Copp argues that the conflation between language and class which persists even today is the result of political rhetoric. Montreal's social tensions were first and foremost due to economic problems rather than animosity between linguistic groups, he explains. Montreal's working class was composed of French and English workers alike; it was not a homogeneous French group exploited by Anglophone factory owners. Ultimately, however, strikes and labour unrest were co-opted by politicians for strategic reasons. The election of Mederic Martin as mayor of Montreal in 1914 "marked the beginning of a period in municipal politics during which issues were defined rhetorically in terms of language and class" (147). As Ames and Copp established, the working-class Montrealers that inhabited the city centre represented a mixed population. Nor were all Anglophones wealthy Protestants. Anglophones in Montreal belonged to different social classes and religions. As early as 1935, Lloyd Reynolds describes in *The British Immigrant* the different types of British immigrants in Montreal, from the unskilled worker to the white-collar worker, and stresses the difference between immigrants of English, Scottish, and Irish origin.

Further from the city centre, however, we also find that neighbourhoods were rather more ethnically heterogeneous than is widely believed. Many working-class neighbourhoods in the west part of Montreal comprised French- and English-speaking, Catholic and Protestant inhabitants. Verdun and Pointe Saint-Charles, for example, were populated by Canadians of French and British origin (as well as immigrants from Poland and the Ukraine) who worked downtown or in the industries of Pointe Saint-Charles. The ethnic ratio in Verdun was approximately 40% French and 55% British, and it was reported that both peoples lived in peace (Davidson 26). In Griffintown, the population was mostly Irish Catholic, with a few French Canadians scattered on the northern fringe. Jewish and Italian families had also begun settling in

the neighbourhood since the beginning of the twentieth century (Mofarrahi 31). The Saint-Antoine district, which comprised Saint-Henri and Sainte-Cunégonde (now Little Burgundy), was predominantly French-speaking, but it was also home to Montreal's African-Canadian community (Williams 36-37). In Outremont, a middle- to upper-class neighbourhood, English, French, and Jewish inhabitants each represented a third of the population (Blanchard 220). Even the Golden Square Mile and Westmount, allegedly upper-class Anglophone areas,¹⁸ were much less homogeneous than was commonly believed and included a significant French and Jewish element (Demchinsky and Naves 177-78).

In fact, as Paul-André Linteau writes, "il y a toujours dans chacun des quartiers, même les plus anglophones, une présence significative des Canadiens français qui ne représentent jamais moins du quart de la population" ("cosmopolisme" 33). Linteau's approach invites us to differentiate between groups and individuals in mid-century Montreal and stresses the day-to-day exchanges between Montrealers of different backgrounds:

Les contacts sont multiples et permanents. À côté de la polarisation et des ghettos il y a depuis plus d'un siècle un important phénomène d'implantation d'individus ou de groupes minoritaires sur le territoire des groupes majoritaires. Quelles relations de voisinage en sont résultés? Les nombreux enfants canadiens-français qui, selon l'expression consacrée à Montréal, ont appris l'anglais dans la rue témoignent-ils d'un décloisonnement plus poussé qu'on ne l'a cru jusqu'ici? (51)

Cultural, ethnic, and religious affiliation did not prevent exchange among residents, nor did it prevent flux and change in residential patterning (Malservisi 329), as is evidenced, by the

¹⁸ Westmount was, and is, an independent city. It was incorporated as a city in 1874 and has remained independent since then, with the exception of a brief period between 2002 and 2006, when it merged with the city of Montreal.

residential mobility of some elements of the population, especially Jewish immigrants, who moved out of the Saint-Laurent “corridor” when they became wealthy enough (Blanchard 220).

Montreal in the postwar years thus exhibited a particular social patterning, but its delineations were permeable and allowed for a degree of social mobility. In the social life and spatial patterning of the city, language, social class, religion, and ethnicity overlapped differently than novels such as *Two Solitudes* would have us believe. As Gilles S  n  cal writes, “l’identit   ethnique est d’abord un espace v  cu, aux fronti  res souples, aux articulations complexes, bref un maillage de points en mouvements” (25). Mixed working-class neighbourhoods and residential mobility embody this suppleness and complexity, significantly complicating received notions about residential patterning in Montreal and suggesting that the very notion of two solitudes has always been erroneous: neither “solitude” has ever evolved completely separate from the other; the two supposed linguistic “solitudes” were never homogeneous; and there have always been several “solitudes” coexisting and interacting in Montreal. In *Two Solitudes*, the reality of this kind of social dynamism is obscured by a static representation of urban space and a correspondingly static depiction of relations between French and English Canadians.

In his novel, MacLennan equates English Montreal with the Golden Square Mile, which he portrays as an isolated pocket of wealth and prestige that consolidates its set of unifying values through a mechanism of exclusion and “othering.” His approach echoes the convictions of Quebec historian Raoul Blanchard who, in his 1947 study *Montr  al: esquisse de g  ographie urbaine*, describes the area as a neighbourhood that has increasingly closed in on itself:

Montr  al est le th   tre d’un v  ritable drame que jouent les races qui s’y affrontent, drame unique dans la Province parce que l’agglom  ration est le dernier secteur o   les Britanniques, peu    peu   limin  s des autres r  gions, se sont *retranch  s comme dans une*

forteresse et pratiquent une défensive tenace, servie par de puissants moyens. (205; emphasis mine)

To Blanchard, tensions between French and English are comparable to nothing less than an armed conflict,¹⁹ but what is truly interesting is his assessment of the English position. Having “retreated” from all other parts of the province (and the city), the English are now “entrenched” in a neighbourhood that he compares to a “fortress.” His description likens the English in Montreal, both socially and geographically, to a garrison of sorts. My reference to Northrop Frye here is deliberate: his ideas about the garrison mentality offer a way to read the binary system established in Hugh MacLennan’s novel as one that harks back to a tradition of Canadian writing that echoes the simultaneous construction of self and “other” and the homogenizing tendency of Said’s Orientalism.

Frye defines the garrison mentality as a state of mind that results from physical or psychological seclusion:

Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological “frontier,” separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources: communities that provide all that their members have in the way of distinctively human values, and that are compelled to feel a great respect for the law and order that holds them together, yet confronted with a huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting -- such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality. (342)

¹⁹ Later in his essay, Blanchard emphasizes the gap between the two peoples rather than the tensions that animate them, arguing that Montreal in fact represents two cities in one: “on n’échange pas de coups de poing, mais on s’ignore. À travers la ville circulent deux foules qui se croisent dans les rues, se mêlent dans les véhicules de transport en commun, mais n’ont l’une avec l’autre ni contact intellectuel ni estime réciproque. En fait, Montréal contient deux villes” (211).

This initial explanation does seem bound up with notions of nature and landscape. But while Frye notes that authors such as Frances Brooke write of literal garrisons, he points out that more contemporary writers “studying the impact of Montreal on Westmount write of a psychological one” (342). Frye’s mention of the city is surprising, especially considering the way in which his ideas were later recuperated by other critics, such as Margaret Atwood, in the establishment of a literary criticism that pits the individual against nature. But Frye’s explanation is well suited to the novels of English writers in post-war Montreal, of which *Two Solitudes* is particularly representative, as these novels almost always describe isolated Anglophone communities that are both contemptuous and fearful of the vast majority that encircles them. In *Two Solitudes*, the inhabitants of these Anglophone garrisons are surrounded by a “physical” and a “psychological ‘frontier,’” and cut off from both the “American and British” majorities. They share “unquestionable” “moral and social values” (342), which are inscribed in the spatial metaphor of division put forth by the novel. The garrison mentality they share not only allows them to “externalize [their] enemy” (346), but in doing so, in shaping that enemy as “other,” it also helps consolidate their own predominant social mythology and reassert the status quo. So too, ultimately, does MacLennan’s novel.

In 1945, when *Two Solitudes* was published, MacLennan was still teaching at Lower Canada College. Having lived in Montreal for six years when he began writing *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan was convinced that the divisions he perceived were representative of a larger Canadian problem. That he conceived of them in spatial terms is clear from his unpublished essay, “The Genesis of *Two Solitudes*,” in which he explains that there was something wrong in Montreal, which was

visible, it seemed, to everyone except the native Montrealers themselves, who took it for granted. It was even visible geographically. The British Empire extended in mixed prosperity and second-class ordinariness west and northwest from Guy Street to the rich farmland of Montreal Island. [...] The French fact began at Bleury Street and extended indefinitely east and northeast. [...] On the steep streets that ran up the slope of Mount Royal between University St. and Côte des Neiges were those massive mansions built by the bank presidents, railway builders, brewers and merchants toward the end of the 19th century and in all but four or five of them, the only French spoken was in the servants' quarters. (2-3)

MacLennan was therefore thinking geographically from the onset. He demonstrated a keen interest in the social and spatial seclusion of wealthy Anglo-Montrealers because he enacted this seclusion to a certain degree.

Despite his desire to “at last solve the dilemma of how to handle a Canadian novel” (Cameron, *Hugh* 166), MacLennan possessed limited knowledge about French Canadians. He spoke almost no French and was not a Roman Catholic (168). In fact, MacLennan and his wife Dorothy associated almost exclusively with the Anglophone elite of Montreal and knew very little of how the rest of Montreal lived. Their first apartment in Montreal was located at 5265 Côte St-Luc road (112). They later lived downtown at 1178 Mountain Street, but when their finances improved, they moved into more luxurious lodgings at 1535 Summerhill Avenue, in the Square Mile (308). In these areas, as Elspeth Cameron observes, MacLennan “lived a life that was almost hermetically sealed in the English-speaking sections of the city, with virtually no interaction with the attitudes, customs, and aspirations of the majority culture” (169). Of his own admission, there were only two French Canadians he knew well: “One was a colleague at Lower

Canada College and he was that exceptional being, a loyal French Canadian who was also a Protestant. The other was an ex-farmer who helped me cut trees around the small cottage I had bought in the Eastern Townships” (“Genesis” 1). MacLennan’s knowledge of French was quite limited, though he always regretted what he called his “handicap”: “In a country like ours I should be able to speak [French] almost as well as English. My inability to do so is a constant shame to me, and I recognize it as the severest educational handicap in my entire life” (“Bilingualism” 1). He lamented this shortcoming, which debarred him “from reaching true equality with [his] French-speaking friends” and also prevented him from “participating with courtesy in many of the gatherings where most of the company is *Canadien*” (“French”161). MacLennan’s knowledge of the language and reality of French Canada was indeed so limited that he admitted relying almost solely on Ringuet’s *Trente Arpents* to depict French-Canadian rites and customs in writing *Two Solitudes* (Cameron, *Hugh* 169).

Nor did MacLennan know much about working-class English Montrealers. His peers Lower Canada College (and, later, McGill University), as well as his friends both in Montreal and in North Hatley, where he and Dorothy spent their summers, were almost solely members of Montreal’s Anglophone elite: people such as Frank and Marian Scott, Isabel Dobell (author and later curator of the McCord Museum), and the Ogilvys of Montreal (194). While MacLennan had struggled to find employment during the Depression, he had travelled extensively, possessed a first rate education, and did not experience economic hardship first hand. As Robin Mathews writes, he was an elitist who expressed himself “flawlessly in a rhythm and with a use of language which catch more of a sense of his class and time than a hundred sociological studies could give” (50). It is therefore not surprising to find that in *Two Solitudes*, as in so many accounts of post-war Montreal, race and class are conflated into two sets of binaries that mirror

and reinforce one another. However, despite MacLennan's own shortcomings, his novel, in its epic opening chapter as well as in its depiction of Athanase Tallard, the inhabitants of Saint-Marc-des-Érables, and Emilie demonstrates a confidence and authority that underscores the extent to which French Canada in *Two Solitudes* is the result of ideas and assumptions; it is "not merely there" but "man-made" (Said 4-5).

As a member of the Anglophone elite, Hugh MacLennan demonstrated a desire to reach out to the rest of the city, an endeavour matched in earnestness only by his often imperfect knowledge of that same city and of the "other" that constituted it. In choosing to focus on the social cleavage between French and English, Catholics and Protestants, rich and poor, he created the impression of a divided city in which built forms underscore the paradoxical centrality of an isolated Anglophone community and relative marginality of a French majority.

Two Solitudes

In *Two Solitudes*, Hugh MacLennan embraces a form of cultural nationalism by deliberately placing Canadian issues at the heart of his work, despite the low sales potential and lack of interest of the American market discussed in his essay "Boy Meets Girl in Winnipeg and Who Cares?". The novel addresses tensions between Quebec and the rest of the country, and promotes the unity of English and French Canada under a larger Canadian nationalism expressed in many of the essays he published in the 1940s. The desire to forge a more coherent Canadian nationalism is visible in MacLennan's use of expressions in referring to an overarching Canadian identity: he refers to Canada as a "political fusion" ("Bi-lingualism" 4), describes his novel in turn as "an experiment in the possibility for synthesis of the social and cultural relations in the life of this country" ("Why" 13) and a "fusion of the Canadian dichotomy" (qtd in Cameron, *Hugh* 196), and believes in the possibility of a "coherent country" ("Canada's Inherited"

Intelligencer n.p.). MacLennan's nationalist lexicon puts a definite emphasis on words such as "unity," "merger," "fusion," "coherence," and "synthesis." These words all exemplify his belief that Canadian nationalism can only exist if Canadians forego allegiance to their narrower ethnic or linguistic group and embrace a larger, overarching Canadian identity. He expresses this idea most vehemently in his 1942 essay entitled "Anniversary of an Idea": "Not for nothing is the motto of Quebec *Je me Souviens*. An unquestioning loyalty held these two groups together during the hard early days of Canada. That same loyalty to the group, blindly and narrowly followed, keeps Canada from achieving a full nationhood" (8). Loyalty to the whole must supersede loyalty to the group, MacLennan argues, for a unifying Canadian identity can only emerge by "forgetting sectional differences in a common aim far greater than the section, by itself, can attain" (8).

MacLennan's attitude towards Canadian identity, his desire to see separate entities collapsed into one or merged together, is also clear from his 1949 essay "The Psychology of the Canadian Character," which repeats almost word for word the foreword of *Two Solitudes*. In this essay, he explains why Canada has suffered from "too little nationalism":

Canada has two official languages, yet the resources of both have failed to provide a single word to designate a citizen of the country. When those of the French language use the word *Canadien*, they refer only to themselves; the rest of the population are *les Anglais*. Those who speak English operate on the same principle. *They* are the "Canadians"; the qualifying word "French-Canadian" is reserved for the inhabitants of Quebec. To date, Canada has no official flag. One of the hottest debates in recent parliamentary history occurred when the project of adopting a national flag was raised and discarded after weeks of exasperated argument. (8-9)

A rallying word to designate all Canadians and a unifying flag from which they may derive pride – both these items are examples of the way in which MacLennan wishes to foster loyalty to a higher, overarching entity. It is perhaps no coincidence that in his novels and essays, MacLennan almost systematically avoids using the hyphenated terms “English-Canadian” and “French-Canadian” and refers to inhabitants of Canada as “Canadiens” and “Canadians,” favouring the pair in which words most closely resemble one another.

But MacLennan’s novel fails in its endeavour to promote unity, and nowhere is this failure so evident as in the common usage of the novel’s title, which has become emblematic of division and difference. Indeed, the title MacLennan gave to his novel added both to the confusion and to the irony of the novel’s misreading. The expression, which also makes up the novel’s epigram, is taken from one of Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Letters to a Young Poet*, in which he writes that love “darin besteht, daß zwei Einsamkeiten einander schützen, grenzen und grüßen” (39). MacLennan came across the expression in the summer of 1944 and wrote to Willem L. Graff in order to track down the original reference. He had read M.D. Herter Norton’s translation, which states that love “consists in this, that two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other” (60) and was considering using the quotation both as the title of his novel and as an epigram. Graff explained to MacLennan that the passage represented a recurrent thought of Rilke, according to which “love cannot consist in mutual assimilation or in the subordination of one party to the other, but that it ought to consist in a mutual respect and protection of each other’s inalienable identity and solitude” (letter to HM June 7, 1944). But Graff also insisted that he did not agree with the translation that MacLennan had found:

As I wrote to you, I do not like Mrs Norton’s translation of “grenzen”. The English word “touch” expresses much more intimacy than Rilke ever wished to imply when he used the

word “grenzen”. The latter word means “to border on” and the implication is rather one of separateness (separation), delimitation. The word “grüssen” has perhaps a heavier meaning from the English “greet”. I think the English “bow to” would be truer. The whole idea is that of two countries (solitudes) guarding each other’s frontiers (grenzen) and bowing to each other across the line. Rather than suggest a translation that would express these nuances, which I think are important, I wish that you yourself would use your better knowledge of English in trying to come as near to the original as possible. (Letter to HM September 28, 1944).

Graff thus declined MacLennan’s request for a better translation, suggesting that MacLennan himself, now properly informed by Graff, would be able to articulate Rilke’s original thoughts more faithfully. But MacLennan ignored Graff’s suggestion and opted for Norton’s translation as the epigram of his novel. To him, the emphasis of the sentence was love, not solitude, and it is arguable that the protection of an “inalienable identity” mentioned by Graff may not have resonated with his vision of Canadian nationalism.

This love, which he was at pains to emphasize in *Two Solitudes*, is a source of contact and dialogue. Yet the expression “two solitudes” has come full circle to signify the “separateness,” the unbridgeable isolation of two nations. MacLennan himself used the expression more than twenty years after the publication of the novel to stress the gap between cultures: “In each of the two solitudes, people behave as though an understanding of the other solitude would incur the wrath of ancestors who perpetuated here the dynastic, religious, and mercantilistic quarrels of two European empires now defunct as such” (“English-Speaking” 230). These two solitudes, which neither “protect,” “touch” nor “greet each other” but which rather

“guard each other’s frontiers” and “bow to each other across the line,” have become part of the popular discourse on Canada.

The failure of MacLennan’s project primarily rests on the novel’s decidedly dual outlook on the city, which not only stresses opposition rather than exchange, but which also inevitably reasserts the same hierarchy it claims to question. If MacLennan’s binary system does occasionally falter, if his novel sometimes seems to articulate a counter-discourse, for example in its depiction of Paul and Heather, the English-French dichotomy is consistent enough to have obfuscated MacLennan’s central message. The author’s alignment of social and geographical boundaries allows the novel’s binary system to gain undue importance.

Two Solitudes follows the Tallard family through two generations. Its first part takes place during WWI and concerns the fall from grace of Athanase Tallard, a member of the French rural aristocracy who lives in the fictive village of Saint-Marc-des-Érables. In siding with an Anglophone majority in favour of conscription and Anglophone business in the establishment of an industry in the village, Athanase alienates Father Beaubien, the village priest and the most influential individual in Saint-Marc. Father Beaubien successfully turns the villagers against Athanase, his Irish wife Kathleen, and his son Paul. Ultimately forced to move to Montreal, Athanase loses his seat as an MP and his fortune, and he dies a broken man. His son Paul is the focus of the second half of the novel. As Paul struggles to find his voice as a writer in the Montreal of the Depression, he and Heather Methuen, a rich young English woman from the Golden Square Mile, fall in love despite economic circumstances and the opposition of her family. Their relationship and Paul’s novel develop as the threat of war becomes imminent.

In his novel, Hugh MacLennan describes Montreal, a setting that is a metaphor of Canada, as an uncompromising city of binaries. The sclerosis of the city maintains the chasm

between the English and the French, the rich and the poor, and prevents the younger generation of characters such as Paul Tallard and Heather Methuen from moving forward. Paul and Heather, usually discussed as being representative of French and English Canada, cannot be together in the city; they must find each other outside Montreal. This situation seems to convey a rather pessimistic outlook for the future of the country: though Paul and Heather eventually marry (in Nova Scotia, tellingly), their union is short lived. As the novel ends, war has been declared and Paul will enrol in the navy. But Paul does not truly represent French Canada. His origins and upbringing are dual; only in Montreal can he reconcile the two parts of his identity, by moving back and forth through the city, and only in Montreal can he begin to write his novel.

Two Solitudes is not the only novel of its time in which the setting of Montreal takes on symbolic value as it underscores the difficult nature of a love story between young people from French and English backgrounds. In this sense, MacLennan's novel does not differ from its contemporaries in its static representation of the city, nor in its depiction of cultural cleavage, but emerges as an exemplar of the way in which novelists' treatment of urban space is consistent with their treatment of French-English relations in Montreal. In Muriel Elwood's historical novel *Heritage of the River* (1945), the Montreal of 1688 is a decidedly French town that Marguerite Boissart must leave to begin a life with Eric Walker, a British soldier. Joan Walker's *Repent at Leisure* (1957) oscillates between the slums of Hochelaga and the opulence of Westmount, associated respectively with decommissioned Canadian soldier Louis Latour and the Nash family, with whom his British war bride Veronica Phelps feels a natural kinship. The incompatibility of the couple is most clearly expressed in their opposite reactions when overlooking the city atop Mount Royal: while Veronica is repulsed by the neon crucifix, which she deems "horrible," "cheap and nasty," Louis admires it wholeheartedly and considers it a

“splendid inspiration”: “A flaming red cross which one could see for miles around” (100).

Ultimately, although the struggling couple move to Toronto for a fresh start, they cannot reconcile their values and temperaments. Louis’s desertion of Veronica and return to Montreal effectively frees her to marry Alan Nash. This sharp cleavage between French and English is also represented in the geographical description of Montreal in Bertram Horace Appleby’s *Montreal Adventure* (1952), which, though it is not properly speaking a love story, features a twisted professor-pupil relationship in which power dynamics are inextricable from culture. The narrator, Professor Thomas Hinchinbrooke, stems from a long line of British ancestors, the last of which was a proud “defender of the British way of life here in Canada” (15). Because Hinchinbrooke wants to “save” a pupil who bears the unlikely name of Jacques Cartier and allow him to develop his musical genius under his tutelage in Westmount, an allegorical reading of the novel in which the layout of the city becomes symbolic is inevitable.

In these novels, as in *Two Solitudes*, the French are constructed as “other,” an opposition that not only perpetuates the mythology of the two separate and distinct founding nations, but one that also fails to acknowledge the extent to which both French and English were complicit in marginalizing other racial and cultural minorities. Montreal Jewish novelists of this period accordingly throw into relief the type of ostracism suffered by a community that is sometimes referred to as Montreal’s “third solitude” (Greenstein 9). In *Son of a Smaller Hero* (1955), Mordecai Richler writes that “the ghetto of Montreal has no real walls and no true dimensions. The walls are the habit of atavism and the dimensions are an illusion. But the ghetto exists all the same” (3). Here, social and spatial exclusion are inextricable, but it is unclear whether that exclusion is enacted or self-imposed. In *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* (1959), Richler’s second novel, Duddy also equates social and spatial exclusion through his obsession with

acquiring land and his belief that “a man without land is nobody” (109). The novel naturally aligns Duddy and French-Canadian Yvette, who find each other because of their shared sense of isolation, but this defining feature is not enough to hold them together. Similarly, Abram Stelman’s *Mariette* (1961) narrates a doomed love story between the daughter of a respected French-Canadian judge and a young Jewish lawyer. There is a natural affinity between the two cultures because, as one speaker of the McGill Debating Society argues, “the tendency is for a minority to be assimilated by a majority – in this case, the English” (22), but the very desire to avoid assimilation is, ultimately, what forbids them to marry. The point of view used in these novels allows for a nuanced account of the workings of marginalization and suggests that the process of “othering” is not reserved exclusively to the English toward the French, though in these cases, Canadian nationalism is not the guiding ideology of the fiction.

Like MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes*, Gwethalyn Graham’s *Earth and High Heaven* (1944) and Morley Callaghan’s *The Loved and the Lost* (1951), both published within a few years of *Two Solitudes*, also demonstrate a marked interest in an “other,” though not a French one. In both novels, the protagonist is an individual who, like Graham and Callaghan themselves, stems from a central, if not dominant, social group and falls in love with someone who belongs, or is closely associated to, a marginalized group. In both novels, Montreal is also a city of binaries: the ease with which their characters move through urban space is indicative of how well they are able to read that space. *Earth and High Heaven* recounts how Marc Reiser, a young Jewish-Canadian lawyer, falls in love with Erica Drake, a Protestant from Westmount. The strong opposition of Erica’s family and Marc’s own misgivings are insurmountable obstacles in the development of their relationship. Marc is a victim of social and spatial exclusion in Montreal because the city is entrenched in its segregations, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the

novel suggests, because he cannot reconcile being Jewish and being Canadian. Only when he, like Paul Tallard, articulates a new identity upon receiving a phone call “addressing him as ‘Captain M.L. Reiser,’ a Jewish-Canadian soldier” (Rackham 136), does he realize that the spatial exclusion has been “ninety-eight percent” his fault, problematic though this statement might prove.

Morley Callaghan’s novel *The Loved and the Lost* depicts the infatuation of social climber Jim McAlpine for Peggy Sanderson, a young woman who refuses to acknowledge the social and spatial boundaries of racial prejudice and seeks the company and friendship of the African-Canadian community of Saint-Antoine. Peggy’s all-encompassing love engenders animosity, both from the wealthy Anglophones of the Golden Square Mile and among the Saint-Antoine community; her disregard for the city’s rigid divisions ultimately costs Jim his promising career as a journalist and brings about her tragic end. Graham’s and Callaghan’s novels were, like MacLennan’s novel, popular and critical successes,²⁰ and both won the Governor General’s award for fiction.

The response to *Two Solitudes* was overwhelmingly enthusiastic in English Canada as well as in the United States. The French response to the novel, while generally positive, was, however, more mitigated. While Jean Berand wrote in *La Presse* that MacLennan “possède le détachement nécessaire à celui qui veut voir clair” and that he describes Quebec “avec une acuité remarquable” (150), *Le Devoir* published a virulent review of MacLennan’s book. After pointing out many factual errors in MacLennan’s description of geography and Catholic rites, Albert

²⁰ MacLennan estimated that total sales for his novel in Canada and the U.S. totalled over 50 000 copies in the first two years (Cameron, *Hugh* 193). The first English edition of Graham’s novel sold out on the day of publication, while in North America, *Collier’s Magazine* “began to serialize an abridged version” even before the book was published (Meadowcroft 119). Between October 1944 (the date of its publication) and November 1945, the book had generated 1,250,000 dollars (120) and sales “would ultimately top a million and a half copies, with translations in 18 languages, as well as Braille” (Ravvin ix). Writing in 1966, Brandon Conron estimated that *The Loved and the Lost* had, since its publication in 1951, sold over half a million copies in paperback edition and wrote that the novel was so popular as to be adapted into a Broadway musical in 1955 (135).

Alain concludes, “Le grand malheur, c’est qu’un tel livre donnera une très fausse idée du Canada français et catholique à des lecteurs de langue anglaise et non catholiques au Canada et aux États-Unis” (8). *Le Devoir*’s reviewer was right in a way that he had not anticipated: while MacLennan wrote his novel to argue in favour of national unity, his descriptions of the cleavage between French and English in Montreal rather brought readers to the conclusion that the “two solitudes” were irreconcilable.

MacLennan’s novel opens with a sweeping description of the Saint-Laurent valley, but his passage culminates in a description of Montreal as the centre of the country:

But down in the angle at Montreal, on the island about which the two rivers join, there is little of this sense of new and endless space. Two old races and religions meet here and live their separate legends, side by side. If this sprawling half-continent has a heart, here it is. Its pulse throbs out along the rivers and railroads; slow, reluctant and rarely simple, a double beat, a self-moved reciprocation. (4)

By identifying Montreal as “the heart” of Canada, this paragraph designates the city as representative of the entire country. The problems of Montreal, MacLennan argues, are the problems of Canada.

While a description of the landscape opens the novel and lends it the epic “sense of new and endless space,” the novel suggests that the “heart” of the country is urban, and that it is, specifically, Montreal. The vital energy of the city is disseminated by its “pulse” into rural Quebec and the rest of Canada. The metaphor of the heart not only indicates that Montreal is a social and economic motor (though it is certainly both of these things in MacLennan’s novel); its sentimental connotations emphasize the fact that the city is the space in which passions and prejudices take on all their meaning. The image of the pulsating heart, whose aim is greater than

either of its ventricles, by themselves, can attain, also harks back to MacLennan's appeal to forego loyalty to specific groups in favour of loyalty to the larger idea of Canada. The city, then, takes on the characteristics of the country at large so that all the characters that occupy it can act out their respective parts in the national drama.

This heart of the continent, however, possesses two ventricles: one French, the other English. Its "double beat" is not a conversation or an exchange between two parts; it is but a "self-moved reciprocation," two monologues alternately interrupted and taken up again. The image is telling, and to make clearer the implications of his figurative language, MacLennan states outright that the French and the English in Montreal live "separate legends, side by side." While MacLennan emphasizes the divide between these "two races and religions," he is careful to anchor this divide symbolically in the geography of the city. Thus, although his description of Montreal in *Two Solitudes* "derives from the actual Montreal and from the lessons MacLennan has learnt there of the tensions and attractions," it remains "a city of the imagination" (Woodcock 17).

Both contemporaries of MacLennan and later critics have pointed out that the characters in *Two Solitudes* symbolize different aspects of the national question (Marius the French-Canadian nationalist, Janet the British imperialist, etc.),²¹ but only a few have noted, following W.H. New, that in MacLennan's novel, Montreal "is taken to be 'heartland,' and so is constructed as the epitome of national cultural norms" (172). In "The Genesis of *Two Solitudes*," MacLennan explains that "The Montreal I first saw in 1935 was purely Canadian. It was the visible replica of the Canada of thirty years ago, and though its human atmosphere was much warmer than it is now, there was something wrong here, something very wrong, for what was

²¹ Paul Goetsch writes that "each of the major characters symbolizes one aspect of this knotty social problem in a direct, one-to-one ratio" (27). See also Peter Buitenhuis's *Hugh MacLennan* (1969).

wrong here was what was wrong with the nation itself” (2). MacLennan felt compelled to set his national drama in Montreal because he felt strongly that “the crucible of Canada’s future was Montreal” (11).

In the Montreal of *Two Solitudes*, the chasm between French and English is symbolized most prominently by streets. Emilie lives and works in “the east end of Sainte-Catherine Street” (60). Significantly, she first meets Marius because she is given an order in English, which she does not understand and which Marius offers to translate. East of Bleury, life happens in French, and few are the English-speaking Montrealers who venture into that sector. When Yardley and Janet watch the military parade go through “the English section of the town” (234) on Sherbrooke Street, an East-West artery, Yardley notices that “the crowd here was entirely English. Farther east it would be French. It was the sort of thing you always watched for in Montreal” (236). Athanase decides to relocate to Montreal because he believes that the city will provide a more tolerant environment for his wife, who feels alienated in Saint-Marc-des-Érables, and for himself, who cannot accept the overbearing weight of the Catholic Church in the town. As it turns out, however, the urban divides are as unyielding as the rural ones. When Kathleen finds a house in Montreal for the Tallard family, she finds one “only a little West of Bleury, a street which runs through Montreal like a frontier, dividing the English from the French” (134). That the house practically straddles the east-west divide is indicative of the precarious position of both Athanase, who aims to reconcile both peoples but who is ultimately spurned by both sides, and of his son Paul, whose inheritance is both French and English.

In this city, the “spires and domes of churches” are “more to the acreage than any other commercial city in the world” (286).²² MacLennan’s narrative frequently alludes to churches,

²² Mark Twain once quipped, “This is the first time I was ever in a city where you couldn’t throw a brick without breaking a church window” (qtd in Demchinsky and Naves 72).

which, because the religion they represent is often conflated with race, language, and class, also become symbolic of the division between French and English. At the very beginning of the novel, Father Beaubien expresses his pride in the church of Saint-Marc, to which Athanase has donated a significant amount of money (164), because it is “larger even than the largest Protestant church in Montreal where millionaires were among the parishioners” (7). Father Beaubien conflates the religious and the economic; the size of the church is representative not only of the fervour of its parishioners but also, implicitly, of the social and economic potential of French Canadians. This association between language, religion, and socio-economics persists throughout the novel. When Athanase, in an act of rebellion against Father Beaubien, decides to convert to Protestantism, he heads, significantly, to St. David’s Presbyterian Church in the English-speaking section of Montreal. Athanase’s falling out with father Beaubien is a result of the former’s desire to send Paul to an English school (163) and is precipitated by the arrest of Marius on his land. The underlying reason for their quarrel, however, is Athanase’s association with Huntley McQueen in order to build a factory in Saint-Marc (208). It is his affiliation with the St. James Street financiers that angers the priest. Athanase’s defection to St. David’s therefore symbolizes not only his rupture with the Catholic Church but also, and perhaps more importantly, his rupture with French Canada in favour of an alliance with the predominantly Anglophone economic forces of the city.

When the deal between McQueen and Athanase falls through, however, the latter is left without affiliation to either French or English. Spurned by both sides, Athanase fantasizes about a financial and secular revenge: “he would endow a public library and set it up in the heart of the French section on Saint-Denis Street. If he made enough money he would endow libraries all over the province. [...] His libraries would be big, big as churches” (250). For Athanase, as for

Father Beaubien, churches are, in size and location, symbols of social and economic forces. His ambition to place a public library (an institution that is both anti-clerical and non-lucrative) in “the heart of the French section” indicates his disavowal of the economic and religious forces that have ruined him. Indeed, if, “by the midtwentieth century, the library was recognized as being integral to a community’s cultural life” in Ontario, so that by 1921, two thirds of the province’s population had access to library facilities, the province of Quebec was decades behind any other province in this area, as “church control of education discouraged efforts to create a free secular library system” (Vance 347).²³ Athanase’s vision is thus a reaction against the mercantilism that has brought about his financial ruin. But it is mainly a reaction against the Catholic Church. That he wishes his libraries to be “big as churches” underscores his understanding of architecture as symbol as well as his desire for secular knowledge to uproot religious dogma.

Athanase’s stumped ambitions are made evident by the walk he takes after he is dismissed by McQueen, a walk that takes him from Saint James Street up Beaver Hall Hill into a little square, likely Beaver Hall Square.²⁴ MacLennan describes this little square as “an island between the slums on the east, and business and financial areas on the other three sides” (248). Athanase is stuck on this “island”: he cannot go home because the military parade (a painful reminder of his support for conscription) is blocking Sherbrooke Street. He also reflects that he can go neither to his English club, which is “nearby” in the English part of town, because “they

²³ In fact, as Jonathan F. Vance writes, the Quebec provincial government had “legislation on the books to allow the establishment of public libraries but had provided no funding. [...] By the time the province passed an Act Respecting Public Libraries (1959), the situation had scarcely changed” (347). In Montreal, the Protestant movement towards the establishment of libraries began in earnest with the creation of the Mechanic’s Institute in 1828, though its members included “peu de canadiens français, l’antipathie l’emportant encore sur le besoin d’apprendre la théorie des arts” (Lajeunesse 13). The Catholic Church, for its part, was wary of public libraries: “en ces années de prosélytisme protestant des ‘colporteurs de bible,’ les autorités craignaient que l’instruction publique, en abaissant le taux d’analphabétisme, ne rendît les Canadiens français plus vulnérables à une diffusion large et soutenue de l’imprimé protestant et non-orthodoxe” (14).

²⁴ In 1982, the Beaver Hall Square was renamed Place du Frère André.

would talk about him,” nor to his French club “farther east,” for there they have “demanded his resignation” (249). He no longer belongs in the French part of town, but he no longer has the economic privilege of staying in its wealthy English section. The alignment of the social and spatial aspects of Athanase’s situation is emphasized by his repeatedly asking “what could he do now?” (248), which eventually becomes “where could he go?” (249). His incapacity to move forward is evident as he “turned a full circle on the pavement, spinning slowly on his leather heels” (248). Athanase is trapped: there is nowhere for him to go socio-economically or geographically. Unsurprisingly, he dies shortly after this spatial and narrative dead end.

Athanase’s disorientation and sense of failure are communicated most effectively when, walking west on Dorchester, he falls upon Saint James’ Cathedral.²⁵ On a symbolic level, Saint James’ Cathedral adds to the tragic tone of Athanase’s last scene. Like the character of Athanase, it is a building with high aspirations (its architecture is inspired by Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome) that seems at odds with its surroundings. A Catholic cathedral built in the English-Protestant neighbourhood of the Golden Square Mile, it resonates with the choices and decisions made by Athanase in his attempt and failure at uniting two peoples. Like Athanase, Saint James was envisioned as a beacon of tolerance and unity but instead only sparked controversy and dissent when it was erected in 1894 (“Marie-Reine-du-Monde”). The cathedral’s portico echoes the spatial component of Athanase’s psychological state. Atop it lie thirteen wood and copper statues. While they are often mistaken for the Christ and the Twelve Apostles, they in fact represent the thirteen patron saints of the French- and English-speaking parishes that contributed to the construction of the cathedral, including Saint-Jean-Baptiste (the patron saint of French Canadians) and Saint Patrick (the patron Saint of the Irish) (Collard 17). These statues are meant

²⁵ Dorchester was renamed René Lévesque in 1987. The Saint James’ Basilica was renamed Cathedral Marie, Queen of the World in 1955.

to represent the unity of the different parishes that helped erect the cathedral but in fact call attention to the frictions between these same parishes (in deciding where the cathedral would be built) and between these parishes and the Protestant neighbourhoods that surround the cathedral. In the same way, Athanase strives for cooperation between French and English but only succeeds in reinforcing racial and religious prejudice under the conscription crisis.

Before Athanase enters the cathedral, thereby foreshadowing his deathbed conversion,²⁶ he contemplates the bronze statue of Bishop Bourget, a man he clearly admires for his “unbreakable will” (252) in establishing the cathedral so defiantly in an unlikely space. Ironically, Athanase seems to ignore or forget that Bourget primarily stands for “the predominance of the church over social and government spheres” (“Marie-Reine-du-Monde”), a position Athanase strongly opposes. As Alan Gordon explains, Bishop Bourget aligned himself with ultramontanist against the growing liberalism he perceived in the city. His memory, embodied by the statue, is therefore “associated with the nineteenth century’s long contest between liberalism and ultramontanist” (108). Athanase should logically repudiate a figure that represents the very forces that have alienated him from his people, but instead he envies Bourget because “now the man was a statue and the bronze had oxidized and he was as green and permanent as the saints above him” (MacLennan, *Solitudes* 252). Athanase realizes his own failure in effecting change and thus becoming permanent, either through political or economic channels. Bourget, for all his weaknesses as a man, has become a “unifying national public memor[y]” (Gordon 9), while Athanase will quickly be forgotten. His endeavour to compromise has effectively ruined him, while Bishop Bourget’s uncompromising stance, though it did

²⁶ It should be noted that this conversion is relayed only through Marius and thus, instead of realigning Athanase with his French-Canadian values, only serves to further muddle his position, leaving him in a cultural and religious limbo of sorts.

nothing to assuage racial tensions and boost pan-Canadian nationalism, will live on in the permanence of his statue.

While the east-west binary is the most evident opposition in *Two Solitudes*, the north-south, or rather the up-down opposition between the wealthy and the poor, often conflated with the French-English opposition, recurs throughout the novel. Sherbrooke Street represents the frontier that separates the rich elite of Montreal from everyone else. Below Sherbrooke, the city core is filled with “hundreds of acres of concrete, bricks, mortar, asphalt, street-cars, trucks, motors, advertisement signs in flaring scarlet and white, crowds” (286). Here is the bustle of the city, where people work, live, and move. Further east but still south of Sherbrooke Street, where Marius and Emily live, every house looks as if it has been built “from the same blueprint of the same contractor, of the same materials” and all the lodgings have “mean little protuberant balconies overcrowded by large families on hot days” (427). As we move north from Sherbrooke, however, and up the flank of Mount Royal, we find increasing wealth and prestige amidst Anglophone mansions. From the top of Mount Royal, a young Paul Tallard makes the same observation. While the central and eastern parts of the city are “a raw waste of masonry with an occasional square building jutting high above the flat roofs around it” (286), the upper part of the city “hugging the mountain [is] beautiful, soft lights and shadows lying among trees and the roofs of various houses quiet in the shade” (286). The novel’s original dust jacket, designed by Lisbeth Lofgren, underscores this dichotomy with its depiction of a large château-style mansion poised atop a cliff, overhanging a narrow street filled with cramped apartment buildings.

MacLennan traces a clear parallel between the geographical ascension of the mountain and the social ascension of successful Montrealers. In his novel, Huntley McQueen is

emblematic of those who go up the mountain as they go up the social ladder. McQueen, who was raised in a “four-room flat” by his poor single mother (132), is a shrewd enough businessman to get rich at a fairly young age: “his advance had been rapid” (132). But only when General Methuen invites him to dinner “at his home *on the slope of the mountain*” (127; emphasis added) does McQueen truly believe he has risen in society, because this invitation, an open door to the neighbourhood on the mountain, means more than “a bank account and a reputation on Saint James Street” (128). As McQueen carefully cultivates his acquaintance with the Methuens, he is able to move up the mountain, both literally and figuratively. His purchase of a “huge house on the mountainside opposite the Methuens” (291) goes hand in hand with his growing intimacy with those who belong to the social and economic elite of Montreal. More even than money, it is social status that the climb up the mountain provides; it legitimizes McQueen’s wealth by bolstering it with social standing. On the mountain, wealth and status are so intricately intertwined that McQueen claims that “twenty years of increasing recognition by Montreal society” has made him “feel at one with his environment” (292).

McQueen is often described as occupying elevated positions, whether in his office, on the top floor of the Bank Building in Saint James Street, or in his library “at the top of his house” (306). Heather even dreams of making a cartoon of McQueen “sitting on top of a boiling kettle on the summit of Mount Royal telling the water it hasn’t been boiling long enough to be sure the heat’s going to last” (340). McQueen’s elevated positions allow him a dominant view of the city, which, according to Elleke Boehmer, signifies an act of appropriation, for to occupy the bird’s-eye position is “to arrogate to oneself, even if momentarily, the cartographic and metaphoric authority of the colonizer” (99). McQueen is correspondingly completely oblivious to the realities of those who live below Sherbrooke Street. The view from his office offers “one of the

panoramas of the world” (119), but because this view is directed southwards, McQueen cannot look upon the wealthy houses on the mountain; instead, McQueen’s gaze should encompass the real city, where people live and work. Yet MacLennan’s narrator informs the reader that “McQueen’s satisfaction constantly renewed itself through his ability to overlook all this” (119). The double meaning of the word “overlook” is telling here. McQueen’s satisfaction stems from the fact that he can contemplate the commercial activity at the heart of the city, the very activity that enriches him. But his satisfaction in enjoying wealth and status necessarily stems from his ability to “overlook,” that is, to disregard or ignore the poverty and suffering of those who live “below” his window.

In seeking out elevated positions, McQueen understands that the up-down divide in Montreal works to his advantage. He does not fear the budding socialist movements, for he considers the working class too lazy to rise up, both figuratively and literally: “they moiled about in the lower streets of Montreal, but they never thought of climbing the hill across the frontier of Sherbrooke Street to see for themselves the comfort in which their business leaders were able to live” (308). To McQueen, the laziness of members of the working class is what prevents them from getting rich; if they had enough will to physically ascend the mountain, they would also be able to financially ascend the social hierarchy.

In a way, this is exactly what happens to Kathleen, Paul’s mother. The character of Kathleen somewhat troubles the clear-cut dichotomy established by MacLennan. Her sympathetic character moves easily up and down, both physically and socially. In Kathleen’s experience, “the street counted, not the people” (137). Although Kathleen grows up poor, she loves Montreal because she possesses the freedom to walk its streets unimpeded. Kathleen

effortlessly transgresses the frontiers erected over class and race and does exactly what McQueen alludes to:

Having no status in [the city], she received the subtle compensation of being able to imagine she owned a share in all of it. She could look at Lord Strathcona's mansion on Dorchester Street and think how wonderful it was that her city had a building exactly like a medieval castle; and not only that one, but many. (140)

Dorchester Boulevard itself may lie south of Sherbrooke Street, but it belongs to the Golden Square Mile, and there is no doubt that Kathleen has ventured up the mountain to contemplate the "many" houses that look like medieval castles and to imagine her "share in all of it."

Kathleen's utter freedom in the city, her ability to feel at ease as much on rue de l'Assomption as among the mansions of Mount Royal, is ultimately what allows her to rise in society by marrying Athanase. When they move to Montreal, they settle just north of Sherbrooke Street, a location indicative of their precarious financial situation. Kathleen is MacLennan's only attempt at sketching a working-class Anglo-Montrealer. Significantly, she is also one of the few characters who is able to transcend the class frontier of the city, though she is never described venturing east of Berri. Her character thus simultaneously belies the strict rigidity of MacLennan's Montreal and his conflation of the up/down and east/west divides. Her intriguing character rapidly disappears in the second half of the novel, however, as MacLennan clumsily marries her off to a wealthy American, thereby getting rid of a character that did not fit neatly into the novel's rigid structure.

For the rest of the characters, the divides remain. As Yardley reflects, "the older generation was trying to freeze the country and make it static" (344). While Alec Lucas considers that MacLennan chose to set his novel in Montreal because the city contains "symbols

of the modern world's new faith and new culture" (14), I argue, on the contrary, that in *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan's Montreal is a city that features symbols of stagnation and stasis. What MacLennan perceives as the self-perpetuating division between the English and the French, the Haves and the Have Nots, is mirrored and enacted in his depiction of the city's architecture, in an attempt to underscore what he saw as the stilted nature of Montreal and Canada's social processes and fixed forms. Most of the houses, ranging from the mansions to the more humble lodgings, are but pale copies of houses in Britain, the buildings watered-down imitations of European architecture: McQueen's mansion is an archaic ode to Britain, with its port wine draperies, dark mahogany, and engraving of Sir Walter Scott meeting Robert Burns (291); the Methuen mansion, which Heather refers to as "that ark of a house" (383), is similarly decorated with "wine-red draperies" and "great dark paintings [...] framed in gilded plaster" (35); the house in which Athanase and his family live in Montreal is a "three-storied Georgian adaptation" (134) in a street that "reminds Englishmen vaguely of London" (134), but only because of its smell and greyness; Heather's own studio is located in an "old house" (330) opposite which are buildings that are also "very old and European" (350); and Yardley moves into an "old house" when he relocates to Montreal (334).

MacLennan uses the architecture of the city to criticize the unflinching admiration of the older generation for all things British and the overall decay brought on by the absence of new Canadian forms of art. Through his implicit criticism of Montreal architecture, he condemns the imperialism that stilted the cultural nationalism of the country. To a young Paul leafing through a book on Greece, the Parthenon therefore looks "plain and ugly, almost like a bank in Montreal" (266). The young boy is perplexed: "why was a building beautiful in Europe when an exact copy of it was ugly here?" (266). The difference, of course, is that the Parthenon is quite at home in

Greece, where it is closely linked to the culture and history of the country; the building resonates with the nation that created it. In Montreal, however, architectural styles imitating ancient European forms are out of place. Like the Square Mile houses that imitate British mansions, the Bank of Montreal building emulates a foreign culture rather than putting forth a developing one. Its pompousness can only translate into what the young Paul instinctively feels to be “ugly.”

MacLennan’s criticism of the unnatural and antiquated architecture of the city is expressed through a wealth of characters. Noel Fletcher, Daphne’s new British husband, calls Montreal a “mausoleum of a city” (298), comparing it to “Kensington – 1910” (299). Two of the characters who have a futuristic vision of the city dream of being architects to change the imitation architecture of the city. Kathleen’s lover envisions an indigenous architecture, one that reflects a Canadian reality:

Imagine a building made of grey granite reinforced with steel smelted out of the best Lake Superior ore. Imagine the building slim and light as a sword in front, and long and light in profile. Imagine it six hundred feet high, towering off that flat plain, with setbacks like decks for gods to walk on and survey the earth. [...] Imagine it [...] clean-angled, balanced, slender, light – mercilessly right. And new, by God ... like the country that made it! (147)

Dennis Morey’s vision highly contrasts the architecture of Montreal as it is: a “dull” and “dirty” imitation of British architecture (147). Fifteen years later, while confiding to Heather that he would have liked to be an architect, Paul echoes the same convictions: “every time I really look at a building in Montreal it makes me cringe. The only buildings in the whole country that suit it are the barns. On the whole, I’d rather be an architect than anything else” (355). Montreal architecture and, by extension, Canadian architecture, must cease to borrow from European

countries and produce indigenous forms. The architects, MacLennan implies, are as much the builders of Canadian nationalism as the writers, painters, or politicians.

In such a stilted city, the younger generation represented by Paul and Heather has no chance to thrive. Heather, though she comes from a wealthy family (or perhaps because she comes from a wealthy family), feels trapped in the rigidity of the city. She reflects that she lives “within the tight cage of activities considered fitting for women in the Square Mile” (303). Certainly, the constraints laid on Heather are in part due to her gender. But Kathleen, also a woman, has always considered herself free in the city: “maybe the respectable ones were not free, but for people like her there had been liberty of a kind” (137). Heather’s constraint stems in part from her status as a woman, but in larger part from her wealth and social standing: it is a result of the values of propriety held so dear by the members of the garrison she inhabits. Later, when reflecting on her marriage with Paul, Heather rages at “the cage which had surrounded her all her life” (420), a socio-economic cage transposed onto geographical space. Social norms constrain Heather, but the specific mention of the Square Mile implies that for Heather, the physical space that is the Square Mile itself is also a cage of sorts. As MacLennan points out, Heather belongs to the Methuens, “leaders in the Square Mile of Montreal society from the days of the old garrison” (128).²⁷ His mention of the “old garrison” anticipates his description of Montreal as an “English garrison enclosed in an overgrown French village” in a later essay and in *The Watch that Ends the Night*, and it suggests a closed-off territory, both spatial and mental (“Best-Loved” 37).²⁸ In MacLennan novel’s, the Square Mile enacts both the physical and the psychological confinement that Northrop Frye would look back on and call the garrison

²⁷ The Methuen family name may itself point to an English heritage, as Methuen was the name of a British publishing company founded in 1889 and still operating out of London (I. Stevenson 59).

²⁸ In *The Watch that Ends the Night*, MacLennan describes Montreal as “an English garrison encysted in an overgrown French village” (58).

mentality. The unwavering respect for Victorian values shared by Heather's family and friends and the physically limited space of the Square Mile conspire to oppress her.

Heather's vision of a marriage with Alan Farquhar underscores this sense of entrapment: "She would live in a house in Westmount until Alan's parents, by dying, enabled them to move into the gargoyle Farquhar mansion on the slope of the mountain above Sherbrooke Street. [...] Heather felt that the girl who married him would not be marrying a man at all, but a way of life" (304). The predestined development of a marriage with Alan is frightening to Heather, but underlying her fear is the conviction that once on the mountain, there is nowhere else to go. The mountain symbolizes the attainment of wealth and power, but it is also a finite space: one cannot go higher than its apex.²⁹ More plainly put, there is nowhere to go once you have made it to the top. In a way, then, the Square Mile and the mountain that epitomizes it are dead ends. Rich Anglophones live there in a state of barrenness and stagnation, only to decay eventually. This stagnation is evident towards the end of the novel, as all the members of the older generation die childless. General Methuen dies, leaving only Daphne and Noel, whose marriage itself is barren. Sir Rupert Irons dies childless. Huntley McQueen never marries.

For this reason, Heather understands that she can only have a career outside the city: "she would certainly have to get out of Montreal" (305). Montreal's representative function in *Two Solitudes* means that Heather must also leave the country in order to fulfil her potential. Accordingly, when Paul enrolls as a sailor, Heather moves to New York. Until she can effect this change, however, she constantly attempts to break the limits of her environment by driving around the city (to escape a suffocating evening at McQueen's) and to its periphery (to paint). It

²⁹ It may be tempting, considering the cross that caps Mount Royal, to equate the act of going up the mountain as a form of transcendence. The distinctive illuminated cross was only erected in 1924 by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, however. It was thus absent during the years when most of MacLennan's story takes place, and it is not mentioned in any of the sections that take place after 1924.

is during one of these drives that she meets Paul, while paying a spontaneous visit to her grandfather Yardley.

The critical consensus on Paul and Heather is that they represent French and English Canada respectively.³⁰ As such, they are unable to be together in the city. When the atmosphere becomes too charged following their first kiss, Paul and Heather head out to Dorval to be alone and swim (360). Paul and Heather marry in Halifax, but as they drive back, they are acutely conscious of the impossibility of being together in Montreal: “the city waited for them ominously, something that had tried to dominate them as long as they were in it, something neither had really escaped even now” (420). The unyielding city dominates them both: the streets and buildings reflect and reinforce the economic and racial divides that separate them. Discouraged, Heather thinks to herself, “If it were not for Montreal! If they could go away some place where nobody knew them!” (421). In *Two Solitudes*, the city is too familiar, the characters too well known. Ironically, they are denied the anonymity often associated with the city and only truly feel free to be themselves in the small villages they encounter on their way back.

In Gwethalyn Graham’s *Earth and High Heaven*, as in *Two Solitudes*, the frontier between Marc Reiser’s world and Erica Drake’s Westmount (a symbol of wealth and social standing similar to, though less prestigious than, Mount Royal) is not a permeable one. Like Heather in *Two Solitudes*, Erica feels suffocated by her family’s unflinching respect for the moral and social values that rule their neighbourhood – devotion to family and rejection of the Jewish “other.” She represents a focalizer through which Graham can criticize the garrison mentality of Westmounters who see the limited influx of Jewish immigrants as yet another menace to their “closely knit and beleaguered society” (Frye 342). Frustrated with Marc’s

³⁰ Linda Leith refers to critics such as George Woodcock, Alec Lucas, Hugo McPherson, D.O. Spettigue, Warren Stevenson, W.J. Keith, T.D. MacLulich, and Janice K. Keefer. Others include Peter Buitenhuis, who even concedes that for many characters, “the symbolic function takes over from the individual representation” (39).

hesitance to risk a relationship, Erica describes the social exclusion that takes place in Montreal in spatial terms: “we’ll stay on our side of the fence and you stay on yours, and that way, there won’t be any complications and nobody will get into trouble” (89). Literal fences and barriers abound in *Earth and High Heaven*, reinforcing the importance of social ones.

Morley Callaghan’s *The Loved and the Lost* establishes an opposition between the mountain, a symbol of the status quo, and the river, whose constant movement threatens that same status quo. The mountain acts as a “barrier” against the less desirable elements of the city. It is closely aligned with the character of Catherine Carver, a romantic and economic interest for McAlpine, whose very name signals his social ambition. Catherine lives on the mountain and all her encounters with Jim take place north of Sherbrooke. She considers Montreal “her town, at least the small part of it that was not French” (5). Catherine, like her father, ultimately embraces and maintains the moral and social values of the Square Mile garrison. Conversely, the character of Peggy Sanderson, with whom McAlpine falls in love, is closely associated with the river and its flow. Her constant movement threatens the racist, divisive status quo in the city because she disregards social barriers and is eager to be accepted by the Black community of Montreal. Her transgressions bring McAlpine to reflect that she “breaks up the pattern” (179). Both Callaghan’s and Graham’s novels pit a wealthy, Anglophone minority against the “other.” In both novels, as in *Two Solitudes*, however, the binary ultimately upstages any reconciliation.

Indeed, by the end of *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan’s own binary system has effectively turned against him. In creating such a dichotomized portrayal of Montreal’s social and geographical space, MacLennan allows divisions to take so much importance that he cannot bring his characters to transcend them and to thereby embody the unity he propounds. After being separated for over a month following their wedding, Paul and Heather are finally reunited,

but only for a short period of time and away from Montreal, in Kennebunkport, Maine. As the novel closes, the voice of King George VI officially announces the beginning of the Second World War and Paul has stated that he will enlist the next day. Paul and Heather will be separated yet again. If, like the numerous critics who have written about *Two Solitudes*, we accept that Heather and Paul symbolize English and French Canada, MacLennan's ending seems surprisingly bleak. This treatment of Heather and Paul may also be the main reason why the novel's readers have consistently attached more importance to the theme of division than to the message of unity. While the narrator is ultimately optimistic in his mention of the war as the means by which the country takes "the first irrevocable steps toward becoming herself" (470), the fate of the novel's characters seems to suggest otherwise. Paul and Heather's inability to be together may be read as one that does not eventually get solved by the war. In fact, in light of the historical events to which MacLennan was witness, the war might separate them more than ever. Considering the date of publication of MacLennan's novel, the conscription crisis of 1944 could not have been far from any reader's thoughts. MacLennan foreshadows this crisis through Paul's musings: "when the war starts [...] there may be quite a lot of dynamite lying around in the towns, and I don't look forward to the prospect of Marius lighting matches in the middle of it" (415). Paul and Heather cannot be together in Montreal in the 1930s, and it appears as though that may not change. If Montreal is a metaphor for Canada, MacLennan's appeal for a unified country appears self-contradictory.

I want to suggest that there is another way to read *Two Solitudes* in order to resolve this seeming contradiction. My discussion has taken for granted the critical consensus that Paul and Heather are symbols of the "two old races and religions" (4) and that their union thus symbolizes the future of Canada. As Peter Buitenhuis astutely points out, however, Paul is not a typical

French Canadian (36). Contrary to what Linda Leith asserts, he is not the only critic to do so. George Woodcock mentions that Paul “personifies racial reconciliation” (76), and Elspeth Cameron describes how Paul develops “toward a pan-Canadian point of view” (*Hugh* 176). Nevertheless, both Buitenhuis and Woodcock agree that the marriage of Paul and Heather represents the “marriage of two solitudes” (Woodcock 77). I believe that it is more fruitful to consider the character of Paul as representing the synthesis or merger of opposing forces and thus a possible unifying Canadian identity. MacLennan wrote of these forces in a note on an early draft of *Two Solitudes*:

As this book has developed, it has become clear to me that the essential struggle existent in all its parts is, was and will be the struggle on the part of certain ideas and holders of ideas for the soul and loyalty of Paul Tallard, to a lesser degree of emphasis for the souls and loyalties of the other elements. By corollary, the tension in the soul of Paul himself is caused by the warring of these claims to his loyalty, as well as to his own growing conception of a finer meaning of that word, which is loyalty to his own potential, and the harmonizing of that potential with the potential of the society in which he lives. (TS *Two Solitudes* n.p.)

Just as MacLennan appealed to a larger, overarching loyalty from Canadians towards the country itself rather than towards smaller groups in his article “Anniversary of an Idea,” so too does Paul ultimately achieve synthesis in demonstrating loyalty to the country at large rather than to the specific racial, religious, and linguistic groups that claim him. In so doing, according to MacLennan, Paul “develop[s] into a real Canadian symbol” (TS *Two Solitudes* n.p.).

MacLennan has established a binary system that ultimately overwhelms his novel and obscures his underlying message because the binary is “the most extreme form of difference

possible” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 19). As we have seen, MacLennan himself was criticized for his over-simplified depiction of French Canada, and this criticism stems at least in part from the opposition he so forcefully stresses in *Two Solitudes*: the binary system tends to confirm the dominance of one binary over its opposite in its suppression of “ambiguous or interstitial spaces between the opposed categories” (19). In Paul, MacLennan has attempted to create a character that unites opposites, but while Paul may embody the bilingual, bicultural Canada envisioned by MacLennan, the latter has put so much emphasis on social and spatial binaries in his novel that, in his evolution towards self-definition, Paul cannot avoid subsuming his French / Catholic / Québécois characteristics under a predominantly English / Protestant / Canadian identity. MacLennan’s totalizing tendency towards a homogenizing nationalism becomes more problematic here.

Yardley, whom MacLennan has positioned as one of the wisest characters in the novel, channels MacLennan’s voice in defining Paul as a Canadian symbol: “Paul is the new Canada” (344). Paul’s origins and upbringing are dual on each level: language, religion, and class. His character seems to allow for an overlapping of the binaries that MacLennan depicts at length in Montreal. The last two sections of *Two Solitudes* therefore read as a *Künstlerroman* in which Paul must establish a coherent sense of self in order to write his first Canadian novel. His ability to unify the opposites that constitute his person goes hand in hand with his ability to walk, like his mother, across the city. But while Kathleen transcends only the up-down binary, Paul succeeds in crossing and overcoming the east-west frontier as well. This reconciliation allows him to finally begin his novel and speak for what MacLennan sees as the emerging nation.

Paul’s mixed heritage is a product of the alliance between his Irish mother and his French father. He grows up in both languages, so that even though his youth is mostly spent speaking

French in Saint-Marc, Yardley exclaims, “the boy speaks better English than I do!” (17). While both Paul’s parents are Catholic, Athanase’s conflict with Father Beaubien motivates him to convert to Protestantism. Paul thus has a knowledge of both religions. Finally, Paul experiences both wealth and poverty. His childhood in Saint-Marc is spent in an “old seignior house” (13) with the wealth and luxury it supposes, but as he grows older, Paul relocates to lodgings that are reflective of the family’s dwindling finances. The same is true of his education: Athanase insists on sending Paul to Frobisher, a private English Protestant school, but after his father’s death, Paul must go to public school. He gets his degree from l’Université de Montréal, a French university, but later chooses Oxford over La Sorbonne for his Bachelor’s of literature. Clearly, MacLennan has taken pains to ensure that Paul truly is the “new” bilingual, bicultural Canada. But Paul must struggle to reconcile the “artificial pulling of the two races within him” (381). He explains to Heather, “It’s a tribal custom in Canada to be either English or French. But I’m neither one nor the other” (347). If, only a few days later, Paul aligns himself with the French minority by invoking the “feeling of the straight-jacket” that he ascribes to the French minority, he must admit to himself, some five years later, that despite his extensive travels, he is essentially unchanged: “a Canadian, half French and half English. [...] Through five years, that was what he had always been” (379).

Paul’s struggle to reconcile the conflicting aspects of his personality is effected through his walks in the city.³¹ He is the only character who is depicted as walking both up and down the mountain, and east and west of Bleury Street. The second of the four sections in MacLennan’s novel, a section that covers the years 1919-21, presents three characters who each walk through

³¹ In a 1945 article entitled “My Author Husband,” Dorothy Duncan writes that walking is a part of MacLennan’s work routine: “In New York, we spent the late hours of the afternoon at Carnegie Hall, at art shows, seeing friends, walking with the crowds on Fifth Avenue between Rockefeller Centre and the Plaza. When I was too busy to go with him he walked through the park, walked down to the Thirties and back, walked and walked and walked. He thinks easily on his feet and he finds himself stimulated by city streets” (38).

the city. The section opens with the military parade that celebrates the end of the war. We first follow Athanase, who, as previously discussed, is both socially and geographically trapped south of Sherbrooke Street and west of Bleury. His limited movement leads him to the realization of his political and economic failure. We then follow Marius, returned from the war, as he spends an evening with Emilie. Marius' bitterness against the English is reflected in his choice to stay east of Bleury.³² Although they eat downtown, the couple soon leave the restaurant to walk "slowly eastward along Sainte-Catherine Street" (258) and continue "drifting eastward into the French part of the city" (259). The walk cements his union with Emilie (he insists on meeting her father). The section closes with young Paul's walk. Without any extra-curricular activity offered by his new school, Paul must occupy himself. Walking the city is the way in which he learns most about the social processes that have shaped him and continue to do so. The trajectory of his walk is also highly symbolic in that it takes him up and down the mountain, and further into the city centre until he reaches the river. Every place thus represents a different aspect of his character.

Paul's walk as a young man introduces him to class consciousness. His meanderings take him all the way to the top of Mount Royal. On the way up the mountain, he encounters Heather but hides when she recognizes him because "he was ashamed without exactly knowing why" (285). Paul is becoming more and more conscious of his social position and yet, like his mother Kathleen, he takes the freedom to continue climbing until he reaches the top. From the top of the mountain, Paul can "see the whole city spread out beneath him. It looked magnificent in the sunshine merely because it was large and he could see so much of it" (286). While Paul's position atop Mount Royal provides him with the "totalizing" gaze of Michel de Certeau's

³² Lianne Moyes has also commented on the fact that Marius is never privy to a view from above, which underscores his lack of agency. Marius is never lifted "out of the city's grasp" (de Certeau 383) and, unlike Paul, he has only a limited understanding of the city.

“voyeur” (383), he, unlike Huntley McQueen, does not embrace this “scopic drive” (384) and rather seeks the more “elementary form” (384) of urban experience that is afforded by walking the city streets. His presence on Mount Royal should be the climax of Paul’s climb but, as Lianne Moyes writes, Paul’s reflections on the “changes in his social and economic circumstances are in many ways more crucial to the narrative than the scene on the summit” (“Writing” 49). As he ascends the mountain, Paul reminisces about his time at Frobisher and the years spent in Saint-Marc, two indicators of his past wealth. In a way, he goes up just as he is thinking of how his family has gone down, or sunken economically. Heather’s presence and her display of wealth teach him the meaning of the up/down divide, but that does not prevent him from continuing his walk towards the summit. While he is never quite lifted “out of the city’s grasp” (383), Paul understands the city better than anyone. He is able to read Montreal and understand its symbolic value for national questions because he combines the “ordinary practi[ce]” of the city with an ability to “see the whole” (de Certeau 383). In other words, he is able to “follow the thick and thins” of his urban text *and* “read it” (383).

Paul’s knowledge of the city goes hand in hand with his knowledge of himself; it also presages the kind of adult Paul will become. In a way, as Michel de Certeau explains, his act of walking is “to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (387). To Paul, then, walking is a “space of enunciation” (387) in which he appropriates a topographical system, engages in a spatial acting-out of the place, and forefronts relations among differentiated positions (387). By walking through the city, Paul enunciates, and in a sense constructs, his own identity. Thus, while he begins his walk on Mount Royal, a symbol of wealth and prestige that recalls his past years and allows him to reflect on his social status, he continues his walk down the mountain and into the heart of the city, where he literally follows in reverse

the path his father took before him, “down University Street to Beaver Hall Hill, down to Victoria Square” (287). Paul’s progress through the town foreshadows the way in which he will come to represent the new country. He will succeed where Athanase failed. His walk further south “down McGill to the harbour” (287), where he spends another hour wandering along the waterfront and fantasizing about the provenance of the ships, heralds his departure in 1934 to work as a deckhand. Finally, young Paul walks back downtown, where he is confronted with the American cultural influence, embodied in cigarettes, beer, and movies. But more importantly, amidst the “crowds speaking French and English around him” (287), he, Paul Tallard, feels comfortable. He understands both these languages, can read the “signs screaming bilingually in red, white and yellow” (287) and the street signs telling him “to keep to the right *gardez votre droite*” (287). This is MacLennan’s first true acknowledgement of a culturally heterogeneous city centre, and thus the first instance of a weakening in the spatial component of his binary system. As an individual, Paul will have to unify these languages and the social status attached to them; this synthesis will ensure that, as a young writer, Paul will be equipped with the right tools to “build the stage and props for his play, and write the play itself” (418).³³

Paul’s walk up and down the mountain parallels Marc Reiser’s own movement in Graham’s *Earth and High Heaven*, and throws into relief the latter’s lack of agency and corresponding difficulty in articulating a sense of self. Marc must climb the mountain to attend a cocktail at the Drake residence, and from their house, he can see the city below him:

³³ Lianne Moyes points out the juxtaposition of this scene with the following scene in which Heather drives up Westmount. While I generally agree with Moyes that Heather’s desire for mobility is also indicative of her role in the “new Canada,” I see a great difference in the fact that she drives instead of walking. Paul’s walks transcend barriers and help make up his identity; Heather’s drives, like her status as a member of the privileged class, give her access more easily to all these urban spaces and do not allow for the reflective process that walking engenders in Paul. Driving for Heather is an escape, a way to break out of the garrison; walking for Paul is a way to counter loneliness.

The whole city lay spread out below him, enchanting in the sunlight of a late afternoon in June, mile upon mile of flat grey roofs half hidden by the light, new green of the trees; a few scattered skyscrapers, beyond the skyscrapers the long straight lines of the grain elevators down by the harbour, further up to the right the Lachine Canal, and everywhere the grey spires of churches, monasteries, and convents. Somehow, even from here you could tell that Montreal was predominantly French, and Catholic. (6)

Graham's long sentence follows Marc's long, sweeping look at the city, and marks the pauses and transitions of Marc's gaze with its punctuation. The sentence seems to not want to end, just as Marc seems loath to turn away from the vista. From the Drake residence, he can see the city in its entirety, which allows him to "gain a certain perspective on the social, cultural, and religious differences that structure both the city and his relationship with Erica" (Moyes 51). Lianne Moyes argues that this vantage point is what allows him to fall in love with Erica; when he is later denied access to the Drake residence, he loses access to this vantage point and thus loses the perspective it gave him. While Moyes implies that Marc must now revert back to "walking" instead of "looking" (52), Graham's novel insists that Marc is in fact not entirely free to do either. Unlike Paul Tallard, Marc cannot walk the city because specific spaces are forbidden to him. The spatial exclusion to which Marc is victim goes hand in hand with his inability to accept that he is "born and bred in Canada, a Canadian of Jewish origin" (289).³⁴

³⁴ Marc is continually barred from entering private spaces. When he inquires about an apartment in Côte des Neiges, the janitor tells him that "they don't take Jews" (24). The first time Marc and Erica go to dinner, they drive all the way to the Back River only to notice "the sign on the gate saying 'Select Clientele'" (127). As Patrick Coleman points out, Charles Drake considers Marc unsuitable less for religious reasons than for social ones ("Comparison" 168). He does not want his daughter to inhabit the "no man's land" of mixed marriages (G. Graham 114). For Charles, the biggest obstacle to Marc and Erica's happiness is Marc's inability to have access to the places Charles holds dear: "I don't want a son-in-law who can't be put up at my club and who can't go with us to places where we've gone all our lives" (114). The most significant instance of spatial exclusion to which Marc is subjected, however, occurs when Charles refuses to let Marc enter the Drake residence. The action is symbolic, of course, because Marc and Erica will continue to meet elsewhere, but this act of spatial exclusion takes on a larger meaning

In Morley Callaghan's *The Loved and the Lost*, Jim McAlpine oscillates between Catherine and Peggy, between the mountain and the river, though he can never quite forget the one when he is with the other. (The view from the mountain allows him to see the city; the mountain itself is always visible from downtown.) Callaghan often describes McAlpine's movement through the city, by naming each street he takes, but this movement is, ironically, a very limited one. McAlpine does not walk the city as Paul Tallard does; rather, he seems stuck in a grid that covers five streets by four streets, from Crescent Street to the west (where Peggy lives) to Peel Street in the east (where his hotel is situated), and from Sherbrooke Street to the north (where the Carvers live) to Dorchester to the south (where his favourite bar lies). McAlpine repeatedly follows the same trajectory: up to see the Carvers, then down to see Peggy, and further down to drink with his friend Foley. The combination of a view from the top and the repeated act of walking allow McAlpine to successfully read the divided city.³⁵ His acute understanding of urban space brings him to view himself as a conciliator of sorts, one whose role it is both to defend Peggy from the resentment of those she insults when she chooses to ignore divisions and to pull her back from the margin. But McAlpine is unable to choose definitively between the wealth and social status of Catherine and the innocence and passion of Peggy, so that his limited back-and-forth movement is also representative of his inability to come to a decision.

In *Two Solitudes*, Paul upholds his tendency to walk throughout the years. As a young adult, he strolls along the streets of Athens, where he has come to write his novel. While he is

in the context of the novel and in the context of 1940s Montreal, where the exclusion of Jews from private spaces often extended into semi-public spaces like restaurants, clubs, and hotels.

³⁵ As Shobha points out, "no one is as aware of the boundaries as he; for he was shut out of the hedge separating him from the big Havelock house when he was a small boy" (201).

contemplating the city after a long walk, he reflects on his novel *Young Man of 1933*, and he is plagued by a sense of failure:

Below Paul lay the city street. Athens could be London, Rome, New York, Paris, Berlin or any other great city. This was where it had started. In the city. Any city. [...] In every city the same masses swarmed. Could any man write a novel about masses? A novel should concern people, not ideas, and yet people had become trivial. (389-90)

Paul's novel is a failure because in it, the masses have eclipsed the individuals, but of course, the main flaw of his novel, as he realizes later with the help of Heather, is that it is not set in Canada. Paul's mistake is that he considers all cities interchangeable, that he puts the idea of the city above the individuals that compose it. Tellingly, in his meditations, Paul comes to the conclusion that Athens could be London or New York, but not Montreal, because the latter is not yet a "great city." And yet, there is something about Montreal, about Canada by extension, something about the "essential Canadian clashes and values" that will present him with "a unique problem" because these clashes and values are unknown to the world (418). All cities are not interchangeable, Paul learns.

Paul is seemingly able to reconcile his opposing set of values on what is perhaps the most important walk he takes. Back in Montreal after his secret wedding to Heather, separated from her until he can find employment, Paul spends his time walking the streets (424). Only when he is walking back from a visit to Marius in the east of the city does he get the epiphany he needs to begin writing. The walk allows him to meditate in a more detached way on the straitjacket of French Canadians as a possible parallel to the "process he had witnessed in Europe" (428). Instead of going home, Paul "kept on walking till past midnight" (429). As he walks, he can finally shed his "past frustration" (429), epitomized in Marius. Thus able to envision things more

objectively, “from the outside” (429), Paul is more sensible to the fellowship uniting the night-workers in the coffee shop where he stops to eat:

he listened to the talk of night-workers around him. They were relaxed and easy with each other, French and English together, radio technicians, theatre operators, telegraphers, men who had walked up from the railroad stations. None of them seemed worried or strained. They were together because of the nature of their jobs, and because the rest of the city was asleep. (429)

Here also, MacLennan’s binary system is significantly undercut by a reality his novel has heretofore practically refused to acknowledge. What gives Paul the impetus to begin his novel is the realization that, although the city in which he lives is divided along clear lines, the individuals who compose it are not binary. They are not defined solely by race or religion, and they do not fall neatly into any one category like Janet Methuen or Marius but spread out across a wide spectrum of possibilities. Here, they are more united by class than they are divided by culture. Language may oppose these workers, but they are unified by other, more immediate factors: the “nature of their job” and its late-night schedule. The mutual exchange between them is underscored by the great emphasis MacLennan places on communication in enumerating their occupations: the nature of the work effected by radio operators, telegraph men, and railroad employees is, ultimately, to bridge a gap in space. So too do these workers, because they sit together in a central part of the city, “relaxed and easy with each other,” bridge the gap between French and English, east and west, and carve out a space for exchange.

This realization is what finally allows Paul to understand himself, his city, and his country well enough to begin writing. Out of all the divides his city and his society enact, Paul knows that he must “beat[] out a harmony” (431). The novel’s “material and symbols lay ready

in his subconscious” because they are a part of the dilemma that has shaped him. These symbols grow out of the city that surrounds him. The streets, the mountain, the churches and statues are intrinsic components of the city that has made him and that he, in turn, will (re)create. But they are also symbols of tensions and movements on a wider, national scale. Though Paul will not construct built forms as an architect, he will, like MacLennan, couch the action of his novel in a setting that also tells its own story. Having read and participated in the enunciation of himself in the city, of himself and the city, Paul, the “new Canada,” will now write the nation into the city, and the city as nation.

Paul’s final walk through the city is therefore a significant moment in the development of his character. Its significance is signalled by the fact that the entire passage is absent from an earlier version of the novel. In a draft tapuscrit preserved at McGill University, Paul does not come to a clear realization in the streets of Montreal. Instead, this early manuscript continues into the war, describing Daphne’s death in a London bombing, Heather’s pregnancy and reconciliation with her mother, and Paul’s injury at sea. When Paul regains consciousness in a London hospital, with his right foot amputated, he thinks back to the war ship aboard which he was stationed: “He was remembering every detail of the ship, and particularly of the crew. The whole country was represented aboard her” (TS *Two Solitudes* 599). MacLennan seems to have originally wanted the war to act as a synthesizing force, but eventually abandoned the idea, most likely owing to the second conscription crisis, which revealed that the war was once again a source of division between French and English. Instead, MacLennan emphasized Paul’s development as a writer and his status as a symbol of Canada, with his enlightening walk easing the tensions between his loyalties and encouraging an all-encompassing allegiance to his art and to his entire country, or to his art as a means of constructing his entire country.

MacLennan's interest and confidence in addressing national issues, shared by both Gwethalyn Graham and Morley Callaghan, is perhaps what most clearly differentiates 1940s and 1950s Quebec fiction written in English from its French counterpart. Gabrielle Roy's seminal *Bonheur d'occasion*, published the same year as *Two Solitudes*, features in the character of Emmanuel Létourneau a kind of French counterpart to Paul Tallard. Like Paul, Emmanuel is to be a Canadian soldier in the war. But Roy's novel is highly critical of the way in which war recuperates nationalism; though he has signed up voluntarily, Emmanuel refuses the patriotic impulse: "À cette heure d'autres soldats aussi forcenés chantent avec le même enthousiasme un hymne à leur patrie. En Allemagne, en Italie, en France, partout il chantent. Comme nous pourrions chanter : « O, Canada »...Non, non, se dit-il avec véhémence, je refuse de me mettre sur le plan patriotique et nationaliste. Suis-je le seul?" (339).

Emmanuel, like Paul, is often depicted walking through the city, though his meanderings are limited to a kind of back and forth between Saint-Henri and Westmount. But while they do underscore the difference between the opulence of Westmount and the poverty of Saint Henri, these walks are not a means of conciliating opposing forces or loyalties. Emmanuel walks in the hope of finding answers about war:

Il ne lui suffisait plus de connaître son motif personnel, il lui fallait aussi connaître la vérité fondamentale qui les guidait tous, la vérité première qui avait peut-être guidé les soldats de la dernière grande guerre, sans quoi leur départ n'avait point de sens, sans quoi c'était une répétition monstrueuse de la même erreur. (338)

The "malaise indéfinissable" Emmanuel increasingly feels when walking among the luxurious homes of Westmount is not rancour or disgust towards an ethnic or cultural group, or even towards affluence itself; it is an uneasiness as to the impact of war on the individual: "On voulait

bien là-haut du don de lui-même, mais non pas de son doute, de ses indécisions, de son problème angoissant” (286-87).

Ultimately, Emmanuel glimpses the awful truth: “aucun d’eux n’allait faire la guerre dans un même but” (339). There is no underlying truth to justify the enrolment of so many men, and, Roy suggests, national pride, though it may be invoked, is little more than a tool to stimulate that enrolment. Thus Roy is wary of the kind of nationalism that convinces Paul Tallard to enrol as soon as the war is declared. Her characters aim to define themselves, not so much as Canadians, not even necessarily as French Canadians, but as individuals first, so that we might think of them as grappling with questions of morality rather than identity.³⁶ In this sense, *Bonheur d’occasion* explores the tension within the individual rather than between individuals.

Although Paul Tallard may seem to achieve an individual reconciliation that is symbolic of a national one, his newfound sense of self, like his union with Heather, causes problems for the reader of *Two Solitudes*. Instead of resulting in a hybrid identity that highlights the inextricability and mutual influence of Paul’s seemingly opposing characteristics, this reconciliation is achieved under the larger idea of “Canadian identity,” and its impulse towards synthesis inevitably implies cultural hierarchy. Indeed, as the reader has been encouraged to seek out and identify antinomies throughout the novel, it is difficult to resist noting the blatant and inevitable hierarchy that constitutes Paul’s identity. Paul may feel a spirit of comradeship with the French Canadians in Montreal, but he must allow his French-Canadian characteristics (language, primarily) to be subjugated in order to function in the life he has chosen. While his non-religious stance allows him to avoid having to choose between Catholicism and

³⁶ Although Florentine might be read as an allegorical figure for French Canada – abandoned by one lover (France) and forced into another union for survival – the depth and complexity of her character make her more than a stand-in for Quebec.

Protestantism,³⁷ Paul must live his life predominantly in English: he speaks English with Heather, he will necessarily communicate in English as a member of the navy in the upcoming war, and there is no indication that his novel will be written in any other language than English.³⁸ In fact, a significant passage of a draft of *Two Solitudes*, which was subsequently cut in the final version, explicitly states that Paul will write in English. When Heather asks him whether he will write in French or English, Paul answers, “I’ve tried both, and it’s typical of the whole set-up that I felt a traitor when I first decided for English. Actually, I think I write better English than French” (TS *Two Solitudes* n.p.). We can only assume that by voluntarily avoiding any reference to Paul’s language of choice in the final version of *Two Solitudes*, MacLennan wanted to avoid privileging one solitude over the other.

On the symbolic level, Paul Tallard represents Hugh MacLennan’s attempt and failure at drawing the outlines of a Canadian identity based on bilingualism and biculturalism; the opposition between Paul’s opposing characteristics, which is predicated on the absence of interaction, is, like the division between French and English in Montreal, underscored by MacLennan’s static treatment of urban space. But on the formal level, MacLennan’s novel itself is ill-equipped to convey the kind of synthesis it attempts to encourage; in other words, its textual space is also notably static. The entire novel, including all dialogue between French Canadians, is written in English. There is only rarely mention of characters speaking French, and we must simply accept, as MacLennan states in his foreword, that “some of the characters in the book are presumed to speak only English, others only French, while many are bilingual” (n.p.). Rather than challenging the reader to “revolutionize the world by revolutionizing his perceptual

³⁷ I am grateful to Patrick Coleman for remarking that, because there was no civil marriage in Quebec at that time, Paul and Heather’s civil marriage, celebrated in Nova Scotia, is a convenient way to avoid the issue of Paul’s religious and, by extension, ethnic identification.

³⁸ The first draft of his novel, edited by Heather, is in English.

experience of it” (Heidenreich 14), MacLennan’s novel, like most English-Canadian novels of its time, essentially seeks to “preserve the familiar world by the alteration of the attitudes and behaviours which are seen to be responsible for its deficiencies” (14).

The textual space of MacLennan’s novel thus only accommodates English, though it acknowledges that French is widely spoken among its characters. This lack of interaction between languages is paralleled by a bi-partite structure that relies on the clear separation between the epic mode and the realist mode, and the absence of interrelation between them. While earlier critics tend to consider that both halves of *Two Solitudes* function in the epic mode,³⁹ more recent critics such as Linda Leith have noted that the last two sections of *Two Solitudes* constitute a *Bildungsroman*. Leith argues that the central weakness of the novel is its move from an epic narrative to a *Bildungsroman* (*Introducing* 29), from heroic narrative to contemporary realism (45). This kind of structure assumes textual space as a container in which neatly separated sections of texts, functioning in different modes, take place.

Finally, despite its concerns towards the possibility of a budding French-Canadian nationalism, as expressed through the character of Marius, the confident voice of *Two Solitudes* with its omniscient narration, one shared by both Graham and Callaghan, signals the consolidation of an Anglophone elite in Montreal even as it confidently attempts to encompass the whole of Canada. This confidence is also evidenced by MacLennan’s consistent use of the simple past, a tense which, in this case, highlights the immovable nature of a story that has already come to pass and that therefore allows no place for uncertainty or doubt. Like his friend F.R. Scott, in whom Sherry Simon sees a perfect congruence between political ideals and

³⁹ For Peter Buitenhuis, the first half of the novel aligns the conflict between Athanase and Father Beaubien with the central plot of *Antigone* (33) and the second half draws a parallel between Paul and Telemachus from the *Odyssey*. Robert Cockburn identifies Yardley as “the chorus of the tragedy” (58). George Woodcock argues that “the great unifying myth of [MacLennan’s] novels was the *Odyssey* translated into terms of modern life” (52).

translating strategies, Hugh MacLennan aligns his treatment of textual space with his political ideals. Simon argues that Scott's "method of translation (literalism) and its aim (revealing the other as the other), are consistent with his vision of symmetrical differences in Canadian bilingualism and biculturalism. As such, they aim at maintaining difference in a profoundly divided city" (Simon 18). So too does MacLennan's emphasis on the symmetrical difference of the "two ventricles" inscribe and reassert Montreal as a divided city and Canada as a divided country. Unsurprisingly, MacLennan, like Scott, finished his life at odds with Quebec because he refused the nationalist impulse of the 1960s and 1970s and the narrower conception of Anglo-Quebec that emerged in those years.

While *Two Solitudes*, like many English-Montreal novels of the time, was a popular and critical success when it was published, it has since suffered from a significant decrease in critical interest.⁴⁰ Many books similar to *Two Solitudes* and published during the same years suffered a similar fate, including Gwethalyn Graham's *Earth and High Heaven* (1944), which was out of print from 1967 until 2003, when Cormorant Books pulled it out of obscurity. In using a highly symbolic setting to explore a trope that appealed to many (the star-crossed lovers from different cultural backgrounds), these books articulated a desire to "correct a given social reality by pointing out its weaknesses as a first step in eliminating them" (Heidenreich 14). But the nature of their narrative structure only reasserts the superiority of their own cultural group and is likely one of the main reasons why they have fallen from a canon that prefers more nuanced, deconstructive approaches. While *Two Solitudes* condemns the attitudes and behaviours of characters such as Huntley McQueen and Janet Methuen, its "traditional narrative pattern" (4) reasserts the status quo. By letting the focus on division take over the narrative and his novel,

⁴⁰ The great majority of monographs on MacLennan date back to the 1970s. The two last studies to address *Two Solitudes* were published in 1990 and 1994.

MacLennan not only perpetuates the conception of Montreal as a city of binaries, but also implicitly reaffirms the superiority of one binary element over the other despite his open criticism of the narrow mentality of the inhabitants of the Golden Square Mile.

Nevertheless, and despite its fall from the canon, MacLennan's novel has exerted a significant influence, although its repercussions were not those MacLennan himself had planned or imagined. In many ways, the novel has come to represent the exact opposite of what MacLennan intended. While MacLennan's ideas about national unity were at the forefront of his project, the great majority of critics misread the implications of the title by concentrating "on the portrayal of the French-English split itself" rather than on the reconciliation it expounded (Cameron, *Hugh* 189). In "Two Solitudes: Thirty-three years Later," MacLennan explains that his novel prompted one reader to claim, in a letter sent shortly after the election of the Parti Québécois in 1976, that "When the true history of Canada is written, you will be named as the Father of Separation. Everything started from that book you called *Two Solitudes*" (290). MacLennan's plea for unity has, time and again, reasserted difference and division.

Chapter II

Montreal, Open City: Scott Symons's *Place d'Armes*

Introduction

Like Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, Scott Symons's *Place d'Armes*,⁴¹ published in 1967 as a "dissonant and dissident centennial gift to Canada from its author" (Elson "Introduction" n.p.), is about identity. Though Symons's work does raise questions about sexual identity, *Place d'Armes* is concerned, at the core, with questions of national identity, a national identity which Symons perceived as in crisis on the eve of Centennial and Expo 67. Symons's "novel" is unlike any earlier Montreal novel in English,⁴² and his work explicitly expresses the desire to dissociate itself from the tradition of English fiction about Montreal represented most prominently by Hugh MacLennan. In so doing, it puts forth a different kind of nationhood while remaining convinced of the possibility and desirability of a Canadian identity. While MacLennan had portrayed Paul Tallard as the future of Canada in light of his attempts to synthesize opposing aspects of his character, Symons denies the spirit behind the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963) and rather stresses the need to resist unity and homogeneity, and to accept that in difference we may also find aspects or moments of similarity that suggest a relation between apparently contradictory beliefs or ideas. This is what Symons considered his "plea for a relevant Canadian civilization" (qtd in King 184).

The very first line of *Place d'Armes*, in which Symons's protagonist Hugh Anderson⁴³ attempts to write a tourist blurb of La Place d'Armes, harks back almost mockingly to

⁴¹ The true title of the book is in fact *Combat Journal for Place d'Armes: A Personal Narrative by Scott Symons*, but I will refer to it as *Place d'Armes* for the sake of concision.

⁴² The only exception here is Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, published in 1966, which will be discussed further in the chapter.

⁴³ While the very name of Symons's protagonist is most likely a conscious allusion to himself, Symons's full name being Hugh Brennan Scott Symons, it is also tempting to see it as a mocking tribute to Hugh MacLennan in light of the novel's several allusions to *Two Solitudes*.

MacLennan's opening description of Montreal by using the same central metaphor: "La Place d'Armes is the heart of Montreal, metropolis of Canada" (1). After a flat and rather insipid description, the passage culminates in an expression of the same type of metaphor as the one adopted in MacLennan's novel: "La Place d'Armes – heart of Montreal, old and new. La Place d'Armes – heart of Canada!" (2). Hugh soon abandons his sketch because it "revulse[s] him" (2). It is clear from the onset, then, that Symons's character aims not to describe Montreal and, more specifically, La Place d'Armes, from the same omniscient and all-powerful point of view as MacLennan, a point of view that dissociates the reader from the immediacy of experience. Yet there is some sense of continuity, here. Symons does not entirely disavow MacLennan's conviction that there is something very special about Montreal: his protagonist Hugh Anderson leaves wife and child in Toronto, sabotages a promising career in editing, and returns to Montreal in the hope of writing a "short novel on La Place d'Armes in Montreal" in which "La Place, of course, would be the hero" (3). To this protagonist, Montreal and "La Place" are important not only because they represent "the heart of Canada" but also because "La Place" is "a centre of life and vitality in the metropolis" (3), in other words, because it *has* a heart. Montreal emerges as a city which, more than Toronto, the "fastest growing city in North America," has "a heart, or a soul, or something" (3). In this sense, Symons himself echoes MacLennan's belief that Montreal (and La Place d'Armes within it) is somehow the most appropriate setting to tackle questions of national identity.

Symons's project resonates more closely with MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* than Symons is ready to admit. While Symons puts forth the idea of an inverted biculturalism in that it seeks not unity and synthesis but rather a dialectical relation between two vital cultures, it does not altogether avoid a binarized vision of Canadian society. For Symons, as for MacLennan, Canada

is a bicultural rather than a multicultural country. As Hugh Anderson attempts to describe his personal and literary project to a friend, the latter exclaims that it is “the opposite of the famous *Two Solitudes*” (46), to which Hugh answers, “Yes – everything I am doing disproves the Two Solitudes... but that’s only incidental. After all, any damned fool can disprove an academic thesis” (46). And yet, while Hugh is writing against the realist tradition and “the restrictions of the Novel itself” (4), and while he alleges to be disproving MacLennan’s “thesis,” he demonstrates to what extent he too has misread *Two Solitudes* and misunderstood its central message, for Hugh Anderson’s aim is in fact quite similar to MacLennan’s. In his actions, as well as in his journal, Hugh Anderson, like MacLennan, draws the outline of what he envisions as the ideal Canadian, a prototype that emerges from his idea of the “modern man” (143). This ideal Canadian, of course, is a far cry from the Canadian MacLennan imagined: he is sensually and sexually open. This openness resists the synthesis of opposing entities that characterizes Paul Tallard; it rather admits contradiction and lets opposites speak back to one another, taking for granted that one cannot exist without the other, that their difference and ultimately irreconcilable nature is what allows them to remain dynamic.⁴⁴ Implicit in Symons’s work, however, is the idea that this ideal Canadian can only develop in a place like Montreal, where opposing races, religions, and languages are interrelated and in constant interaction. Symons’s Montreal is no longer a city of binaries, as in *Two Solitudes*; it is a city of openness in which the dynamism of urban space parallels the dynamism of English-French relations. This emphasis on movement is, in turn, thrown into relief by Symons’s dynamic use of the novel’s textual space.

⁴⁴ In fact, Symons’s conception of Canadian nationalism is both more and less in line with Rainer Maria Rilke’s epigram to MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes* than MacLennan’s own novel. Indeed, Symons’s refusal of synthesis between French and English Canada echoes Rilke’s own conviction that “love cannot consist in mutual assimilation or in the subordination of one party to the other,” but his insistence on interaction and contact seems to contradict Rilke’s insistence on the “mutual respect and protection of each other’s inalienable identity and solitude” (Graff, letter to HM June 7, 1944).

Hugh's comment on Montreal as the heart of Canada is also indicative of his idealization of French Canada as somehow more authentic, an idealization that becomes more apparent as Symons's novel develops and Hugh elaborates on the French-Canadian "gift of life" (48), which comes from the ability to think at the end of one's fingertips (203). That Hugh, like Symons himself, embraces "the French-Canadian Revolution" (47), though it might appear antithetical to his own conception of Canadian nationalism, is thus not a contradiction of his national ideal. It resonates with his own desire for a form of authenticity that places sensuality over reason and that informs both his personal and his political vision. Because it is appealed to as an influence on English Canada, French Canada's authenticity is therefore envisioned as an antidote against the "dissolving" (76) liberalism of the Canadian government, and, ironically, the remedy for Canadian nationalism itself.

Symons's own identification with French Canada, a kind of self-marginalization, may also be seen as the novelist's desire for authenticity. This concern with authenticity (and its association with marginality or alienation) is inscribed in the larger socio-historical context of the North American counter culture, but it appears to find a particular form of expression in Montreal for Symons because it co-opts what Frantz Fanon describes as the "emergence of a new energy in the cultural sphere," one that is "linked to the maturing of the national consciousness" (176) and thus inherent to the Quebec nationalist sentiment so actively sought out and promoted by Symons.

This chapter will argue that in its exploration of what a renewed Canadian nationalism might be, and what it might mean to be a "modern" Canadian, Symons's work deliberately inscribes itself against the compulsion towards national synthesis exhibited by a previous generation of English-Canadian writers and expressed through the establishment of a binary

system mapped onto the metaphorical urban landscape of Montreal. Symons's appeal to an "openness" that lets opposites interact and enter into dialogue (both on a personal and on a national level) is directly related to his privileging sensuality over reason, a sensuality designated as a French-Canadian characteristic and associated with Quebec nationalism more specifically. This personal and national "openness" is mirrored by the "openness" of form and language in his novel, as well as by his representation of urban space, specifically La Place d'Armes in Old Montreal, with which Hugh can only interact when he himself is "open" (55).

In accordance with this ideology, Symons abandons the rigid realist mode and the traditional form of the novel in favour of a layered and multivocal structure whose movement between fiction and reality is constant and never quite settled. *Place d'Armes* also destabilizes any clear sense of unbridgeable opposition between English and French through its linguistic playfulness. In its use of French syntax to express English ideas, it is almost (though not quite) a bilingual book. Finally, *Place d'Armes* depicts a literal, organic relationship between the individual and the city. Hugh's ideas about identity and nationalism are bound up in his relationship to the urban space he so affectionately calls "La Place" (*Place* 3). His convictions are not mapped onto features of urban space as with MacLennan; rather, Hugh's openness is embodied in his own interactions with streets, buildings, and statues. Thus, his endeavour not only to describe but to become the modern man, and thus the New Canadian, is developed through what amounts to a dialectical relationship between himself and the elements that compose La Place d'Armes. The more he is able to "site" (27), "eyesite" (68), or "insite" (111) La Place, to occupy it even as it occupies him, the closer he comes to becoming the modern man. In order to be "open" to La Place, however, Hugh must develop his sensibility. This he accomplishes by cultivating the ambiguity he associates with same-sex desire; his relationship

with young male prostitutes not only parallels but also enhances his relationship to La Place. Symons's and Hugh's interest in and identification with the socio-political transformations of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the rapidly shifting cityscape of Montreal brought about by mayor Drapeau's urban renewal movement enact both a form of self-marginalization and an appropriation of the dynamism of Montreal in its gathering energy for change. By encouraging seemingly contradicting forms and modes to coexist and to enter into dialogue with one another without promoting homogeneity or hierarchical subordination, Symons's avant-garde work demonstrates his desire to participate in the "pulse of a fresh stimulus" (Fanon 176) inextricable from the rising Quebec national consciousness. His experimentalism may be read as a proxy for participation in the "French-Canadian Revolution," quiet though the latter may be. The openness of his form parallels the openness of his proposed Canadian ideal, which, if he is able to emulate it, allows him to exchange with La Place. Hugh's relationship with an urban space that is both anthropomorphized and sexualized thus becomes an indicator of how close he is to attaining this ideal.

Openness and Urban Space

The definition of "openness" I am working with here comes from Symons himself, who equates it with having "insite," that is, the ability of the individual to "eat the site till it is inside you, then you are inside it, and your relationship is no longer one of juxtaposition...but an unending series of internalities" (*Place* 68). Symons's definition applies to the individual and the urban space, implying a mutual exchange that is dialectical in nature. I use the word "dialectical" here not in the Hegelian sense that leads to synthesis, but as a term that designates the type of inextricability and mutual influence best understood through the theory of urban geographer David Harvey. In his 1997 essay "Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form," Harvey

delineates the theoretical framework of his work by asking one seemingly simple question: “what is the relationship between process and form?” (20). Harvey urges his readers to value processes over things and to reconsider the categories we inevitably turn to in describing the world. He argues that “we should focus on processes rather than things and we should think of things as products of processes” (21). Things do not simply exist; they precipitate out of processes. But, “things, once constituted, have the habit of affecting the very processes which constitute them” (21). In this dialectical relationship, and more concretely in the field of urban studies, the things (such as the city’s built environment and social networks) that are products of social processes (specifically, the urbanizing process) ultimately affect the way in which these social processes can function.

Harvey’s approach helps us understand that the city is not simply a pre-existing thing (or a static container, as in Hugh MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes*); nor does it simply occur in a given time and space. Instead of envisioning time and space as absolute, then, Harvey posits a relational understanding of the two. Thus, in an ongoing dialectical relationship, urban space is constituted by social processes but is in turn constitutive of these same processes. According to Harvey, then, we must

abandon the view of the urban as simply a site or a container of social action in favour of the idea that it is, in itself, a set of conflictual heterogeneous processes which are producing spatio-temporalities as well as producing things, structures and permanencies in ways which constrain the nature of the social process. Social processes, in giving rise to things, create the things which then enhance the nature of those particular social processes. (23)

Processes produce certain things at certain times and places, but these things in turn influence subsequent processes. The result is a conceptualization of the city as a “palimpsest,” a series of layers, of “different historical moments all superimposed upon each other” all of which interact with one another and influence contemporary processes in different ways (22). This relational understanding of space is what informs Scott Symons’s *Place d’Armes*. With its emphasis on flux and movement, the book in itself privileges process over thing. Symons does not describe the city as a mere backdrop against which his character evolves and in which his protagonist seeks to experience immanence. Rather, through Hugh’s attempt to “insite” La Place (to be “in it” as it is “in him”), his character is in constant interaction with La Place itself, with the buildings, rituals, and social relations that constitute it (and are constituted by it). Hugh’s growing ability to enter into a dialectical relationship with La Place is an indicator of how close he is to achieving his goal of becoming the modern man or the ideal Canadian; because La Place, a palimpsest, exists as the result of conflicting spatio-temporalities (the buildings which precipitated out of the French and English regime stand alongside each other, in dialogue but not unified), Hugh’s communion with La Place is an indicator of how open he is; openness and the status of modern man go hand in hand because they both presuppose a tolerance of apparently contradictory beliefs and a preference for process and movement.

In promoting this form of openness, Symons demonstrates his clear preference for process-oriented thought, one that insists on the importance of flux and movement. As Frederic Jameson explains, in process-oriented thought, “it is the relationships that come first; while in the doctrine of the binary opposition, concepts are necessarily defined against each other” (*Valences* 17). Thus we may refer to Symons’s approach as dialectical in the sense that it does not consider that a particular opposition (French Canadian/ English Canadian) can be “‘solved’ by a mere

identification of the unity of such opposites” (24) (for example, identifying both as Canadian, as in *Two Solitudes*). His approach resists the urge to conflate or collapse antinomies into a coherent whole even as it “strongly emphasizes the interrelationship of the two phenomena” (25). As Jameson explains, the structuralist use of binary is a dead end, “for the structuralist perspective always grasps contradiction in the form of the antinomy: that is to say, a logical impasse in which thought is paralyzed and can move neither forward nor back, in which an absolute structural limit is reached, in either thought or reality” (43). For Jameson, as for Symons, contradiction is “not that which blocks and suspends movement but within which movement itself takes place” (43). In Symons’s work, openness is a condition that allows for dialectical thinking as a “movement” or “process” that implies a relationship between opposing entities, but that precludes synthesis.

Openness, then, is a state of being that allows the individual to let contradictions co-exist and, more importantly, interact with one another without attempting to synthesize, conflate, or homogenize them, and without subordinating one to the other.⁴⁵ Accordingly, in my discussion of the form and structure of *Place d’Armes*, I use the term as a synonym for multiplicity of genre and layering of fiction and non-fiction, while in the section on language, “openness” designates the co-existence and exchange between French and English in Symons’s novel, imperfect though it may be. Symons’s uses of form, structure, and language thus reveal his treatment of textual space as dynamic. Being open, as I have mentioned, is necessary in the development of Hugh’s relationship with La Place and is cultivated primarily through homosexual encounters with young male Québécois prostitutes, but it is also closely linked to his vision of Canadian identity.

⁴⁵ In a way, the openness celebrated by Symons also bears resemblance to John Keats’s description of negative capability, which, he explains, is exhibited “when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (277). It is reason that aims at synthesis and certainty; inversely, accepting uncertainty implies receptiveness and openness.

As a discussion of Symons's journalistic work before writing *Place d'Armes* will bring to light, the kind of "openness" cultivated by Hugh in Symons's novel is the same as Symons's desire for a strong English- and French-Canadian identity to flourish both against and in dialogue with one another. We might thus think of Symons's nationalist stance as a kind of "hyphenated thinking," by which I mean a Canadian nationalism that valorizes two strong cultures simultaneously without attempting, like Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* or John Diefenbaker's notion of "One Canada," to amalgamate them under the all-encompassing term "Canadian."⁴⁶ The hyphen presupposes some kind of connection or interrelation between two words or entities (in this case, cultures), all the while preserving a sense of distinction between the two concepts.

Scott Symons

When Scott Symons left his wife and child in Toronto and came to Montreal for three weeks in order to write *Place d'Armes*, he was in fact returning to a city he knew fairly well. Symons had lived in Montreal with his wife and newborn son for a year in 1960-61. After a brief stint in Quebec City working at *The Chronicle Telegraph* in 1958-59, and back from a year in Paris studying French literature and grammar at the Sorbonne (both endeavours being "a conscious attempt to probe more deeply into the French portion of his Canadian heritage" [Taylor 201]), Symons was hired by Jean-Louis Gagnon, the editor of *La Presse*, as a reporter and columnist for the newspaper. Symons was by then fully convinced that what he perceived as the neo-liberal decadence of English Canada could somehow be solved by a better understanding of French Canada, as if the ferment of the Quiet Revolution and developing national

⁴⁶ Diefenbaker's conception of "One Canada" implies the subjugation of any ethnic affiliation to one homogeneous national identity. He once commented, "One Canada, one nation, my Canada, your Canada, cannot be a hyphenated Canada" (202). Diefenbaker's synthesizing ideal, his promotion of a singular Canadian identity, is what Symons is writing against. Yet the rhetoric of hyphenated identities, which has gained traction since the Multicultural Act of 1988, throws into relief the extent to which an approach like Symons's fails to account for any othertype of Canadian than French Canadian or English Canadian (that is, WASP). R. L. Gabrielle Nishiguchi writes that "compressed within the ubiquitous hyphen – that tiny splash of ink uniting words but distancing worlds – lies the unhappy legacy of the 'other' Canadian" (112).

consciousness he sensed in the province could help stimulate and renew English-Canadian nationalism. His interest in French Canada was complete and profound; counter-intuitively, perhaps, it did not seem to threaten his idea of Canadian nationalism at all.

This was a prolific year for Symons: he attended a multitude of literary events and met everyone who was anyone in French Canada (including poets and writers Jacques Godbout, Naim Kattan, Hubert Aquin, lawyer and politician Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, and journalist André Laurendeau, who allegedly offered him a job at *Le Devoir* [Murphy 101; Symons "Notes" 311]). Symons represented an oddity for French Canadians. He spoke an impeccable French, was genuinely interested in French-Canadian culture though he candidly shared his political and religious convictions (Tory and Protestant, respectively), and made such surprising claims as "Je suis Canadien français de droit," "Être Canadien français je serais séparatiste," and "Si les Anglo-Canadiens ne veulent pas tenir compte de l'existence des Canadiens français, il faudra proclamer la république" (qtd in Deschamps 56). His interest in the development of French-Canadian arts and politics was matched only by his zeal in infiltrating the predominant social and artistic spheres and in getting acquainted with the leading thinkers of the time. He considered himself a participatory witness of what was happening in the province, and in Montreal more specifically. Writer Jacques Godbout remembers that "C'était un homme qui circulait beaucoup. Il se présentait comme le digne délégué de Toronto" (qtd in Murphy 101).

In his attempt to witness first hand the cultural and intellectual ferment of Montreal, Symons attended the March 1961 meeting of L'Action Socialiste pour l'Indépendance du Québec (ASIQ), a group of writers and intellectuals dedicated to the promotion of the independence of Quebec and left-wing ideology. He subsequently published an article entitled "Le Canada vu par un jeune Canadien anglais" in its literary organ, *La Revue socialiste*. The

article was a transcription of a speech he made to the “Cercle juif de langue française” in January 1961. In this article, we can already see the ideas that will find expression in *Place d’Armes*. Symons expresses his conviction that English Canada has abandoned its royalist tradition in favour of a uniform, homogeneous conception of the nation that is detrimental to both English and French Canada as it now subjects both peoples to cultural assimilation by the United States. Symons first communicates his Tory convictions: “L’érosion constante de tous les signes extérieurs de la présence de la Couronne au Canada, je la vois comme une érosion de ma propre culture, comme une attaque contre ma façon de prendre conscience du monde qui m’entoure” (“Le Canada” 37). The disappearance of a British English-Canadian culture, he continues, is as detrimental to French Canada as it is to English Canada.

Thus Symons puts forth his conviction that the only Canadian nationalism that can save the country from the risk of assimilation to the United States is necessarily one that encourages and valorizes two separate and distinct traditions:

Finale­ment, le Cana­dien anglais est, pour ainsi dire, “nationalisé”: il n’est rien que Cana­dien. Il ne voit pas le Canada comme dialogue entre deux traditions auto­nomes, mais plutôt comme monolithe. Il se dit, à son insu, “j’ai sacrifié ma tradition; pourvu que le Cana­dien français en fasse autant. Je ne suis plus Britan­nique ... et quel­que jour, je vais même sacrifier ma Reine; mais le Cana­dien français doit lui aussi sacrifier sa tradition ... et il parlera anglais. Nous sommes des Cana­diens sans trait-d’union.” Ainsi l’enterrement de la tradition des Cana­diens anglais n’a fait qu’empirer la situation des Cana­diens français, en même temps qu’il a aboli la raison d’être d’un Canada indé­pendant des États-Unis. Et je peux, dans le même sens, dire que nous devons

maintenant ressusciter quelque peu ces mêmes préjugés, ces mêmes croyances, ces mêmes traditions. Ou périr. (38)

English Canadians are so bitter at the loss of their Tory tradition, Symons argues, that they cannot understand why French Canadians fight so vehemently to keep theirs. But in this spirit of sacrifice, both nations ultimately negate any reason for a country separate and distinct from the United States. Only a country that is defined by its two autonomous traditions and that holds on to its hyphens can distinguish itself from the cultural hegemony of a strong southern neighbouring nation. In this sense, Symons's speech clearly expresses his resistance to uniformity and homogeneity and foreshadows the dialectical exchange he promotes in *Place d'Armes*.

The convictions Symons expresses here prefigure his description of the protagonist Hugh Anderson in *Place d'Armes*, a self-proclaimed "tory radical" who cherishes his "Toryism" as the bedrock of his culture but who votes for the N.D.P. (14). In light of this apparent contradiction, Symons exemplifies the values of the "Red Tory," a term coined by Gad Horowitz to describe George Grant and which became a popular way of referring to "a conservative tradition that favoured an interventionist state and rejected the economic continentalism of the Liberal party" (Potter xxxi). George Grant's lament, as expressed in his seminal work, *Lament for a Nation* (1965), is, ultimately, for the loss of tradition, the "impossibility of conservatism" (67), and the destruction of Great Britain as "an alternative pull in Canadian life" (71). Grant's central claim is that, because it tends towards universalism through the ever-expanding capitalism it champions, "liberalism is the ideological means whereby indigenous cultures are homogenized" (79). Thus, he argues, the liberal ideology towards which Canada leans, one that places the freedom of the individual above the public good, and which is a departure from the "greater sense of order and

restraint” (69) of Canadian Loyalists, perforce destines it to continentalism, that is, annexation by the “freedom-loving republicanism” (69) of the United States. Already, he writes, Canada has become, both socially and economically, a “branch-plant satellite” of the United States.

In his articles as well as in his first novel, Symons also laments the disappearance of a strong English cultural tradition and is wary of Quebec’s turn away from the Church. He shares Grant’s disregard for liberalism and appeals to a renewed sense of Tory values for English Canadians, as well as to the Catholic Church as a custodian of French-Canadian culture. In this sense, Symons can be identified as a conservative in the old sense of the term, one who believes in the value of tradition and who sees capitalism as “the great solvent of all tradition in the modern era” (Grant 46). Like Grant, Symons believes that what English and French Canadians have in common is that they both recognize that they can “only be preserved outside the United States of America” (Grant 67).

Symons’s approach was regarded with a degree of amusement and disbelief by the French Canadians with whom he so insistently consorted. In the same issue of *La Revue socialiste* that published Symons’s speech, the editor stressed that the ASIQ membership had appreciated his “franchise” and “bonne volonté” (Roy n.p.), but an article signed Marcel Deschamps singles him out as an outsider come to observe the aboriginals, one who expects to be able to juggle two irreconcilable things: “vous êtes un dialecticien et c’est tout à votre honneur. Votre aventure surréaliste au pays des indépendantistes est une pièce de collection pour le moment” (56). Deschamps challenges Symons to make good use of the data he has collected while in Montreal, a challenge Symons would take on four years later in writing *Place d’Armes*.

Symons’s claim to understand French-Canadian culture did ruffle a few feathers, however. When Symons published his article “Marie-Claire Blais: l’autopsie du Québec au yeux

d'un Torontois" in *La Presse* in February 1961, writer Jacques Godbout responded to what he considered Symons's faulty understanding of Quebec culture. Ostensibly defending writer Marie-Claire Blais from the "anticlericalisme" of young writers and critics, Symons in fact makes a judgment on the entire culture: "En Marie-Claire Blais je trouve ce que le Canada français peut me donner comme Canadien anglais [...]. Elle incarne votre 'mission,' la mission des Français 'canadianisés,' naufragés parmi 200 millions de 'désensibilisés' qui sont à la recherche d'une âme rejetée lors de la Réforme du 16^e siècle" ("Blais" 24). Symons is convinced that the mission of French Canada is to reanimate and support a desensitized English Canada and suggests that the former's Catholicism is the only thing that can help them complete that mission. To Jacques Godbout, Symons's assessment was not only erroneous but also insulting. He retaliated in an article in *La Presse*, published two weeks after Symons's paper on Blais. Godbout stresses that French-Canadian writers and intellectuals are largely "anticléricaux," but that if Blais is not well loved, it is not because she represents the clergy; it is because she represents "l'ordre bourgeois, les sentiments bourgeois, les images bourgeoises" ("effigie" 24). Godbout's article strongly questions Symons's credentials in judging French Canada, and though Godbout calls him "l'un des rares Canadiens anglais qui se soient donnés la peine de venir sur place étudier les indigènes," he insists that the knowledge Symons has gained in becoming "confesseur général, l'ami de tous et de personne" is of limited use until he returns to "Albionario" (24).

Clearly, Symons did not take kindly to this critique of his judgment; he responded to Godbout in the same tone in the pages of *La Presse*. In his article, Symons attacked the hypocrisy of the "petite Sainte Chapelle d'écrivailleurs" who revel in their own dogma of "'anti-cléricisme,' 'nationalisme,' 'provincialisme,' 'séparatisme,' 'iconoclasme,' 'orgasme,' etc.'" ("désacralisée" 24), but who take advantage of grants and work opportunities offered by the federal government. He ends the article by making a startling affirmation: "je suis un conquérant

qui regrette la conquête, et qui s'en trouve coupable. Je travaille pour l'annuler. Cette discipline m'a enseigné quelque chose de plus : que je suis aussi bien Canadien français que Canadien anglais, et cela de droit" (24). Symons's pretension in understanding and judging French-Canadian society is telling: the French-Canadian mission he invokes here will be elaborated more fully in *Place d'Armes*; the hypocrisy he decries in 1961 is the same he will explicitly condemn as intrinsic to the English-Canadian arts in *Place d'Armes*. But his desire to be recognized as a "Canadien français," though it finds an outlet in the dialectics he establishes in *Place d'Armes*, certainly piqued the ardent nationalists who read *La Presse*.

What *La Presse* called "L'affaire Symons-Blais" finally ended on March 25th, 1961, with the simultaneous publication of five letters addressed to Symons himself and of Symons's first article of a twelve-part series on English and French Canada entitled "Le Canada: duel ou dialogue?". One cannot ignore the irony of the situation: the polemic exchange concerning the accuracy of Symons's judgment on French Canada climaxed on the same day as his first column on English and French Canada appeared. One of the letters to Symons published by *La Presse* was by Godbout himself, who refutes Symons's letter point by point, and who refuses to allow Symons to call himself French Canadian by right: "je vous concède bien des choses mais pas de vous appeler Canadien français de droit. Ou alors moi je suis papou. Non. Être Canadien français, cela se paye. Vous aurez beau, dans un harem, vous déclarer eunuque de droit, on ne vous fera jamais confiance" ("paye" 28). Another letter was by writer Jacques Ferron, who delivers a trenchant judgment on Symons. According to Ferron, not only does Symons have no talent, but what he considers the sacred quality of French Canada is in fact "une marque de commerce," a kind of branding of the people by a higher authority, in this case the clergy. In this sense, as Ferron writes, Symons likes the works of Marie-Claire Blais because she has "la marque de commerce en latin" of the clergy, but he looks down on Jacques Godbout, whose only

fault is “de ne pas être du bétail” (“sacré” 28). Scott Symons may have been convinced that he understood French Canada and the kind of salvation it represented for English Canada, but Godbout and Ferron both express the doubts that his conviction elicited.

Surprisingly, in light of this altercation, Jacques Ferron dedicated his play *La tête du roi* to Scott Symons when it was published in 1963. Symons had by then left Montreal to return to Toronto and take on his position as curator of Canadiana at the Royal Ontario Museum, but his interest in Quebec was still strong, and he continued to publish articles on the subject, albeit in the English-Canadian press. Ferron’s play concerns a father whose two sons are of opposite tendencies: Pierre is a poet, holds no animosity towards Anglophones, and even spends his evenings in a bar called “L’entente cordiale,” while Simon is an ardent separatist. The action unfolds when Pierre comes home with the decapitated head of the Philip Square Edward VII statue, not knowing that Simon has orchestrated the beheading as a symbolic act. As Pierre and Simon’s opposing convictions pressure their father into choosing a camp, Ferron introduces the character of Scott Ewan, an Anglophone friend of Pierre’s who speaks French perfectly, whose interest in French Canada is significant, and who helps bring the play to a climax between the father and his two sons, not because of his actions but because of his mere presence. Scott, a clear allusion to Symons, is not an evil character. He represents the oppressor but he is not one as an individual. Like the Symons of “L’affaire Symons-Blais,” who is “un conquérant qui regrette la conquête, et qui s’en trouve coupable,” Scott Ewan is simply a witness to what is going on inside this family, one whose presence is a catalyst but who cannot dissociate himself entirely from what he represents. As the father and his two sons reconcile, all of them choosing to embrace separatism, the father tells Scott to come back next year, when “nous pourrons vous offrir une hospitalité plus franche. De votre côté vous serez un hôte moins ambigu. [...] Sans

l'égalité on force toujours l'amitié" (92). Ferron's dedication of his play to Scott Symons, as well as his character of Scott Ewan, proves that Symons was an ambiguous character indeed for French Canadians. The nationalist hostility exhibited by Ferron and Godbout in the pages of *La Presse* demonstrate to what extent they too, like Hugh MacLennan in *Two Solitudes*, engage in a form of othering. Scott Symons may have been well known and taken part actively in the intellectual and cultural ferment of the beginnings of the Quiet Revolution, but to the likes of Ferron and Godbout, he was also, inevitably, an outsider looking in, no matter how clearly he thought he could see.

If March 25, 1961, marked the end of "L'affaire Symons-Blais," it also witnessed the publication of Symons's first column, "Lettre ouverte à Jean-Louis Gagnon" in *La Presse*. In this first of a twelve-part series entitled "Le Canada: duel ou dialogue?", Symons explains the circumstances that brought him to meet Gagnon, the editor of the newspaper, who offered him a one-year contract in order to investigate "les rapports existants – ou non-existants – entre les deux grandes cultures du Canada" (5). The series, he writes, is the result of more than ten years of research: "dix ans de travail qui furent une recherche constante de la véritable identité canadienne" (5). And while Symons claims not to give a final interpretation of what it means to be Canadian, he does offer some preliminary conclusions. According to Symons, both French and English Canadians are injured and orphaned; both "races" must cease to oppose one another in order to revalorize a heritage that is unique. A stronger Canada should acknowledge two interacting but distinct cultural heritages (5). This first column sets the tone for the rest of Symons's series. In his exploration of the "true Canadian identity," he prefigures the kind of dialectics that *Place d'Armes* will make manifest and ground more specifically in a sense of place a few years later.

The problem, Symons explains, is that an iron curtain of sorts has fallen between French and English Canada (“rideau” 5), which prevents either side from truly understanding the other’s culture. In his series of articles, Symons enumerates and reflects on the differences between French and English Canada, thus setting up a clear binary only to destabilize this binary by emphasizing the similar origins of these “deux tronçons antinomiques” (“races” 5) and, more importantly, by stressing the inherent co-dependence of their cultures. Because English-Canadian culture is just as endangered as French-Canadian culture, both sides need to understand the necessity of the other for the survival of their own culture: “Tout simplement, l’un ne peut pas survivre sans l’autre! Nous sommes inextricablement jumelés!” (“rideau” 5). To Symons, then, the welfare of French-Canadian culture depends on the welfare of English-Canadian culture and vice versa. The “messianic” role of French Canada in representing French culture in North America was and continues to be shaped and defined by English Canada: “le fait anglais fut – et il l’est toujours pour le Canadien français – la croix particulière qui, d’un certain point de vue, le définit. Il le définit en ce sens que ce fait menaçant l’a pressé sans relâche de lutter pour sa survivance et ainsi d’entreprendre une analyse constante de ce qu’il est, une analyse constante de son vouloir survivre” (“améliorés” 5). But if English Canada was and is necessary to the development of a French-Canadian consciousness and mission, so too is French Canada necessary in revitalizing a decaying English-Canadian culture. Indeed, according to Symons, English Canada is “une culture châtrée” “qui manque de sensibilité” (“Tweedledum” 5). English Canadians need the sensuousness Symons associates with French Canada, whose mission, Symons writes, is in part “de nous sensibiliser. C’est le Canadien français qui peut servir à contre-balancer l’américanisation, c’est-à-dire l’enterrement de la capacité essentiellement latine

de penser au bout des doigts” (“Tweedledum” 5). French and English Canada are thus engaged in a dialectical relationship in which both “races” define and are in turn defined by the other.

Nowhere is this two-way relationship more visible than in Montreal, Symons argues, because “Montréal est surtout, et plus que toute autre grande ville canadienne, la ville du *dialogue* canadien. C’est à montréal qu’a lieu cette rencontre quotidienne entre les deux langues majoritaires de ce pays, un dialogue vieux de deux cents ans” (“2 villes” 5; emphasis mine). Symons’s expression here sounds so much like one of the sweeping statements of the introduction to *Two Solitudes* that it may sound like Symons is making fun of MacLennan, but the earnestness of his article seems to preclude the kind of jocularity with which Symons treats MacLennan in *Place d’Armes*. The possibilities of this dialogue, Symons muses, are great, as great as the cultural possibilities of the country itself. Like MacLennan, Symons considers that one of the obstacles to this dialogue lies in the fact that a part of the Anglo-Montreal population, “peut-être peureux à cause de sa situation minoritaire, persiste à agir en garnison” (5). Unlike MacLennan, Symons nuances and questions the very spatial dichotomy he has just established: he admits that the mansions in Westmount, which clash with the “slave” huts around the city, are also owned by French Montrealers; he also notes that there are some stores in which service is exclusively offered in French. But Symons also reiterates MacLennan’s commonly used trope in his conviction that perhaps it is less accurate to see the “démission” (a word that will recur frequently in *Place d’Armes*) of English Canadians living in Montreal as arrogance than as “la discretion d’une minorité qui se retire dans la deuxième solitude” (5). The dialogue between English and French that takes place in Montreal, imperfect though it may be, confers on Montreal the status of true metropolis of Canada. It is emblematic of the kind of dialectical relationship that Symons envisions as the answer to the identity crisis of the entire country. The

ideas first developed in “Le Canada: duel ou dialogue?”, implicit in the very title of the column (for indeed, the title seems to imply that both duel and dialogue allow for some form of exchange, some kind of back-and-forth movement), are developed more at length, and in a more organic way, in *Place d’Armes*, a work that Symons returned to Montreal in order to write.

Place d’Armes

When *Place d’Armes* was first published in January 1967, reviews were somewhat underwhelming.⁴⁷ One reviewer called the book a “bold attack on English-Canadian sexual taboos” that shattered “in a dynamic way, the genteel tradition in Canadian letters,” claiming that with *Place d’Armes*, “the Canadian novel enters a new era” (K. Graham 13). Others were less enthusiastic. Those who criticized the novel most virulently generally ignored the playfulness of the language and the originality of the form and rather appeared to take issue with its use of foul language. *The Gazette*’s Roy Kervin wrote, “As for a literary breakthrough, it was not needed. All these four letter words have been published before, all these scenes described before. The ‘sacrifice’ was unnecessary” (51). W.D. Godfrey from *Canadian Forum* suggested that though Symons “tries very hard,” he ultimately fails at “put-down satire” though his book could be put in a special category such as “The Ideal Book to Shock Your Early Ontario Commode Collecting Aunt in Orillia” or “Pluckiest Self-Plucker” (46). Montreal writer Naïm Kattan also pointed out Symons’s “affection particulière pour ce que les anglais appellent les ‘four letter words’” (15), but his main focus is the repetitive nature of Symons’s book: “tout au long de ces pages, Scott Symons reprend la même idée, la reprend et la répète. Seule une véritable puissance poétique

⁴⁷ The book itself was commissioned by Jack McClelland, whom Symons considered his “Publisher-in-Arms” (qtd in King 188). McClelland allegedly “agreed that, yes, [Symons] should write a book about being fucked by a city, by Montreal!” and gave him an advance of \$500 (188). While *Place d’Armes*, like *Beautiful Losers* in 1966, did not earn the obscenity charge feared by the publisher, critical interest was scant. Ultimately, the scandal caused by Symons’s escape to Mexico with “the underage son of a prominent Canadian family” (S. Martin 229) did more to promote the novel than its disappointing reviews; Symons received the Beta Sigma Phi Best First Canadian Novel Award “while he was on the lam” (229).

aurait pu épargner au lecteur la lassitude qui finit par l'envelopper" (15). Inevitably, because of its experimental nature, the book was compared to Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, which had been published the previous year. The comparison was unfavourable to *Place d'Armes*. In *Canadian Literature*, Ronald Sutherland wrote that "the author appears to have sought the kind of freshness and frankness of expression which characterizes Leonard Cohen's excellent novel *Beautiful Losers*. But while Cohen's book dazzles and hypnotizes the reader, rising often to Faulknerian heights, *Place d'Armes* jars and bores" (84).

Certainly, the most well-known critique of the book came from *Toronto Star* critic Robert Fulford. Fulford's assessment of Symons as a writer is fair: he duly notes the ingenious and playful nature of Symons's work but is just in his estimation that the novel becomes rather repetitive and that, in terms of prose, Symons "reveals more ambition than talent" ("Monster" 22). Fulford's review is neither more virulent nor crueler than others published in the wake of the book's publication, but it struck Symons to the core and continued to needle him all his career. One of the reasons why Symons was so insulted by Fulford's review lies in the review's title, "A Monster from Toronto," and in its first sentence, which states that "the hero from Scott Symons's first novel, 'Place d'Armes,' may well be the most repellent single figure in the recent history of Canadian writing" (22).⁴⁸ Symons's use of the journal form was more than just a literary device; many of his personal experiences and character traits found their way into the book. In a 1972 interview with Graham Gibson, he summed up the proximity between his characters and himself: "They have to put my writings into categories such as this must be a novel, so plunk, it goes in as

⁴⁸ In Nik Sheehan's 1997 documentary film *God's Fool*, Symons is still fully convinced that the title of Fulford's review was directed towards him, not towards his character, an assertion Fulford has refuted on many occasions. In the documentary, Symons is still clearly nettled by Fulford's review; he accuses Fulford of sabotaging his career. In a 1998 article, Fulford reminisced about Symons's animosity: "In 1967, I reviewed *Place d'Armes*, a first novel by Scott Symons. The response from the author, in print, on television, and in person, was on a scale that would perhaps have been justified if I had written a 1,000-page book accusing him of mass murder. Symons has claimed for decades that my 800 words destroyed his career – and, he sometimes adds, his life as well. All nonsense, of course, but most critics have had similar experiences" ("Bodies" E1).

a novel. You know it's my diary, but they have to call it a novel because they can't think that one publishes one's diaries, so it's called a novel" (Gibson 314). There was no critical distance between Symons and his protagonist, Hugh Anderson; they both shared so many characteristics that any criticism of Hugh stung Symons as a personal attack, especially his being called a monster.

Symons's reaction to Fulford's review speaks volumes about how fraught the relationship between reality and fiction in *Place d'Armes* truly is. The book opens with a rather straightforward presentation of the protagonist, Hugh Anderson, a Toronto editor with significant success who decides to leave his family and comfortable situation in order to spend three weeks writing a novel in Montreal. His "brief biography" is telling: "four years with Montreal CBC special features (documentary), six years with the House of Johnson, Toronto, in charge of publications on Canadian history and literature ... lecturer at the University of Toronto ... author of *Essays in Canadian Taste: A Study in the Relationship of the Arts and Politics from 1812 to 1914*" (18). Hugh's career has promoted him to the centre of Canadian culture, much like the career of Scott Symons had brought him respectability and success. Hugh's admitted aim is to write a novel about La Place d'Armes, but his project also implies embarking on a spiritual and sexual adventure in the city, a kind of social and professional suicide that can somehow remedy the personal crisis he is undergoing. Hugh Anderson espouses many of the same characteristics as Symons, who worked as an assistant curator for the Royal Ontario Museum for its Canadiana collection until he was fired for insubordination (Symons, like Hugh Anderson, told his boss that he "had no balls" [Taylor 209]). In 1965, Symons left his wife and son to stay "in a small hotel on the edge of La Place d'Armes" for three weeks, during which he wrote *Place d'Armes* (Taylor 211). Hugh Anderson is not in all points identical to Scott Symons: Hugh is an editor while

Symons was a curator, so that their careers are both central to Canadian culture but related to distinct media; he is a little older than his creator; and he has two children instead of one. Both men do, however, hold similar personal and political views: a belief in the necessity of acknowledging and embracing openness; a strong attachment to tradition and heritage; and a corresponding disavowal of the diluted Canadian nationalism celebrated by their federal government. Their differences are superficial; their similarities are overwhelming.

The structure and organization of *Place d'Armes* not only reflect the mirroring between Hugh Anderson and Symons himself but also engage in a continuous *mise en abyme* that comments on the creative process and on the relationship between reality and fiction. *Place d'Armes* begins with an account of how Hugh Anderson arrives in Montreal and gets his bearings. The third-person narration is interspersed with Hugh's own first-person "Novel Notes – some for the Novel, but some for himself" (4) as well as his journal, a first-person account of his dealings with Montreal and La Place. As the book progresses, however, the reader becomes privy to sections of Hugh's novel, written in the third person, in which we become acquainted with its protagonist, Andrew Harrison. Significantly, Andrew Harrison (whose initials are the reversed initials of Hugh Anderson) bears even more resemblance to Scott Symons than his creator, Hugh Anderson. Indeed, Hugh creates Andrew very similar to himself in terms of general values and beliefs, but decides to make him

a few years younger than me (allows for highjinks) – 32. Instead of CBC, worked at La Presse (much more impact) – that's how he got to know the young French-Canadian revolutionaries. ... Send him to school at TCS instead of Upper Canada...Cambridge instead of Oxford (everyone goes to Oxford – this'll be different). (82)

Symons, like Andrew Harrison, was 32 when he spent three weeks in Montreal to write *Place d'Armes*. He had worked at *La Presse* in 1960-61, had attended Trinity College School as an adolescent, and had earned a Master's degree at King's College, Cambridge. *Place d'Armes* is thus a series of self-reflections on Symons. Symons created Hugh Anderson, a character that resembles him and whose aims are similar to his own; in turn, Hugh creates Andrew Harrison, a character who resembles him but who resembles Scott Symons even more closely. Andrew Harrison, like Hugh Anderson (and Scott Symons), is in Montreal to resolve a personal and national crisis; he too is trying to write a novel about La Place d'Armes and the reader occasionally has access to his notes and to his diary. Symons's book ultimately evolves into a series of mirrorings, a self-referential stance that climaxes when Hugh Anderson decides that the protagonist of Andrew's novelette will be called ... Hugh Anderson.

Symons's endeavour in writing *Place d'Armes* was not only a creative one. He was also undergoing a personal crisis that echoed with national overtones and believed that it was time to live the ideas that he had been theorizing. His growing attraction to men was taking its toll on his marriage. Moreover, as a "radical Tory" profoundly attached to his traditions, he reacted with horror to what he considered the "gliblib" mentality of Lester B. Pearson's Liberal government, which "seemed bent on systematically destroying his heritage for the sake of a continental destiny" (Taylor 206). He was therefore profoundly upset by the Canadian government's decision to adopt a new flag, a reflection of "the accelerating effacement of his Canadian traditions" (Elson "Mourning" 12). Like Hugh Anderson's Montreal project, Symons's decision to up and quit Toronto to embark on his literary and personal adventure was not one easily taken. In an interview, he admitted that

I contemplated for at least five years before I did what I did that it would have to be done. I kept waiting for other people to do it. Why should I, who was happily married, had a lovely home in Toronto, a lovely farm full of Canadian art and culture, a Curator of Canadiana, a Professor at U of T., a Visiting Curator at the Smithsonian, have to do it? I did not leap with any glee. There was a sense of civic action. (qtd in Elson "Mourning" 12)

Symons's break with conventions and comfort was thus the result of both personal and national reassessments, which, to him, were unavoidably intertwined. He wrote to his publisher Jack McClelland, "I have got to live my crisis. My crisis is a spiritual one, and it is inextricably bound up with the nature of Canada" (qtd in King 185).

Symons's alignment of the personal and the political is representative of the way in which his promotion of openness allows for both conservatism and radical experimentation in *Place d'Armes*. If, according to George Grant, a conservative is one who abides by "the social doctrine that public order and tradition, in contrast to freedom and experiment, [are] central to the good life" (69), then Symons is both a conservative and its opposite, for he values tradition at least as much as he does freedom and experiment. *Place d'Armes* is a plea for tradition in an experimental guise, made by one who avidly pushes back the limits of individual freedom. In *Place d'Armes*, Hugh Anderson consciously alludes to Grant's *Lament for a Nation*: "there's that new book on Canada...lamenting our dead nation. Well, I've never dared read it. Because I'm simply a result of what it diagnosed. Why read it anyway? I know it all by heart already! That's why I'm here" (48). Hugh's disengagement from Grant's work is deceptive. In fact, as is made evident by his equation between personal and national crisis, Hugh's endeavours, experimental though they may be, are a reaction against the same defeat of nationalism as the one "diagnosed"

by Grant. Acerbic though he may be in his indictment of his English-Canadian contemporaries, however, Hugh does not share Grant's pessimism. The encroachment of American liberalism is everywhere visible in *Place d'Armes*, but not inevitable. The conviction that there is a solution to both crises, a solution that is inevitably tied to both the social change and the urban space of Montreal, is "Why I'm here" (48). Hugh Anderson is in superficial ways dissimilar to Scott Symons, but their convictions and the project they both undertake in coming to Montreal to write a novel about personal and national identity are one and the same. So too are the nationalist convictions and literary endeavours of Andrew Harrison.

In Hugh Anderson, Scott Symons has created a character who embodies the openness he promotes as a necessary condition for the development of a new Canadian identity. Hugh represents the single entity in which opposing forces coexist and are allowed to interact with one another, just as Symons envisions Canada as one country in which separate and distinct peoples, with strong distinct traditions, enter into dialogue. Hugh speaks English and French, and often allows both languages to interact in his writing. Unlike Paul Tallard, he is not half-English and half-French; his is not an attempt to unify conflicting aspects of his identity. He is conscious that he is an Anglophone from Rosedale, but he has also taken pains to go in search of French roots by studying in France and living and working in Quebec. He tells his friend Luc, "I can't say it in English, Luc...typically. But in French I can – 'j'incarne un énorme besoin du Canada français' – just because I am English Canadian...just because I love my own people, my own land, my own citizenship, my own family, so very much. You Canadiens are an essential part of my own will to live" (47). As a "modern man" and an ideal Canadian, one whose national project is rooted in "love," Hugh is the "incarnation" of an English Canada that is in desperate need of French Canada. English Canada needs the sensibility of French Canada, just as French Canada needs

English Canada to force itself into “une analyse constante de ce qu’il est, une analyse constante de son vouloir survivre” (“Anglais et français” 5).

The type of relation Hugh demonstrates in his juxtaposition of English and French is also visible in his attitude towards religion. Although Hugh is a “good Protestant” (41) from “Toronto Rosedale Toryland” (88), he spends a large part of his time in Notre-Dame, the Catholic cathedral in Place d’Armes, where he most often achieves a state of immanence and where he meets Yvon, with whom he has his first homosexual experience. In the same way as Hugh is an Anglophone who acquires a French-Canadian heritage, so too is he a Protestant who appropriates a Catholic one. As we have seen, Symons had made clear his sympathy for the Catholic clergy in his column in *La Presse*, describing Catholicism as one of the pillars of French-Canadian identity and a necessity in its “mission” to save English Canada. To Symons, as to Hugh, Protestantism and Catholicism, while antithetical, are not mutually exclusive. This is the kind of multiplicity Hugh cultivates in himself, by pointing out the similarities between his Protestant background and his Catholic interests and embodying the “Anglicanadian” (65).

Finally, Hugh cultivates openness on a cultural and political level, by calling himself a “Tory Radical” (14). He holds dear the royalist traditions of his ancestors, and he does not consider that they are antithetical to the fact that he “voted for the N.D.P.” (14). Hugh’s openness allows him to take pleasure in describing himself through the juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory terms, for he is convinced, like George Grant, that “our Toryism is our culture as Canadians...not our politics” (14). His own person accommodates seemingly contradicting impulses and forces because each gives meaning to the other. But in his interaction with the city of Montreal, he also illustrates a dialectical relationship that aims to destabilize the traditional French-English binary.

Montreal, the Quiet Revolution, and the Arts

Scott Symons, Hugh Anderson, and Andrew Harrison are aligned in their personal and political convictions, and these convictions are intrinsic to their conception of what it means to be Canadian. For this reason, and because I wish to argue that Symons's imaginative use of form and playful use of language are in many ways related to the new forms of expression emerging in Quebec as a result of the development of a national consciousness, it seems fruitful to provide an overview of the social and political changes taking place in the province in the 1960s. These societal changes were mirrored by a very concrete, structural, and architectural renewal in the urban fabric of Montreal, which throws into relief the kind of dialectical relationship between process and form, urbanization and built form, described by David Harvey and represented both in Symons's depiction of urban space and treatment of textual space.

For many historians, the Quiet Revolution began in 1960 when, after both Maurice Duplessis and Paul Sauvé died in office, Jean Lesage and his liberals took over the leadership of the province. The political changes effected by the Lesage government⁴⁹ were accompanied by a rapidly increasing secularism that opposed the Church-State association championed by Duplessis as well as by the development and affirmation of the Quebec identity. As both Paul-André Linteau and Jane Jacobs point out, however, the roots of the Quiet Revolution can be traced back to the Second World War. By the end of the war, Montreal had reached over one million inhabitants (Linteau *Montréal* 314).⁵⁰ While many of these newcomers to the city were

⁴⁹ The Lesage government made several significant changes that epitomize the spirit of the Quiet Revolution: the creation of the Ministry of Education in 1964 following the initial recommendations of the Parent commission, the nationalization of Hydro-Québec in 1962, and a petition for a greater provincial autonomy, especially concerning the health care system. The Ministère des affaires culturelles, the Conseil provincial des arts, and the Office de la langue française were created in 1961, following the recommendations of the report by Judge Thomas Tremblay, who presided over the Commission royale d'enquête sur les problèmes constitutionnels. The same year also witnessed the creation of the Régie des alcools du Québec.

⁵⁰ While Montreal was growing rapidly, however, Toronto was growing even more rapidly. After 1945, Linteau writes, Toronto's economy slowly overtook Montreal's so that by 1960, "Toronto a supplanté Montréal comme

immigrants, even more were French Canadians who had left rural areas to relocate to the city, thereby transforming it into “le foyer principal de la culture québécoise et une importante métropole culturelle de la francophonie” (425).

Both these factors, the growth of Montreal and its emergence as a provincial metropolis, played a significant role in bringing about the Quiet Revolution. The French Canadians that came to Montreal out of the rural exodus swelled the ranks of the city’s Francophone population and helped create the necessary conditions for social and cultural activity in the 1960s:

The “quiet revolution” arose from their networks of interest and interaction in the city; in the arts, in politics, working life and education. French culture in Montreal was in a quiet ferment as people built these relationships and put together ambitions and ideas they could not have developed even in a smaller city like the capital, Quebec City. In the 1960s the evidence of this ferment burst forth in French theatre, music, films and television. Talent and audiences had found one another. (Jacobs, *Question* 11)

The Quiet Revolution, then, was first and foremost a cultural revolution rather than an economic or institutional one. It provoked “des changements d’esprits, mais peu de transformations structurelles” (Rocher, *Québec* 20).

One of these changes in mentality consisted in the development of Quebec nationalism, a nationalism that was grounded in language and that spawned the separatist movement. If language questions were at the forefront of debates that animated Quebec society in the 1960s and 1970s (Linteau, *Québec* 595), then, it was because they were inextricably intertwined with questions of national identity, as “defence of the French language became the centrepiece of nationalism, replacing the church and legal institutions like the Civil Code as the essential sine

principale métropole du Canada” (*Québec* 430). Thus, Montreal was losing its title of metropolis of Canada to Toronto, but because it was increasingly a French-Canadian city, it was developing into a provincial metropolis.

qua non for the survival of francophone society” (Dickinson and Young 305). In short, language came to replace religion as one of the fundamental French-Canadian values.

As one of the offshoots of Quebec nationalism, the movement for independence began in the late 1950s⁵¹ and became a social and an economical question expressed in colonial terms. For if it was a question of nationalism and national identity, the ideology of independence was also a response to what French Canadians considered economic domination: separatists believed that “while Ontario or Canada may be regarded as economically colonized in relation to the U.S.A., Quebec is doubly colonized by the U.S.A. and by English Canada” (H. Milner and S. Milner 31). FLQ leader Pierre Vallières echoes this conviction in *Nègres blancs d’Amérique* (1968), written during his four years in prison. Vallières describes the “formidable offensive financière américaine qui prit son élan au début du XXIème siècle et qui ne s’est pas encore arrêtée” (47). For Vallières, this economic domination was made possible by Confédération, which “créa les conditions économiques et politiques de l’invasion du Québec et du reste du Canada par les entrepreneurs et les financiers américains” (42).

The influence of anti-colonial writers such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Albert Memmi on Quebec intellectuals should not be underestimated. If Césaire’s concept of “négritude” inspired Vallières in writing *Nègres blancs d’Amérique*, underscoring the extent to which, as Césaire himself repeated, “négritude” was not only a question of skin colour (Selao

⁵¹ Two small groups championing the political sovereignty of Quebec were formed in the 1950s: the Alliance laurentienne, a “conservative Catholic organization inspired by an unreformed Groulx-type nationalism” (W. Coleman 217) formed in 1957 and the Action Socialiste pour l’indépendance du Québec (ASIQ) formed in 1959. The latter’s manifesto claimed that the province of Quebec was a “peuple colonial opprimé” “occupé économiquement par une grande bourgeoisie colonialiste de langue et de culture étrangère qui se sert d’un mercenariat politique, prostitué à ses intérêts élitistes, pour asservir la majorité de la population” (ASIQ 13). The ASIQ included writer Jacques Ferron and journalist Raoul Roy. In 1960, one year after the appearance of the ASIQ, the Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale (RIN) was co-founded by Marcel Chaput and André d’Allemagne. The RIN did not have the independence platform to itself in the mid-1960s: the Ralliement national (RN), formed in 1966, and the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association, formed in 1967, eventually merged to become the Parti québécois in 1968, while the RIN dissolved itself and most of its members joined the PQ (W. Coleman 221).

99), it also had an impact on Paul Chamberland, a prominent poet and intellectual of the independence movement. So, too, did the writings of Frantz Fanon, especially *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which Chamberland's 1963 essay "L'intellectuel québécois, intellectuel colonisé" quotes at length and enters into dialogue with, and to which the title of his 1964 essay "De la damnation à la liberté," in *Parti Pris*, is a direct allusion. In Vallières's and Chamberland's writings, national consciousness emerges as a powerful symbol against colonial oppression, as long as it translates into political and social action. Fanon writes that "le nationalisme s'il n'est pas explicité, enrichi et approfondi, s'il ne se transforme pas très rapidement en conscience politique et sociale, en humanisme, conduit à une impasse" (qtd in Chamberland, "Intellectuel" 124). Chamberland's essay is thus a call to arms for Quebec intellectuals in favour of independence.

Independence was also a prime topic of discussion for newspapers. In March 1961, in the same issue of *La Presse* as the final chapter of "L'affaire Symons-Blais" and Scott Symons's first column of "Le Canada: Duel ou Dialogue?", the newspaper announced that no less than 45% of Quebec inhabitants considered themselves separatists ("Séparatisme" 4).⁵² Political sovereignty was a prime subject of discussion, but even among separatists, there was disagreement on how to achieve independence. A clear divide formed between those who wished to use political means and those who, convinced that a political platform would never deliver its promises, opted for a more radical approach.⁵³

⁵² While *La Presse* was explicit about the unofficial quality of its survey, its numbers shocked readers and encouraged other newspapers to join the discussion. On June 10, 1961, *Le Devoir* published a similar survey according to which 69.76% of Quebecers believed the independence of Quebec to be both "souhaitable" and "réalisable" (Léger 9). In this case, too, the newspaper admitted that it was "un sondage qui n'a pas de valeur scientifique" but insisted that it provided "une très précieuse indication" of the importance of the topic (9).

⁵³ Among these, we find the Réseau de résistance (RR), formed in 1963. The RR was of short duration, however, and the same year as the RIN officially became a political party, almost one half of the RR separated from the organization and formed the Front de libération du Québec, more commonly known as the FLQ. Activists from the RIN and the ASIQ swelled the ranks of the FLQ in subsequent years (Cardin 25).

The exacerbation of Quebec nationalism and the successive waves of violence initiated by the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ)⁵⁴ contributed to making Montreal a centre of social and political upheaval; it was also the place where the transformations affecting society could most notably be observed. As discussed above, Paul Chamberland's essay "L'intellectuel québécois, intellectuel colonisé" incites Quebec intellectuals to engage in political action, but it also calls out to artists, whose role in a Quebec that is "colonisé culturellement" (125) is to liberate "la manifestation de la vie totale de la nation" (125). For, as Fanon, quoted by Chamberland, explains, "c'est d'abord le combat pour l'existence nationale qui débloque la culture, lui ouvre les portes de la création" (qtd in Chamberland, "Intellectuel" 125). The energy generated by the shift from developing nationalism to political action towards independence stimulates creativity and allows for new artistic forms to emerge, which, in turn, also influence the developing nationalism. Thus, the rising national consciousness of Quebec embodied in the social and political changes effected by the Lesage government was echoed in new subject matter and new forms in certain artistic spheres. In 1965, the year Symons wrote *Place d'Armes*, Jacques Godbout published *Le couteau sur la table*, Hubert Aquin published *Prochain épisode*, Marie-Claire Blais published *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, Paul Chamberland published

⁵⁴ The violence initiated by the FLQ came in waves. The first wave began in the spring of 1963 and ended with the arrest of fifteen members in June of the same year. During that interval, a series of "terrorist acts" were committed, mostly in Montreal. Shortly before Jacques Ferron's play *La tête du roi* was published, with its dedication to Scott Symons, the FLQ threw molotov cocktails in the windows of armouries in Montreal and placed bombs downtown and in Westmount, half of which either failed to detonate or were disarmed (Morf 5). The group circulated several manifestos, most of which were either ignored by the media or published in part in *Le Devoir*. This first wave culminated in the accidental death of 65-year-old night watchman Vincent Wilfrid O'Neill on 16 April 1963. O'Neill happened to pass by the bomb, which had been placed in front of the building of the Canadian Legion in Saint-Jean, Quebec (6). In early June, the activists were apprehended and jailed. The second wave of violence extended from September 1963 to April 1964 and consisted mainly in hold-ups and thefts of arms and ammunition by a group that called itself the Armée de libération du Québec (ALQ) (36). It too ended with the arrest of the group members. During the third wave, which took place in August 1964, the Armée révolutionnaire du Québec organized an armed robbery at a gunshop in Montreal, which resulted in the deaths of the store manager and one employee (40). The fourth wave, between August 1965 and July 1966, returned to bombings, and made two victims: Thérèse Morin, 64, in May 1965 and a young FLQ member Jean Corbo, 16, on 14 July 1966. This violence culminated in the October crisis in 1970.

L'afficheur hurle, and Gilles Carles filmed *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z*. All these works deal either directly or indirectly with Quebec identity, subjugation, and separatism; all of them adopt, at least in part, new techniques and forms to convey this new content.⁵⁵ These examples are all “unusual forms of expression” which, according to Frantz Fanon, go hand in hand with national consciousness (*Wretched* 176). Their role in “restructure[ing]” “perception” is vital in the process towards national independence, as “original themes [are] no longer invested with the power of invocation but the power to rally and mobilize with the approaching conflict in mind. Everything conspires to stimulate the colonized’s sensibility, and to rule out and reject attitudes of inertia or defeat” (176). This equation of political and aesthetic insight was thus part of a general emancipatory movement that ultimately led to the correlative “equation of political separatism and the *avant-garde*” in the arts (Heidenreich 14).

In their break from older patterns and styles, the arts in Quebec, and French-Canadian literature more specifically, were mainly separatist in that they “represented attempts to define and elaborate what it meant to be a Québécois and what the culture of French Quebec entailed” (W. Coleman 155). The analogy between political and literary activity becomes a central theme of Quebec literature in the 1960s. In fact, as Kathy Mezei writes, “terrorism or other forms of political action become, for so many *québécois* writers of the sixties, the most appropriate form

⁵⁵ *Le couteau sur la table* recounts the break-up of a French-Canadian man and his Anglophone girlfriend. *Prochain Épisode* is a spy novel narrated by an FLQ revolutionary narrator awaiting trial in a psychiatric hospital in Lausanne. As Kathy Mezei writes, both works are, “in a sense, a response to the death of the night watchman [O’Neill]” (39). The complex structures of both novels blur space and time (as well as narrator and protagonist) and “present flowing and impressionistic interior monologues” (40). *L’afficheur hurle* is a long poem that reads like one long, sustained scream during which its speaker goes from being prostrate and suicidal to embracing a revolutionary stance. *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z* recounts how a French-Canadian man must plow the streets of Montreal after a snowstorm on Christmas Eve. Gilles Carle considered his protagonist to be a “personnage prérévolutionnaire qui tourne en rond” (qtd in Lever 464). The film integrates direct cinema techniques. *Une Saison dans la vie d’Emmanuel* is not directly about independence but embodies the spirit of the Quiet Revolution in its dark and satirical appraisal of the average Quebec family.

within which to describe their ‘*condition humaine*’” (41).⁵⁶ At the same time, the FLQ was attempting to accelerate social change through violence, which created a climate of anxiety in the provincial metropolis. Symons, as is evident not only in his journalistic work, but also in *Place d’Armes*, was sympathetic to the French-Canadian artists expressing a desire for separation and independence, and, while he never openly condones the violence of the FLQ, the movement’s “nationalisme d’extrême gauche” (Laurendeau 38)⁵⁷ and the “intimate relationship between extremist separatism and anti-Americanism” (Morf 77) certainly echoed with his own “Tory radical” convictions (Symons, *Place d’Armes* 14).

Not surprisingly, just as Quebec nationalism developed in tandem with experimentation in fiction, so too did a few Anglo-Quebec writers experiment with style and form during this dynamic period. While Scott Symons, who associated closely with Quebec intellectuals during his first stay in Montreal in 1960-61, seems to have largely identified with and, to a certain extent, appropriated the energy for change engendered by Quebec nationalism, others, such as Leonard Cohen and Russell Marois, seem to have been merely inspired by the socio-political upheaval taking place in Montreal, though their innovative treatment of the novel suggests that they may also be read as taking part in the emergence of “unusual forms of expression”

⁵⁶ Perhaps the best example of this association between political action and literary activity is Hubert Aquin’s novel *Prochain épisode*, published in 1965. This seminal work, published just as Symons was writing *Place d’Armes*, was written while Aquin was detained in a psychiatric hospital. He had pleaded “suicidal depression” (Allard xix) when he was arrested carrying a firearm after publicly announcing that he was becoming a terrorist and joining the FLQ. In his article “Cheap Tricks in Montreal,” Robert K. Martin argues that Aquin’s novel is a model for *Place d’Armes*: he points out that Aquin’s work had “particular meaning for Symons, in part because of its repeated figure of a doomed visionary whose thwarted sexuality mirrors that of a nation” (199). *Place d’Armes* does share many similarities with Aquin’s work; as Martin points out, it features the high romantic features of “a first-person narration of a national and historic mission, a surfeit of language, and a relentless search for transgression” (199). But to call *Place d’Armes* “a kind of English translation” of *Prochain épisode* is a dubious claim, at best. It is more fruitful, I believe, to consider *Place d’Armes* and *Prochain épisode* aligned in their depiction of an eroticized nationalism.

⁵⁷ Marc Laurendeau aligns the FLQ with a Marxist ideology (37). Indeed, as he points out, many of the bombs placed by the FLQ were placed in industries where there was a strike underway. For a discussion of the FLQ’s links to the union movement in Quebec, see Jean-François Cardin’s *Comprendre Octobre 1970*, in which he writes that “l’oppression des travailleurs et la lutte des classes deviendront les concepts dominants de l’idéologie et de la motivation du FLQ” (22).

associated with Quebec nationalism. Their sympathy for the movement may also be read as representative of a larger counter-cultural concern with the primacy of sensuousness over reason, so that in their works, Quebec nationalism becomes almost erotic.⁵⁸

Leonard Cohen's first novel, *The Favourite Game*, published in 1963, is a rather straightforward *Bildungsroman* and *Künstlerroman*, but it does offer a very tentative experimentation with voice and narration, foreshadowing the radical formal innovation Cohen engaged in with *Beautiful Losers* a few years later. Indeed, with *Beautiful Losers*, published in 1966, a year before *Place d'Armes* was published but a year after it was written, Cohen does not avoid narrative altogether, but explodes it. Like *Place d'Armes*, his highly self-reflexive novel juxtaposes and parodies different literary forms such as the advertisement, the play, the religious text, the epistolary novel, the comic book, the list, the Greek-English phrasebook, the pornographic novel, and the memoir.

What most prominently unites *Place d'Armes* and Cohen's fiction is the way in which all three works explicitly link marginality with authenticity, so that, like Scott Symons, both Lawrence Breavman in *The Favourite Game* and F. and "I" in *Beautiful Losers* (and, to a certain extent, Cohen himself), embrace a form of self-marginalization. As adolescents, *The Favourite Game*'s Breavman and his friend Krantz purposefully attend a dance at the Palais D'Or, where they know that the dancers will be "Catholics, French-Canadian, anti-Semitic, anti-Anglais, belligerent," and where they are ultimately physically assaulted (47). In the midst of their losing battle, however, Breavman rejoices at being so completely himself: "he threw his fist at a stranger. He was a drop in the wave of history, anonymous, exhilarated, free" (51).

⁵⁸ Paul Chamberland explicitly describes Quebec nationalism as building on an emotional rather than an intellectual impetus: "Avant d'être une idéologie politique, le nationalisme est le sentiment d'une communauté. [...] L'ambiguïté du nationalisme tient à sa nature irrationnelle, ce qui ne lui enlève pas pour autant son importance objective" ("contradictions" 10).

Breavman consciously refers to other minorities as an example of what is “real.” When he becomes a literary figure after the publication of his first book, for example, he claims that the distrusting Gentiles make him “feel as vital as a Negro,” thus assuming that the Negro somehow possesses more, or “truer” life instinct because of his marginal status (107). Shortly after the publication of his first book of poetry, the young man decides to do “penance through manual labour” and begins working in a brass foundry, where he punches the clock “every morning for a year” (110). In the foundry, Breavman’s idealization of the working-class and his idealization of the Negro are conflated in the figure of the moulder: “He looked like a monolithic idol. No, he was a true priest” (109). Breavman believes that manual labour will reconcile him to his essence, but his attitude towards the moulder reveals that he feels compelled to look to other, marginal figures to locate the source of authenticity. Similarly, when he works as a camp counselor, Breavman admires the young camper Martin’s genuineness, though the fact that Martin is “half-nut, half-genius” (199) completely alienates him from the other children. Breavman idealizes Martin’s condition: “I enjoy his madness. He enjoys his madness. He’s the only free person I’ve ever met. Nothing that anybody does is as important as what he does” (213). Martin’s death, far from alerting Breavman to the fact that his line of thought leads to potentially tragic conclusions, only consolidates his equation of marginality with authenticity, and Breavman ultimately severs all ties with the important people in his life.

In *Beautiful Losers*, Cohen also features characters whose marginal status is a source of authenticity; they are beautiful, not despite the fact that they are losers, but because of it. In this novel, Cohen, like Symons in *Place d’Armes*, attributes a form of authenticity to French Canadians because of their marginal status. His characters, like Hugh in *Place d’Armes* and Symons himself, appropriate the energy of what is perceived as an eroticized nationalism. One of

F.'s last lessons to "I" is to embrace this marginality, to seek it out. The lesson takes place in the summer of 1964, as "I" and F. are walking along "Parc Lafontaine Park" and encounter demonstrators protesting against the visit of Queen Elizabeth, shouting "Québec Libre!" (123). While "I" is wary of what he considers an "ugly crowd," F. insists that it is a "beautiful crowd" because "they think they are Negroes, and that is the best feeling a man can have in this century" (123).⁵⁹ Siding with Quebec separatists is thus a source of vitality for "F," who naturally integrates himself with the protesters, getting them to hoist him up on their shoulders like "a Patriot! A man the English could not disgrace even in their own Parliament!" (126). After remarking that "everyone had a hard-on, including the women" (123), "I" also merges with the crowd and, through his simultaneous turn towards revolutionary politics ("Fuck the English! I shouted unexpectedly" [124]) and sexual promiscuity (not only with the woman standing behind him, but, ultimately, with the entire crowd, whom "I" believes is going to "come together" [126]), becomes the embodiment of the same kind of eroticized nationalism that Scott Symons puts forth in *Place d'Armes*.

A second Anglo-Quebec novelist to share both Symons's emphasis on sensibility and formal innovation is Russell Marois, whose first and only novel, *The Telephone Pole*, was published in 1969 as one of the five novels in Anansi Press's Spiderline Edition, a sideline dedicated to first-time novelists with experimental works.⁶⁰ One cannot properly speak of

⁵⁹ The idealization of African American marginality in both Cohen's novels echoes the thoughts of Norman Mailer as expressed in his 1957 essay "The White Negro." Mailer's views, which are representative of the countercultural spirit, dictate that conformism is as damaging as cancer. The only life-giving answer is to "divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self. In short, whether the life is criminal or not, the decision is to encourage the psychopath in oneself, to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness, and one exists in the present" (339). Mailer, like Symons and Cohen, celebrates marginality and alienation as a source of authenticity.

⁶⁰ Anansi's decision to include Pierre Gravel's *A Perte de Temps* in its 1969 Spiderline Edition is perhaps a sign of just how inspiring the "richness and the fury of the literary scene in Montreal" was becoming for English language writers (i). The novel's "new mode of presentation" itself was experimental: it was published in French, with the words or phrases that might give trouble to "half-bilingual" readers translated at the bottom of each page (ii). The

eroticized nationalism in Marois's novel, but its publication by editors who deemed themselves "urban nationalists" points to an underlying concern with national identity in their choice of works (qtd in Cain 114).⁶¹ Most obvious, however, is the kind of sensibility exhibited by Marois's characters, which places them alongside Symons's and Cohen's protagonists. A dynamic treatment of textual space also aligns Marois with Symons and Cohen. Although the five characters in *The Telephone Pole* are initially clearly distinct, they ultimately overlap so that point of view becomes extremely ambiguous. Repetition of specific phrases or passages progressively merges the characters into one another, and they all eventually dissolve into the atmosphere of the city, a Montreal of "libertinism and withdrawal from conventional life" (Gill 45). Scott Symons himself was extremely impressed with Marois, of whom he wrote that "with Russell Marois, English-speaking sensibility in Canada comes of age. [...] *The Telephone Pole* has a sensuality which has no correlative in English-Canadian literature. Even Leonard Cohen's sentence is not so brilliantly incisive" ("Telephone" 70). Clearly, both Cohen's and Marois's endeavours resonate with Symons's own, to the extent that Symons does not hesitate to situate himself, Marois, and Cohen around the same axes of formal and stylistic innovation.

Symons, Cohen, and Marois were not the only Anglo-Quebec novelists to write about Montreal, but others, such as Hood Hood and Hugh MacLennan, produced less experimental works. Incidentally, the less sympathetic these writers seem to be towards Quebec nationalism, the more traditional their forms of fiction tend to be.⁶² In other words, their political ideology

very subject matter of the novel, the inner monologue of a young man awaiting to be arrested for planting bombs as part of a separatist terrorist cell, may be surprising, but it does reflect Anansi's desire to represent different parts of the Canadian experience.

⁶¹ See Stephen Cain's article "Tracing the Web: House of Anansi's Spiderline Editions" for an explanation of how Denis Lee and David Godfrey's choice of authors for the first Spiderline Edition reflects the "five cultural or national backgrounds that Anansi saw as making up the populace of Canada in 1969" (118).

⁶² Hugh Hood's *White Figure White Ground* (1964) describes, but does not embody, formal innovation. In this story about Alex Macdonald, an English-Quebec painter married to Madeleine Filion, a French-Canadian woman who stems from a powerful and influential family, Hood, like Symons, is reticent to oppose the same traditional English-

seems to dictate their treatment of both urban space and textual space. The bulk of English-Quebec novels produced during these years therefore still reasserts the east-west urban divide as a metaphor of Canadian politics and treats the issue as in postwar years or uses Montreal as a ghost setting, in which the city is barely featured and might in fact be mistaken for any other Canadian or American urban centre.⁶³ For Malcom Reid, English-Canadian writers (including English Montreal writers) simply did not feel threatened or revolted by one culture's subjugation to another: "English-Canadian literature lacked its own central cry and was guilty of a colonial complacency before the French and theirs" (128).

In privileging sensibility over reason, then, Symons, Cohen, and Marois are more likely to have been inspired by the energy of Quebec nationalism, which demands the emergence of "unusual forms of expression." It is also arguable that these novelists' increased perception of urban space as dynamic (the noticeable effect of Quebec nationalism and corporate capitalism on built forms, as well as the ideology conveyed by new structures) affected their treatment of textual space. For example, the last pages of *The Favourite Game* foreshadow the kinds of urban changes that inform both *Beautiful Losers* and *Place d'Armes*. Breavman stands atop Mount Royal and observes the city:

French binaries and suggests a more fruitful relation between the two cultures. Through the characterization of Madeleine, Hood demonstrates a "willingness to include opposites within a continuum rather than to dichotomize [which] also permeates the book" (Cloutier 62). Ultimately, Hood's novel does little in the way of formal experimentation, but it does ekphrastically depict how Alex himself strives to break through conventional modes of representation through a kind of dialectical painting.

In *Return of the Sphinx* (1967), MacLennan presents young Quebec separatist Daniel Ainslie, whose convictions and frustrations lead him to a botched attempt at detonating a bomb. The novel might be read both thematically and formally as a kind of disenchanting sequel to *Two Solitudes* (though it is in fact a sequel to *Each Man's Son*), and adopts the same third person omniscient narration and realist mode as MacLennan's famous novel. As a result, the portrait of Daniel Ainslie seems to lack in psychological depth and, while it does address the malaise of its time, the novel ultimately reasserts, through the character of Alan Ainslie, the conviction that Canada will "endure" and that the separatist movement, like his son, will see the errors of its ways in due time because the land is, ultimately, "too vast even for fools to ruin all of it" (303).

⁶³A more comprehensive study of fiction set in Montreal would benefit from a close reading of Hugh Hood's *Flying a Red Kite* (1962) and *Around the Mountain* (1967), Mavis Gallant's *My Heart is Broken* (1964), and Mordecai Richler's *The Street* (1969), in which Montreal features prominently, but the scope of this work can unfortunately not accommodate short fiction.

The streets were changing. The Victorian gingerbread was going down everywhere, and on every second corner was the half-covered skeleton of a new, flat office building. The city seemed fierce to go modern, as though it had suddenly been converted to some new theory of hygiene and had learned with horror that it was impossible to scrape the dirt out of gargoyle crevices and carved grape vines, and therefore was determined to cauterize the whole landscape. (242)

Not only does the passage address the aggressive urban renewal led by Mayor Jean Drapeau's administration in Montreal, but these architectural changes, in Cohen's novel as in 1960s Montreal, seem to usher in a new order, one that is the result of a tension between the nationalism that demands the neglect, if not the destruction of a Victorian architecture associated with English oppression and the internationalism of modern architecture, associated with commerce and the homogeneity of liberalism.

Societal, artistic, and political change coincided with a massive urban renewal in Montreal, which no doubt had a significant effect on Scott Symons's conception of urban space. In many ways, this urban renewal truly began with the election of Jean Drapeau as mayor of Montreal, though most scholars acknowledge that the "modernization process" began as early as the 1940s and 1950s, and that it was "mainly prompted by changes in civil society" (Germain and Rose 63). Drapeau had served in office from 1954 to 1957, but his election in 1960 signalled the beginning of a new era, as he would stay in power for over 26 years, until 1986. Drapeau envisioned Montreal as a "world-renowned modern metropolis" (67) and took the necessary steps to achieve that status: he "welcomed foreign expertise and capital" (67) to help transform the city centre into a business district, he initiated a complete renewal of the city's transportation system, and he initiated large scale projects (such as Expo 67) in order to attract international

attention. While the eyes of the world were on Montreal on the eve of Expo 67, Drapeau, who envisioned Montreal as a metropolis of progress, adopted the means of making it thus: more high-rise buildings went up downtown than ever before. His approach was “emphatically opposed to the idea of urban planning” or restoration and rather encouraged the kind of urban renewal brought about by demolition and reconstruction (90). It is clear that “while [Drapeau] was in power, developers had the upper hand” (91).

The urban landscape in Montreal was rapidly changing, in a way that both reflected social change and guided the development of social mentalities. While skyscrapers had remained relatively conservative in design until the 1950s, the international style of architecture that emerged after the war swept over the city in the late 1950s and 1960s. In its wake, it left, among others, the Royal Trust Building (1959), Place Ville-Marie (1962), the Stock Exchange Tower (1966), and the Banque Canadienne nationale Tower (today known as 500 Place d’Armes), which was under construction when Scott Symons came to Montreal to write *Place d’Armes*. This new style engendered much discussion, not only because the city seemed to be importing a style that could be found in every big city in the world, but also, and perhaps more importantly, because the construction of these buildings necessarily implied the destruction of historical buildings, houses, and even entire neighbourhoods. This type of aggressive urban renewal brought about the destruction of areas known as the red light district and the “faubourg à m’lasse” (Hinrichs 32). It was additionally fuelled by the upcoming Expo. The entire neighbourhood of Victoriatown, known to its inhabitants as Goose Village, was bulldozed to provide a nicer view to Expo visitors as they took the Victoria Bridge onto Sainte-Hélène Island.

These urban changes find their way into Symons’s novel as symptoms of a crass liberalism that operates according to the insatiable law of capitalism. When Hugh observes the

construction site for the Banque Canadienne nationale, he reflects that the site “was aptly represented by a hole now. And once built, it would still be a hole...” (101). Hugh contrasts this future “skyliner of glass and metal” with the other buildings that constitute Place d’Armes: the old Bank of Montreal building, “as fine a piece of Greek Revival Classic architecture as there was in the nation”; the New York Life Insurance Company building, “a brownstone turret of the High Victorian Phallic”; the Aldred Building, a “pile of grey 1920s Radio City Gothic”; and, of course, Notre Dame Cathedral, an example of Gothic architecture juxtaposed to its “late Georgian” “administrative building” and “eighteenth-century presbytery” (101-02). To Hugh, as described by Symons, these buildings, each stemming from a different era and thus representing conflictual “spatio-temporalities” (to use David Harvey’s term), not only bear relation to one another, but also influence contemporary processes (quite literally in Hugh’s case, as he himself develops a relation with La Place): “each building was a Style and each Style was an Era: and all of them was a Person – a Real Presence” (120).

Hugh’s description of Place d’Armes clearly invokes it as a palimpsest on which “different historical moments all superimposed upon each other” (Harvey, “Contested” 22), one that allows these buildings to interact with each other in a way that creates “a Real Presence.” His distaste for the urban renewal of the city, epitomized by the construction of the Banque canadienne nationale Tower, is a distaste for a movement that effectively wipes the palimpsest clean and erects in its stead built forms that will, in turn, influence social processes for the worse, that is, according to the dictates of capitalism. In Symons’s novel, this type of urban renewal runs parallel to the “gliblib” mentality which, according to Hugh, attempts to attenuate cultural differences perceived as irreconcilable in the name of an amalgamating Canadian nationalism

signalled by the official adoption of the new Canadian flag in 1965, one that “closes” Hugh since he deems it “a flag for Cubes castrated” (79).

The advent of Expo 67 as an event associated with the centennial celebrations was also inscribed in this reinvigorated Canadian nationalism. Indeed, according to journalist Robert Fulford, one of the reasons invoked by Mayor Drapeau in convincing Prime Minister Diefenbaker to submit a Canadian application to host Expo 67 was that such an exhibition would “promote Canadian unity” (*Expo* 10). For this very reason, the entire endeavour is perceived by Hugh as an example of “Canadian smugliness” (186). Despite the enthusiasm and national self-consciousness of English and French Canada, the mid-1960s, during which Scott Symons left Toronto for Montreal in order to write *Place d’Armes*, were years of urban, social, and cultural turmoil. While the anxiety, the optimism, and, most of all, the energy prevalent in Montreal at the time inspired some novelists working in English, Scott Symons’s *Place d’Armes* is the work that engages most wholeheartedly with the Quebec anti-colonial thrust through its form, style, and content.

Place d’Armes: Open Form

In *Place d’Armes*, Scott Symons adopts a layered structure in which fiction and reality influence and, in turn, are influenced by each other in a dialectical relationship that multiplies the *mise en abymes* of the “novel.” (We might even think of this structure as a palimpsest of sorts, in keeping with Harvey’s urban theories.) The dynamic treatment of textual space here is expressed not only in the use of the journal form, but also in the coexistence of several different modes of fiction as well as in the physical aspects of the book: its changing font and the maps, pictures, and postcards it contains, all of which allow the reader to interact with the text in different ways.

One of the things Hugh Anderson is eager to experience and convey is the immanence of what he calls the “4-dimensional world” (113), which is the true spirit of the Canadian identity because within it, the English-Canadian rationality enters into a relationship with French-Canadian sensibility, its “unknown birthright” (137). In 4-D, two worlds (French and English Canada) are held in a precarious equilibrium, not unified but balanced in their separate and distinct qualities. As an Anglophone transplanted to Montreal, Hugh considers himself the prime candidate to access this fourth dimension because he has “a foot, legitimately, in both camps”: “C’est pourquoi, en tant qu’Anglo Canadien, j’incarne un énorme besoin du Canada français...French Canada resurrects me...adds the requisite dimension to my Anglo-Cubicularity” (188). French-Canadian sensibility does not replace or negate Hugh’s three-dimensional “Anglo-Cubicularity”; it merely allows him to become a “modern man” (143), one who can balance different and apparently incompatible components while resisting the urge to collapse or unify them.

This ability to hold conflicting entities in balance is also, according to Hugh, the ability to love. To him, the three dimensions involve

three different men, moralities, societies...visions. Each in irreparable conflict:

In 4-D body is imbedded...a world of love

In 3-D body is detached...world of common-sense

In 2-D body is dissolved...world of non-sense

And the Canadian is exposed in a unique immediacy to all three at once. His American heritage is 2-D (the American Dream); his British heritage is 3-D (Parliamentarian’s Club); his French-Catholic heritage is 4-D (Peasant Baroque!). (137)

For the English-Canadian Hugh, accessing 4-D, a state of immanence, does not imply losing his English-Canadian heritage or compromising it; rather, it is a question of developing the kind of sensibility he associates with French Canada. It is what Symons once called “la capacité essentiellement latine de penser au bout des doigts” (“Tweedledum” 5) and what Hugh describes as the ability to think at the end of one’s fingertips (*Place* 203). In order to develop this sensibility, however, Hugh must stay “open” so that he can experience “the gift of insite,” that is, the ability to engage in a dialectical relationship with La Place d’Armes, itself enacting a dialogue between opposites. For Hugh, to “insite” La Place is to be in it even as it is in him. Thus, his project in Montreal necessarily implies “the right to remain open...to see...to have insite” (136).

The openness Hugh believes is crucial to his project of becoming the modern man and the ideal Canadian, intrinsically linked to his notion of 4-D, immanence, and the ability to “insite,” allows contradicting entities to occupy one space without synthesis and without one subverting or subsuming the other. Therefore, Hugh’s notion of 4-D implies that there are French and English, Catholic and Protestant, Tory and radical, and male and female opposites that stand poised on the edge of his identity. Hugh begins his stay in Montreal with the intention of writing a novel, but he is conscious that his personal notes will be much more revealing of his experience than the end product of the novel itself: “after all he wouldn’t be able to present the complete truth in the Novel. So it was important to have complete notes for his own private edification. A kind of private revenge against the restrictions of the Novel itself – a sort of intimacy. The intimate privilege of the first person” (4). Hugh, like Symons, considers the novel a rigid form that does not allow for the kind of immanence he wishes to communicate, but believes that his notes can provide the kind of intimacy he feels he needs. Writing in the third person limits Hugh

to 3-D because 4-D is exclusive to personal experience, to the openness he constantly aims for. As a closed form, the novel constrains Hugh, forces him to stay in the static state of the three-dimensional cube: “It is odd but I think I can only write when I am Cubic” (187). Unfortunately for Symons and his protagonists, Hugh soon realizes that it is not the third person narration but the very act of writing that limits him to 3-D because it is a rational act: “Writing, then, is a 3-D affair! And there I’m trapped – because the essence of my sitting La Place is 4-D. And the very medium I use to convey that insite, the written word, betrays my quest...or at least betrays its success” (188). Living and writing, Hugh suggests, are mutually exclusive.

And yet, Hugh still attempts to convey the immanence of 4-D, even though he knows his endeavour is doomed. He uses the intimate and immediate first person to palliate the distance between his open experiences and their representations in writing. As Elspeth Cameron writes, “the power of the journal lies in its immediacy. It is, above all, a *firsthand* account of some experience the reader will probably never have. The traditional journal consists of daily entries kept chronologically. This linear pattern encourages a similar linear presentation of ideas – even a linear grammatical form (subject-verb-object)” (“Journal” 268). But of course, nothing about Hugh’s journal is “traditional”: although it does follow a chronological order, there is very little that is “linear” about his presentation of ideas and especially his grammar. In this sense, as Cameron observes, the journal offers the most appropriate form to represent flux and movement (270), and therefore is the form that allows for the most openness. As he advances in his adventure and his writing, Hugh understands that his novel will have to comprise his entire body of writing: “he thought of his novel again – of course, it wasn’t a novel – it was Life. Much of it was down now...in notes, in diary, in full. He had read over parts of it – and he knew that the real

book – his book – his Testament, was in fact all of it...he knew that he would never get it all reduced to a novel” (228).

Because Hugh’s novel will include his notes, his journal, and his actual third person narration, his distinction between “a novel” and “Life” is not a clear one. As we have seen, Symons shares so many characteristics with Hugh Anderson, and even more characteristics with Andrew Harrison, that the three ultimately become difficult to differentiate. As George Piggford remarks, “although the text appears formally to utilise metafictional techniques, it tells basically just *one* story” (50). Therefore, while the discrepancies between journal form and novel form, between first and third person accounts, provide some form of ambiguity, the very use of these techniques by Hugh (in writing about Andrew Harrison) and Symons (in writing about Hugh) constantly evoke a back and forth movement that destabilizes the distinction between reality and fiction.

Hugh’s experiences in the “reality” of the text necessarily influence his “fictional” portrayal of Andrew, as on day twelve and thirteen, when Hugh’s journal segues into his novel, but the actions and thoughts of Andrew chronologically and logically follow those of Hugh (129, 133). In the same way, the “fictional” thoughts and actions of the characters Hugh and Andrew impact both the “reality” of the text and the very book that Symons produces. Thus, Hugh reflects, “by allowing my protagonist, Andrew, to write directly of his adventure, in his Diary (which then becomes me! weird, that), by presenting the rationale of it, his Diary becomes my Novel, becomes my adventure, becomes me now – and my Novel, being merely his Diary is reduced, and what I am living becomes merely my Novel” (97). Andrew’s diary, because it requires him to think rationally, to write “in an “objectively-subjective” instead of a “subjectively-subjective” way, “kills the adventure” (97). In other words, the immediacy of

Hugh's "reality" becomes too disrupted by the "fiction" of Andrew's diary, so that Andrew's novel becomes "dangerous to my Novel – to me" (97).

But the "fictional" world of Andrew also has an impact on the "real" book Symons has produced. In his diary, Andrew writes, "as I type this diary now I realize that my novelette is in fact some deeper assault on reality than I cared to admit. It is war...between reality and me – I'll call this diary a Combat Journal – I'll stick a label on the front cover..." (265-66). Andrew shares many of Symons's own characteristics, so that his "assault on reality" takes place because Symons describes one of his characters (Hugh) being actively involved in the process of creating Symons himself as a character. But Andrew's "assault of reality" also translates into the material object of Symons's book: the word "combat" has been added by hand next to the word "journal" on the cover page and on the first page of the book. So too does the "fictional" world of Hugh have an impact on Symons's book. He also calls his log-book a "Combat Journal" and mentions that he should "type it in red" (23); the hand-written word "Combat" added on the cover page is, therefore, written in red. Furthermore, Hugh mentions that his "old-fashioned journal" is "red and black" "with a good spine to it. None of that paperback stuff" (22). It has "marbleized endpapers" and "a pocket for papers...containing one reproduction map of old Montreal and a couple of postcards – one of the Bank of Montreal, the other of Notre Dame's gut" (22). The journal described by Hugh is the very object the reader holds in her hand, complete with hand-written comments by Hugh on the maps and postcards. To further underscore the series of mirrorings between Symons, Hugh, and Andrew, the book's pocket also contains a mimeographed copy of an article on Symons from *La Patrie*, in which he discusses his upcoming novel, *Place d'Armes*.

In light of these mirrorings, we might be tempted, like Peter Brigg, to read *Place d'Armes* as a conflation of reality and fiction in which Scott Symons and “the personalities of Hugh Anderson and Hugh’s creation Andrew Harrison become confused and finally merge” (80) or to assume, as Elspeth Cameron does, that by the end of the book, “Andrew has *become* Hugh” (276). I would argue, however, that while *Place d'Armes* carefully aligns all three individuals, it does not truly merge them, nor does it quite conflate reality and fiction; rather, it blurs the line between them just enough so that the reader becomes more keenly aware of the way in which they influence one another while remaining unsure to what extent they overlap. Hugh contributes to this destabilizing effect by referring to his work sometimes as his novel, and sometimes as “notes [...] that are really me become novel” (73). Symons himself adds to the confusion by treating his work like fiction but by referring to *Place d'Armes* in turn as a work in the tradition of “literary confession” (Gibson 305), a “personal narrative” (Book cover), a “diary” (Gibson 314), and a “novel” (Symons, “Brief Biography” n.p.).

Most of these differing and contradicting modes are by definition in opposition, but their interactions with one another are such that no one mode ultimately subsumes the other forms of discourse. In fact, the book contains several more different modes: in addition to the novel, the journal, the notes, and the diary, we also find the tourist blurb (1-2), the biography (17), the letter (86-88), the interior monologue (69), the prayer (203), the list (257), and the advertisement (272), all of which coexist and interact with one another, and all of which are held in precarious balance in Symons’s work.

Furthermore, while Symons’s characters strongly resemble one another and Symons himself, his use of font always enables the reader to differentiate between the unnamed narrator’s third person account of Hugh’s doings (in small type), Hugh’s notes for his novel (in italics),

Hugh's journal (in medium type), Hugh's novel, narrated in the third person (in bold type), and his character Andrew's diary (in italics – the same font as Hugh's notes but indented further), which also contains the notes for the novel he wants to write. In each layer of narration, we find some degree of editorializing, which further dissociates the narrator from his character. In this dialectical relationship between fiction and reality, there is no synthesis. Instead, the continuous dialogue between the two, much like Symons's playful use of language, forces the reader herself to avoid the pull towards homogeneity.

***Place d'Armes*: Open Style**

Symons's openness is not only formal; it is also linguistic. When *Place d'Armes* was published, many reviewers criticized its too frequent use of "four letter words" (Kervin 51), but very few of them pointed out Symons's playfulness with language. This playfulness comes in a multitude of forms, from the wordplay to the internal rhyme, to the phonetic pun. Just as the realist novel was too rigid a form to express 4-D, so too do Symons and his characters judge that the English language as it is traditionally used is too rigid a mode of communication to translate experience. His playfulness is a means of unsettling the rigidity of language. But Symons's use of language also enacts his ideology of openness: his frequent use of French grammar, his intentionally faulty translations, and his generous use of French dialogue all destabilize the opposition between French and English and enact a dialectical relationship between both languages. Though the aim of this type of exchange between the two languages is clearly aligned with Symons's ideology, however, its success is questionable.

Symons's treatment of textual space highlights his dynamic use of language: he wields different forms of word play in the same way as he contrasts seemingly incompatible modes of discourse. In both cases, his endeavour is to use a mode of communication that conveys

immediate experience most successfully. When Hugh feels too “open” and thus vulnerable, his “magic talisman” is “Wordkill,” the act of shutting off the immanence of 4-D or of “killing with the word” (119). This action is closely linked to the act of writing, and Hugh often uses the printed word to dissociate himself from experience when it becomes too overwhelming:

All he had to do was mentally run the printed word in front of his eyes...and that would do it...sheer wordkill! Killing with the printed word that reduced life to little black letters that were inquisitorial little black priests censorial...Easy to kill that way, to disembowel, to gut...Kill with words, written wordage...life all labelled, footnotated, in cold storage. (232)

The labelling and footnotating alluded to by Hugh represent the rational act of writing, which cancels out the sensibility of 4-D. Hugh’s very description enacts the content of his explanation: the over-abundance of synonyms, the alliteration, the use of homonyms and the inner rhyme divert us from the meaning of the message. The words here kill the meaning, just as they kill the immediacy of experience for Hugh. But language is not inextricable from the act of writing: Hugh can also invoke “wordkill” orally, without the use of “little black letters”: “all he had to do was say, firmly, ‘wordkill’ and the world died out of him” (119). Language kills the immanence of 4-D because it too, like writing, is a rational act. In the translation from feeling to thinking, from 4-D to 3-D, immediacy is necessarily lost.

In light of Symons’s perceived rigidity of the English language, his endeavour is one that aims not so much to break down fixed forms as to destabilize them. He does not deconstruct language – his reader must, after all, still be able to understand what is being communicated – but rather engages playfully with it. Sometimes Symons has simply invented the words that best express his ideas instead of describing the latter with pre-existing words. This is often the case

when he is celebrating sexuality and sensuality, because his neologisms are a linguistic representation of the kind of flexibility and openness Hugh needs to access 4-D. Thus, Hugh spits his venom on the “fédérastes” (a play on “pédéraste,” the derogatory term for homosexual, and “fédéraliste”) (141) and the Canadian “smugliness” (186) but celebrates the “assoul,” “fingertits,” “earwhole,” and “cockear” (19, 187) that allow him to think sensually. At other times, Symons refuses to separate the words of a sentence in a logorrhoea that forces the reader to search for and recognize the words that form it, thus drawing attention to the constructedness of these words and the thinking process that allows language to function (26).

Ultimately, however, language proves insufficient to convey the immanence of 4-D. Hugh narrates how Andrew, finally ready to interact with La Place, stands at its “very centre” while the buildings are “all vehement in his motion” (279). Andrew attempts to communicate his state with passers-by, and tells them that “La Place d’Armes it is come alive for us, all of us” but no-one responds; in contrast to the movement of La Place, the people have “stopped dead” (279). Communication through language is impossible while Andrew is in this state. To further illustrate this point, the final line of the book, in which Hugh narrates Andrew’s action, is curtailed abruptly mid-sentence: “as he ran to embrace them in this new life he held out at fingertip to touch they” (279). The spacing between these final words grows larger as the words become dislocated and the syntax and meaning disintegrate. Although this final sentence implies that language cannot fully express the state of 4-D, it does nevertheless aim to bring the reader to the threshold of experience so that he or she can live rather than read it. As Symons explained in an interview, “my effort is not to explain these experiences to the reader, but rather to put the reader through them” (Graham 117). Language may keep Symons and Hugh from fully

describing what happens to Andrew when he finally attains 4-D, but it encourages the reader to imagine the rest.

If language has its shortcomings as a means of communication, it also serves a second, more important purpose. In *Place d'Armes*, it becomes an additional representation of Symons's ideology. Unlike MacLennan, whose novel is entirely written in English with the occasional disclaimer that parts of this or that conversation occur in French, Symons transcribes French dialogue when it takes place and incorporates French vocabulary and syntax into his writing to a degree that almost justifies classifying his book as bilingual. The relationship between French and English shifts back and forth in Symons's work. Sometimes the author superimposes French words onto an English syntax, as in his description of a coat rack splattered with "taches of aluminum paint" (28). At other times, it is the opposite and English words are inserted into a French syntax. Thus, Symons often borrows the reflexive form from the French. After his first sexual encounter with Yvon and Pierrot, Hugh understands that "to see La Place, to write my novel, to come alive, again, I must fall, utterly. To share my love I must humiliate me" (40). In choosing the pronoun "me" instead of the correct English "myself," Symons simultaneously creates an association and a dissociation. He demonstrates his ease in French and English by uniting the conjugation of one language with the vocabulary of another, but he also creates a dissonance within Hugh. "Me" becomes another, so that Hugh emerges as a fragmented individual that accommodates several opposites.

Still, at other times, Symons erroneously translates an expression in order to create an equivalent in English. During Hugh's lunch with Luc, both men switch back and forth between French and English. Both men perfectly understand each other. Hugh tells Luc that he loves Montreal because "it fulfills something in me...completely...demands a plenitude of response

from me ... forces me to flower (I could never say that in English you know...people would laugh!)” (45). Of course, Hugh is “saying” “that” in English, but Luc (and, ideally, the reader) understands that he is using the verb “to flower” for the French verb “s’épanouir,” which can only be translated in English as the verb “to flourish” (45). This English word, however, does not provide the wealth of imagery or the sexual connotation of a verb like “to flower.”

Symons’s use of language therefore works in two ways. First, his playfulness with the sonority, spelling, and arrangement of English destabilizes what he considers a paralyzing structure, one that fails to convey the immanence of 4-D. This linguistic component of Symons’s dynamic treatment of textual space does not, however, solve the problem of representation, as the last lines of the book demonstrate. Symons can only lead his reader to the edge of experience; despite his best efforts, he cannot fully communicate immanence. Second, Symons’s style allows French and English to coexist in the text and interact with one another. By embedding French words into an English syntax and vice versa, Symons illustrates the kind of dialectical relationship he envisions as the ideal remedy to a binarized conception of the country and which we see at work in his book. If the dialectical relationship between Hugh and La Place (to be “in it” as it is “in him”) is a measure of how “open” and sentient he is, then Symons’s use of English in French and French in English is also an attempt to keep language “open” and to keep two apparently conflicting forces in balance within one entity. He simultaneously underscores their difference (which makes it possible for him to manipulate translation) and points to their possible similarity (they both make use of the same alphabet; they both share a Greek and Latin heritage). In this sense, Symons’s intended use of textual space resonates with his political ideology, as both are based on dialectical exchange.

Symons's treatment of language might, in this sense, be described as "colinguisme," a term Catherine Leclerc uses to describe a form of literary code-switching that emphasizes reciprocity and that both upholds and contests the separation of languages (71, 73). And yet, Symons's endeavour ultimately fails. The type of dialectical relationship his use of language exemplifies is not exactly the same as his description of Hugh and La Place implies. Ultimately, and despite Symons's best efforts to put both languages into dialogue, *Place d'Armes* allows English to overcome and subsume French: it collapses the two languages into one. The majority of the book is written in English and, despite Hugh's claim to his friend Luc that "you French Canadians will understand it better than my own community" (46), Symons's *Place d'Armes* is clearly aimed at an Anglophone readership, for an Anglophone market. Although the newspaper article accompanying the novel states that *Place d'Armes* will be published in two languages, the book was not translated into French until 2009, proof that Francophones felt less concerned by Hugh Anderson's adventures than Symons anticipated.

To fully understand and appreciate Symons's virtuosity with language, one must be fluent in both languages like Symons himself. But to read the novel and understand its central message, one need only understand English. Although Symons's approach does unsettle any clear separation between French and English, the balancing act he attempts between the two languages ultimately gives way to a hierarchical structure in which English dominates and French becomes almost a token mode of expression. Nevertheless, Symons's treatment of language reveals a dynamic treatment of textual space, imperfect though that treatment may be. It is also a means by which the novelist attempts to insert himself "dans une tradition dont il ne partage pas la langue tutélaire: celle d'une littérature québécoise de langue française, marquée

par la confrontation des langues, et qui fait de Montréal le terrain où se joue cette confrontation tendue et créatrice” (Leclerc 280).

Montreal: Open City

If Symons’s use of form and language is not always fully successful, his endeavour to promote openness in the relationship between Hugh and the city of Montreal, more specifically with La Place d’Armes, also occasionally falters. Hugh’s attempts to “insite” La Place ultimately prove fruitful and in this type of exchange, we recognize the ideas Symons had put forth in his series of articles on French and English Canada. Instead of attempting to merge opposites, he attempts to find spaces of similarity that suggest a relation between them. But Symons ultimately fails to uphold the openness he so cherishes in his depiction of Hugh’s sexual encounters, as they become laden with power dynamics that threaten to re-enact the colonizer-colonized dichotomy.

In his desire to walk the city, Hugh resembles Paul Tallard in *Two Solitudes*, but Hugh does not walk the city in order to reconcile conflicting aspects of his identity, nor does he perambulate like a flâneur, embodying a kind of “disengaged and cynical voyeur” (Harvey, *Paris* 14). On the contrary, his walking is calculated as a form of “scout[ing],” identifying “certain sites with precision” and establishing “posts” before he converges onto La Place (Symons, *Place* 103). Hugh’s first intention in coming to Montreal is to “take the Place, outpost by outpost, street by street” (50). He uses a lexical field of war, emphasizing his desire to “prove possession of it” (33) like a conqueror. But Hugh soon finds that this approach is impossible, that his plan to converge on La Place will not do. His vocabulary is gradually replaced by a vocabulary of love and sex, in which the ideas of exchange and interpenetration are central. Walking through the Old City and “siting” buildings helps Hugh foster an openness that prepares him to make some “direct forays into La Place d’Armes itself” and “suspect some of its identity” (103).

His first walk takes him around the “outer circumference of La Place d’Armes,” the “perimeter of his world” (54). The reader can follow his quadrangle trajectory on the map included in the book, along Commissioners Street, up McGill Street, along Craig Street, and down Berri Street. At first, Hugh is completely dissociated from the city through which he is walking. Like the act of tracing his steps on a map, his experience is “flat” (54). It lacks the added dimension that he strives for. Hugh is unable to enter any kind of exchange with the buildings he associates with empty commerce. He has only disgust for the office buildings on McGill Street, which “could all be torn down without loss” (51) or with the neon signs that prevent him from seeing the buildings themselves, except as “outlines, as subsidiary facts” (54).

As Hugh walks on, however, he gradually “open[s] up” and engages in an exchange with the types of architecture he considers “organic”: “somehow he felt inside these houses that were now inside him” (54). This type of exchange prefigures the interaction he will eventually have with La Place. Hugh re-enacts the same kind of openness when he does his “World Tour” of the “Second Circuit” (73). Once again, Hugh engages in an exchange with the buildings that compose his surroundings: “the world into which I walk walks into me” (79). Hugh’s interactions with built forms make up the urban space his novel represents. In a parallel fashion, the dialectical nature of space itself is underscored by the map on which the reader follows his movements. The map is inspired by urban space, but it also, in turn, circumscribes geography, “by enclosing, defining, coding, orienting, structuring and controlling space” (R. Phillips 14). The map therefore “guides our own engagement with material spaces” by producing its own space: it “functions as a representation of space in Lefebvre’s sense, altering how we read written texts, conveying meaning about the spaces travelled through” (65).

Hugh's ability to engage with specific buildings, his propensity to remain open or to close up, is directly related to his type of open, eroticized nationalism. Hugh responds to buildings in the same way as he does to flags. The Fleurdelisé, with its strong symbolism rooted in tradition, is thus a source of inspiration: "what a magnificent flag – the white cross and fleurs-de-lys on the blue ground. It instantly engages my response...as a visual experience, as an event. Although it is not my flag...it is theirs. Yet I am they too. So it is my flag by right" (75). Similar to what Symons expressed in his column in *La Presse*, Hugh is convinced that the strong symbolism of the Fleurdelisé is a boon, not a threat, to English-Canadian nationalism. Two nationalisms can and should coexist, he believes, in order to avoid an uninspired neoliberal vision of Canada. Following this conviction, he remains open as he walks in the Old Port until he reverts to being "closed again" upon spotting the new Canadian flag, which, because of its homogenizing impulse (in French, the flag is called l'unifolié), he considers a symbol of Canadians as "crushed" and "castrated" "cubes" (79). To Hugh, the "very flag that guts us proclaims us" (79).

As Hugh reacts to flags, so too does he consider buildings as symbols and reacts to them accordingly. His reaction to specific buildings is in line with his dialectics of openness. He immediately feels a connection to buildings that represent a strong tradition of architecture, and that can easily be attributed to the French or English regime, as, for example, the Château de Ramezay and its "natural stone" (52), the "Superb Georgian architecture of the old customs building" (51) or the Marché Bonsecours, the "very best of in British Rajmanship" (74) on Place Royale. On the contrary, he feels instinctive repulsion for buildings that embody the soulless modern commerce and the threat of American hegemony through architecture. Thus, to Hugh, La Banque Canadienne nationale (now known as 500 Place d'Armes), built in the International

Style between 1963 and 1967, is representative of the death of culture by commerce. Similarly, to Hugh, Place Ville-Marie (1962), also built in the International Style, though its cross shape may hold symbolic potential, is a building intended for consumption and commerce, and it is therefore “an abortion” (147), as is the newly constructed Place des Arts, which forces him to “close down” in order to avoid being “guttled” (153).

But buildings are not simply symbols to Hugh. In his interactions with them, he treats them almost like human beings, each building belonging to a “style” which, in turn, represents an “era” (121). This, of course, is especially true of the buildings that make up La Place d’Armes. The Sulpician Seminary, for example, belongs to what Hugh deems “Peasant Baroque” style, which he associates with “New France,” while the “Merchantman’s Neo-Classic” style of the Bank of Montreal identifies it as belonging to the era of “British North America” (121). La Place as experienced by Hugh (and Andrew) is, in the words of David Harvey, a set of “conflictual heterogeneous processes which are producing spatio-temporalities as well as producing things, structures and permanencies” (“Contested” 23). Because of the ongoing tension between the several buildings that make up La Place, and the power dynamics that these buildings both embody and promote, La Place emerges as a vital space, at the centre of which stands Notre Dame Basilica, whose symbolic charge remains for Symons the bedrock of Quebec culture.

To Hugh, La Place d’Armes is the perfect site to develop openness because the urban space itself embodies the different and conflicting cultures and time periods that constitute the city of Montreal and, more generally, the country at large. Like David Harvey, Hugh perceives the buildings of Montreal, and La Place d’Armes more specifically, not merely as “things” but as “things” that precipitate out of a set of processes and that, as such, are constantly feeding back and influencing these same processes. His conception of the city is one that parallels his own

desire for movement and flux. When he becomes open, Hugh ceases to consider only the façade of buildings and engages with them as “a Real Presence” (Symons, *Place* 121).

Hugh’s circumventions repeatedly lead him to La Place, but only when he feels “open” can he truly experience it; he can only “insite” La Place when he achieves this state of flux and movement. His frequent walks do, on occasion, allow him to achieve this state, but the most significant way for Hugh to be open is to engage in homosexual relations. After having sex with two young Québécois prostitutes, Hugh has no difficulty entering La Place and is able to “stand in the centre, free man with the key back into the kingdom” (40). At this point, he is not only able to interact with La Place, but through that interaction comes closer to becoming the New Man he envisions as the ideal emblem of Canadian identity: “the veil [is] rent from my eyes, all the Place sears in me” (40). The feeling is short lived, but it allows Hugh to understand that his dialectical relation with La Place is, among other things, contingent upon his sensual or sexual relations with other men. The latter represent both a humiliation of sorts, in which he must “fall, utterly” in order to “see La Place, to write [his] novel, to come [alive],” which brings about a “deconstipation” that has “made a man out of [him] again” (40). Only when he acknowledges and experiences same-sex desire does he find himself open to La Place. And only by embracing this openness can he step closer to becoming the “New Man.”

As a remedy to the “gliblib” (Taylor 206) mentality that he believes has led the English Canadian to “self-castrate” (Symons, *Place* 47), Symons develops in Hugh a form of eroticised nationalism that goes hand in hand with his conception of the New Man. This “modern man” (143) is “patently homosentient” but not necessarily homosexual: “No – it is not the homosexual I want...it is the sentient man. A new kind of man. The man who thinks at the end of his fingertips” (203). This New Man is also the ideal Canadian because he will both influence and be

influenced by French Canada. As Hugh is having dinner with his friend Bill, he comes to the realization that “that impasse in our Tory Canadian culture, and in our national politics, it comes back to that failure to live up to our hard-ons... to our failure to feel the other man” (91). The homosentient quality of the New Man can be a redeeming feature of the English-Canadian nationalist, Symons argues, so that Hugh’s own transformation into the New Man, one who occupies a middle ground between old conceptions of masculinity (by refusing to emulate the “eunuchs at Ottawa” [189] and living up to his “hard-ons” [91]) and new ones (by embracing same-sex desire) takes place in both a sexual and a spatial realm. That spatial realm is La Place, where he can fully “insite” the heterogeneous buildings that surround him.

But if Hugh maintains a sexual openness that enables his cultural openness by cultivating and acting upon his same-sex desire, Symons himself fails to see how the sexual relations he depicts between his protagonist and young Québécois male prostitutes – one that mirrors and is inextricable from his relationship with La Place – is highly problematic. Hugh considers these relations dialectical, most explicitly because the sexual acts that constitute them are performed by both men in turn on the other. But the way in which Symons describes their encounters negates this dialectic. Hugh underscores the distinctions between himself and the young prostitutes. He reveals himself blissfully ignorant of the realities of prostitution, aestheticizing it by comparing it to an artistic vocation: “this boy is an artist. And he sells his body the way artists do, only they do it at one remove, on canvas, or sculpted” (36). He openly looks down on the young men, pointing out the “definably French Canadien – incredible ‘bad taste’” (37) of Pierrot and mocking his “indelibly Canayen” teeth, like “rotted patates frites” (38).

The most problematic treatment of these figures, however, occurs because Hugh repeatedly designates them as “land” (39). Hugh believes that by agreeing to be sodomized by

André, he is enabling a mutual exchange between French and English, oppressor and oppressed. He believes that he has somehow given back the land to the French: “Yes...I gave it back to you...to all of you” (224). But he fails to see that there is no exchange in the relationship between Hugh and these young men – there is only Hugh re-enacting the invasion of French Canada by attempting to invert it. In this sense, Symons’s writing becomes an example of what Marie-Louise Pratt calls “anti-conquest” literature in that by agreeing to be sodomized by André, Hugh adopts a “strategy of innocence [...] constituted in relation to older imperial rhetorics of conquest” (*Imperial* 7). But, as Robert K. Martin argues, this “anticolonial project,” by simply replacing the body of the colonizer by that of the colonized, “rests on the reclaiming of a racist colonial discourse that, far from being deconstructed, is simply reversed” (204) and therefore never goes beyond “the limit of the binary and oppositional” (200). The power structure between them, made explicit by the exchange of money, is simply momentarily reversed instead of being destabilized or subverted. Ultimately, it is reasserted.

Perhaps because the politics of openness Symons puts forth in his book are so decidedly in contrast with the national impetus towards synthesis and unity felt by many on the eve of the Canadian centennial, *Place d’Armes* did not enter the canon, nor has it ever been included in the canon since its publication. Despite Christopher Elson’s claim that while Symons is “arguably the most consistently undervalued English-Canadian author” (“Mourning” 11), he is also, somehow, “one of the most significant” (11), critical interest in Symons has remained faint. While Leonard Cohen’s *Beautiful Losers* and Hubert Aquin’s *Prochain Épisode* have both consistently prompted significant scholarly interest, only a handful of articles have been published on *Place d’Armes*, and, as Terry Goldie points out, these articles are due in large part to the rise of gay studies (114). One possible explanation for this critical neglect lies in the

abandonment of biculturalism as a valid philosophy to explain Canadian society and its replacement by multiculturalism, which acknowledges more than two languages, cultures, and peoples.

Despite its rather narrow conception of Canadian society, *Place d'Armes* remains important for what it tries and fails to do: discuss the way in which French- and English-Canadian identities are inextricably linked. *Place d'Armes* thus embodies Symons's fascination with the Quebec nationalist movement and his appropriation of its creative energy. His novel is representative of the limited but significant (though less intense) interest of some Anglo-Quebec novelists in the changes affecting French-Canadian society and arts, and the creative potential of marginality more generally. Symons's convictions about French-English relations are mirrored both by his depiction of urban space and his treatment of textual space. Symons chose to come to Montreal in order to give shape to his eroticized, dialectical nationalism because the city, in the very middle of a tumultuous era, represented for him a space where openness is not only sustained but encouraged. His formal, linguistic, and structural attempts at innovation coincide with, and should be read in relation to, his dynamic portrayal of Montreal's Place d'Armes.

Chapter III

Montreal, Centre and Margin:

Keith Henderson's *The Restoration* and Gail Scott's *Heroine*

Introduction

While many Anglophone novelists writing in or about Montreal in the 1960s tend to be divided into those who all but ignored the social, cultural, and political upheaval of the Quiet Revolution in the city and those who actively sought it out, it is clear that by the mid-1980s, the major changes to the province's legislation had affected Anglo-Quebecers enough to ensure that social and political tensions implicit in the "reconquest" of Montreal emerged in their fiction. The English-speaking population in Quebec reacted to the election of the PQ and the subsequent language laws in a multitude of different ways laid out across a spectrum ranging from sympathy for the nationalist movement, to whimsical acceptance, to aggressive condemnation. In the same way, the writing of the time adopts a wide variety of tones and modes to convey the self-consciousness and the anxiety related to the Anglophone change in status from "majority" (actually, a privileged 'dominant minority' in the city) to mere 'minority'" (Radice 128).

In 1983, journalists Josh Freed and Jon Kalina co-edited a humorous collection of essays aimed at this new minority entitled *The Anglo Guide to Survival in Québec*. The book is clearly not meant to offend, and the definition of satire sits atop the first page in case any (Francophone) reader should take its content too seriously. The collection features several essays by media personalities in the province, who invite readers to travel to the remote east-end of Montreal ("A Voyage East"), allow them to test their knowledge of French swear words ("Prayer or Profanity?") and Anglo-Quebec trivia ("Test your A.Q."), and argue that Jacques Cartier,

Montcalm, Charles de Gaulle, and Camille Laurin were in fact British agents working to free Britain from the Quebec yolk (“La Petite Histoire du Québec: Version Anglaise”).

Freed and Kalina’s book was a runaway success; it soon hit number one on the country’s paperback bestseller list, selling more than 55,000 copies and going into a fifth printing less than 55 days after its publication (Slopen I-3). A year and half later, Eden Press had sold over 80,000 copies of the book (Mennie C-1). Merchandise associated with the book was abundant. *The Gazette* cartoonist Terry Mosher (better known as Aislin), whose cartoons were included in Freed and Kalina’s book, created an “Anglo” T-shirt “in basic black with a white ‘Anglo’ logo in the right corner” (Schnurmacher C-1). The book was so popular that it spawned a stage adaptation, “Anglo!”, a musical cabaret show that premiered in 1984 and ran for two and a half years in Montreal, and a sequel to the guide entitled *Anglo 2: The Sequel*, published in 1988. Clearly, the collection’s subject matter appealed not only to Anglo-Montrealers and ex-Montrealers, but to Canadians in general (sales in other provinces were “strong enough to make an impact” [Slopen I-3]).

Despite its humour, there is an underlying wariness that runs through Freed and Kalina’s book. Anglophones are insistently if humorously portrayed as a persecuted minority in an invasive and almost totalitarian state. The preface suggests that ex-Montrealers miss the “romance, the allure, and the tension of being an ‘oppressed minority’” (viii). In “Le Instant French,” Stephen Phizicky describes the guilt felt at not speaking perfect French as becoming “an immigrant in your own land” (17); in “Bringing up Bébé,” Victor Dabby and David Sherman tell you how to act when your bilingual child’s French friends laugh at you: “you just smile and nod, feeling like an immigrant in your own house” (42). The book even features a “Special Refugee Section” and a refugee ghost story unfortunately titled “The Diary of Ian Frank,” which

takes place in 1984 and in which the “last of the Anglophones” is apprehended by the language police and re-educated like the protagonist of George Orwell’s novel. This recurring idea of being an exile in one’s own land demonstrates that while the tone is light, the uneasiness is genuine.

The success and content of *The Anglo Guide to Survival in Québec* are representative of the different reactions to the minoritization of Anglophones in Quebec beginning in the 1970s. On the one hand, there is a certain wistful resignation to its humour, coupled with a desire to reach out to Francophones, evident in the attribution of the last word to Francophone comedian Serge Grenier. The latter, in his bilingual essay “Le Mot Final: From One Minority to Another,” signals the importance of the shift in mentalities. While he still considers the Québécois a “minority” on the continent, he conveys the conviction that the province and its metropolis have become their own centre. He tells the readers, “You are a Montrealer”; “You are a Montréalais” (141). Like Quebecers, Anglo-Quebecers have become “another” minority. On the other hand, as the flap jacket makes clear, *The Anglo Guide* also contributes to the strengthening of the Anglo-Quebec identity through its portrayal of the “plight of a previously unknown minority group,” and, in this sense, it shapes the “imagined community” (Anderson 6) of Anglo-Montrealers (the rest of the province is ignored) as a persecuted minority. The growing self-consciousness of Anglophones in Quebec and their consequent ambivalence towards the consolidation of Quebec nationalism and the territorialization of French inform the way in which Anglo-Montreal novelists, like their non-fiction peers, represent Montreal in the 1980s.

This chapter will demonstrate how, following the election of the PQ in 1976, the passing of Bill 101 a year later, and the first referendum of 1980, Anglo-Montrealers increasingly perceived themselves as a minority whose rights were threatened. Some English-language

novelists described their community as a victimized minority, while others refused the very idea of an Anglo-Montreal community and rather welcomed Quebec political developments. Keith Henderson's *The Restoration: The Referendum Years*, published in 1987, embodies the first approach, while Gail Scott's *Heroine*, published the same year, embodies the second. In both these works, and in 1980's Anglo-Montreal fiction more generally, there is a recurring interest in the periphery that is symptomatic of the growing self-consciousness of Anglophones in Quebec. *The Restoration* and *Heroine* both depict Montreal as a contested city in which streets and buildings are sites of dispute that enact legal, political, and linguistic power struggles. These struggles throw into relief the tension between social and geographical centres and margins. Space, then, becomes a central issue, both geographically and textually reflecting the authors' conception of the city. Henderson and Scott both evoke the relationship between centre and margin, but while Henderson does so in a clear opposition between the two (an opposition reminiscent of the binaries wielded by Hugh MacLennan in *Two Solitudes*), Scott troubles this same relationship. In the same way, both authors depict Montreal as a layered city but differ in their static or dynamic treatment of urban space.

In Henderson's novel, the periphery is represented by the suburb, where many of the West Island Anglophone families congregate to watch the 1980 referendum unfold. Like the reader at which *The Anglo Guide to Survival in Québec* is aimed, its protagonist Gilbert, who refuses to live in Roxboro with his family, is an exile in Montreal. Having recently moved back to Montreal with the project of finishing his doctoral thesis on the architecture of Montreal, Gilbert is caught up in the politics of cultural heritage as he struggles to bring a historical building under the protection of the provincial government. The Mercer-Granville building, which, Gilbert discovers, houses the foundations of the Couvent des Récollets, becomes a

symbol for both Canadian history (for Gilbert) and contemporary Quebec (through efforts to save, destroy, or sell it, as well as through the provincial government's recuperation of its cultural value) in Henderson's novel. The layered building, like the layered city in Henderson's novel, is static in the same way as the novelist's treatment of textual space. The building's layers, each representing a different time period and regime, fail to enact any real exchange or interaction.

In Gail Scott's *Heroine*, the interactions between centre and periphery splinter into a multitude of social, sexual, and political tensions. As the protagonist, actively resisting nostalgia, reminisces on the last ten years of her life in Montreal and her failed love affair, she contemplates the possibility of writing a novel in which the heroine might "radiat[e] from the middle of the story" (42). Despite her affiliation with a Francophone Socialist group, the protagonist of *Heroine* is always on the margin, but, Scott suggests, this double status of being both inside (part of the whole) and outside (the main body) can also engender a potential creative energy. Scott's destabilization of the centre/margin dichotomy parallels her depiction of the city as a dynamic palimpsest, somewhat in the same order of ideas as Scott Symons in *Place d'Armes*. Her novel depicts Montreal as a space in which different linguistic layers, made prominent in the city's public language, interact with one another and play out social and political tensions, even as they embody the quotidian reality of the city's inhabitants. Scott's treatment of textual space is likewise dynamic, effecting a destabilization of language through the use of "colinguisme" and encouraging a dialectical exchange between text and reader.

Centre and Margin

In the two novels discussed here, and in 1980s Anglo-Quebec fiction more broadly, the minoritization of Anglo-Quebec is explored through a broader concern with marginality,

principally but not exclusively represented by the emergence of Quebec, and its metropolis, Montreal, as a centre in its own right, with its own margins. As Annedith Schneider writes,

the simple installation of a new person or group in the role of power does nothing to weaken the dichotomy that says some cultures and peoples are central and important, and others are not. The end of colonization did not mean the end of this dichotomy. Thus, following many colonial independence struggles, a newly independent nation might relegate some part of itself to the margin or suppress it altogether in order to reassert the centrality of its own existence. (85)

Quebec may not have become a “newly independent nation” in 1980, but the socio-political changes that led to the first referendum on sovereignty certainly reinforced its view of itself as the “distinct society” described by Jean Lesage as early as 1965 (O’Neil). Both Henderson and Scott acknowledge the centrality of Quebec, and both depict its urban centre as a contested, layered city, but Henderson’s tone is reactionary while Scott’s tone is hopeful. *The Restoration* depicts Quebec as an imperial centre, a “monolithic nation opposed to outside forces, cultures, and peoples” that demonstrates an “obsessive concern with borders” (Schneider 87). For Henderson, marginality is equated with effacement and the threat of disappearance, as Quebec enacts a form of nationalism that effectively mimics imperial logic. Conversely, *Heroine* celebrates the reintegration of the marginal subject into the city and blurs the distinctions between inside and outside, centre and margin, underscoring the way in which “the centre is and always has been home to the supposed periphery” and how “the boundaries between the two may not be at all clear” (Schneider 87).

My discussion of *The Restoration* and *Heroine* focuses on the treatment of the centre/margin dichotomy in the two novels as a parallel to their representation of the city as a

series of layers that may or may not enact a dialectical relationship. As I have discussed briefly in the previous chapter, David Harvey, in “Contested Cities,” argues against the view of the city as a mere container in which contestations are acted out. Rather, he explains, urban space is a set of processes that produce built forms and structures which, in turn, influence these same processes (23). Harvey borrows from Tony Leeds, an urban anthropologist for whom “society is a continuous process out of which structure or order precipitates” (qtd in Harvey 21) in order to develop his own theory of the dialectical relation between the urbanization process and the city as a built form. Things precipitate out of processes but ultimately affect the way in which these same processes function. In the same way, built forms precipitate out of social processes and then influence the way in which these social processes operate.

Because fixed forms have precipitated at different times in history, they are reflective of the social processes at work in these specific times and places. Harvey explains: “the result is an urban environment constituted as a palimpsest, a series of layers constituted and constructed at different historical moments all superimposed upon each other. The question then becomes how does the life process work in and around all of those things which have been constituted at different historical periods? How are new meanings given to them? How are new possibilities constructed?” (22). As we have seen in the previous chapter, Harvey’s approach privileges process over product. This conception of the city reveals the city as a dynamic palimpsest, in which several layers are constantly in tension, competing to come to the fore. Keith Henderson’s *The Restoration* and Gail Scott’s *Heroine* revolve around the meanings and possibilities ascribed to these layers in the highly contested city of Montreal. But Henderson’s depiction of the Mercer-Granville building tends towards a portrayal of urban space as one that is static and empty, and in which several layers are superimposed so that they must literally be peeled off (or

burned down) to reveal what is underneath. Only in its treatment of the relationship between cultural heritage and the political recuperation of architectural mythology does Henderson's novel evoke built forms as possibly participating in a dialectical exchange with social processes. Conversely, Scott's representation of Montreal as an urban palimpsest highlights the way in which different layers of public language are constantly interacting and speaking back to one another.

Both authors' treatment of space is, in many ways, evocative of their characters' struggle with nostalgia. As Jane Jacobs writes,

imperialism may also be reactivated in the present through various nostalgias which seek to memorialise the period of imperial might. Such trends may be marked by the self-conscious elaboration of tradition, or in the preservation of historic buildings or through the emergence of new industries of consumption which build on the past, the primitive, Nature. (*Edge* 4)

Thus, in *The Restoration*, protagonist Gilbert's efforts to protect Montreal's English architectural heritage are informed by a general nostalgia for the Montreal of his youth. Gilbert may belong to the new generation of Anglo-Montrealers which, unlike Gilbert's parents, wants to live in Montreal no matter what the political situation is, but his tone is one of genuine regret for a city with a predominantly English character. Henderson's own treatment of Montreal as a layered city in which the French visage effectively obscures English heritage thus goes hand in hand with his character's wistful evocation of the past. On the contrary, the protagonist and narrator of *Heroine* is constantly battling her own inclination towards nostalgia through a focus on the present and the process of "becoming." Scott's treatment of urban space is correspondingly a dynamic one by which what is submerged constantly threatens to erupt at the surface and

interrupt the narrative in a way that allows for “new meanings” to emerge and “new possibilities” to be “constructed.”

Both works thus respond in large part to the minoritization of English Quebec through their representation of urban space. As Joseph Yvon Thériault explains, and as I discussed briefly in the last chapter, the minoritization of Anglophones in Quebec is concomitant with the rise of Quebec nationalism after the Second World War: “by territorializing the representation of the nation to the space of Quebec, this nationalism redefined the French Canada / English Canada opposition as that of Quebec / the rest of Canada opposition, thereby making the existence of minorities in each of the new configurations of national identity more visible” (260). Therefore, by invoking the term minoritization, I refer not to the diminishing number of Anglophones in the province, or what is sometimes called the “Anglo exodus” (G. Stevenson 152), nor do I refer to the number of Anglophones dropping below that of Francophones in the province, as this was already the case long before the Quiet Revolution.⁶⁴ Instead, by “minoritization,” I invoke the creation of an Anglophone minority in Quebec in demographic, legal, and political terms signalled by a shift in the self-perception of Anglophones from belonging to the larger category of “English Canadians” to the smaller one of “Anglo-Quebecers.” This minoritization, as I discuss in the following section, was ultimately consolidated by provincial legislation concerning language, most notably Bill 101.

⁶⁴ Montreal briefly became predominantly English from 1831 to 1871, at which point it reverted to a French majority (Blanchard 140).

Language Laws and the Minoritization of English in Quebec

While the main goal of the Parti Québécois was political sovereignty,⁶⁵ the word “independence” itself was barely mentioned during the 1976 campaign (Durand 184) that led to its election. But in 1979, René Lévesque announced a referendum on “souveraineté association” in the spring of the coming year. After a divisive campaign, and with Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau a powerful force in the campaign, promising to revitalize Canadian federalism if Quebecers voted No, the referendum of 20 May 1980 was defeated, “with 59,6 percent of voters opting for the ‘No’” (Dickinson and Young 327). The growth of Quebec nationalism, the 1976 elections, and the 1980 referendum all instilled growing concern among Anglophones in Montreal about their place in the province and the future of their rights as a minority. But it was the successive language laws, passed first by Robert Bourassa and subsequently strengthened by the Lévesque government, that contributed most prominently to the anxiety of Anglophones in Quebec.

The Official Language Act introduced by the Bourassa government, otherwise known as Bill 22, proclaimed French to be the official language of Quebec.⁶⁶ It disappointed Francophones because it attempted to pacify the English-speaking business community by introducing weak

⁶⁵ Although the Parti Québécois, created in 1968 as the result of the merger between René Lévesque’s Mouvement Souveraineté-Association and the Ralliement National, won only 7 seats in the 1970 elections and 6 seats in the 1973 elections (thus becoming the official opposition until 1976), its separatist agenda put pressure on the elected parties to respond to the growing nationalist aspirations of their constituents.

⁶⁶ The politicization of language in Quebec began with the Gendron Commission in 1968, a provincial equivalent to the federal government’s Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism and a response to the ongoing conflicts within the Catholic schoolboard in Montreal (Linteau *Québec* 603). When Jean-Jacques Bertrand’s Union Nationale government passed Bill 63 in 1969, allowing for freedom of choice in terms of language of education but proposing measures to encourage use of French in the public domain (604), many nationalists demonstrated against what they perceived as too weak a law. Following some of the recommendations of the Gendron Commission, Liberal Robert Bourassa passed Bill 22 in 1974. Bourassa was eager for a concession that would help him keep the head offices of Canadian corporations in Quebec and “ward off nationalist pressures on his government,” thus allowing him to avoid choosing between nationalism and economy. The Bill, a precursor to Bill 101, was both his undoing and, according to Sheila McLeod Amopoulos and Dominique Clift, “a traumatic experience for the English community in Montreal” (117).

provisions for the promotion of French in the economic sphere;⁶⁷ it disappointed Anglophones because it introduced testing of English language competencies as a prerequisite for children who wished to attend English-language schools. As Paul-André Linteau writes, language tests soon became, for Anglophones and Allophones, “le symbole de l’autoritarisme francophone et de l’inégalité de traitement dont ils se sentent victimes” (*Québec* 605). A victim of the language battle, Bourassa’s Liberal government was replaced by Lévesque’s Parti Québécois in 1976. A year later, Bill 101 was passed, marking the progression from incitation to coercion (606).

The Charter of the French Language aimed to make French “la langue de l’État et de la Loi aussi bien que la langue normale et habituelle du travail, de l’enseignement, des communications, du commerce et des affaires” (“Charte”). To achieve its aim, Bill 101 formulated provisions that were far more restrictive than the ones found in Bill 22. The majority of Anglophones was still concerned by the regulations concerning education,⁶⁸ but those who reacted most strongly belonged to the business community, which was no longer excluded from the provisions since the Charter required that “all firms with fifty or more employees, and not just those doing business with the government, must acquire a certificate of francization” (G. Stevenson 145). Bill 101 also introduced the compulsory exclusive use of French on commercial signs, a provision that had a great impact on the Anglophone business community and that mobilized many of its members. Whether or not the feeling was justified, as Garth Stevenson

⁶⁷ Only firms that “did business with the government,” or that wished to receive subsidies would be required to “comply with provisions relating to the use of French within the firm” (G. Stevenson 117).

⁶⁸ Although testing was eliminated from its regulations, Bill 101 dictated that immigrants may only be educated in French. Only four categories of children were allowed to receive an education in English: “those whose father or mother had attended an English school in Quebec, those whose father or mother had attended an English school in another province and were already living in Quebec when the bill was adopted by the National Assembly, those who were legally enrolled in an English school in Quebec before the bill was adopted, and the younger siblings of those who qualified under the third criterion” (G. Stevenson 146).

writes, many Anglophones felt especially threatened by Bill 101 and responded by “voting with their feet” (151).⁶⁹

The term “exodus” has often been used to refer to the migration of Anglophones from Quebec following Bill 101. Although the exact reason for their departure varies from one study to the next,⁷⁰ the fact that there was indeed an important out-migration of Anglophones during these years is undeniable.⁷¹ However, the term exodus, which is recurrent in both non-fiction about Anglophones in Quebec and English-language novels set in Montreal, holds a political connotation when it is applied to designate Anglophone emigration after the election of the Parti Québécois (Locher 35). Not only does it function as a symbol of the Montreal Anglophone community moving from a self-confident majority to a self-conscious minority, but, because the great majority of these Anglophones lived in Montreal, the notion of “exodus” also conjures a correlative notion of abandonment, decrepitude, and general stagnation in the city.

After 1976, the “exodus” of Anglophones became “conspicuous, even to the casual observer” as “real estate signs sprouted like mushrooms in the Anglophone neighbourhoods and suburbs of Montreal” (G. Stevenson 152). In Mordecai Richler’s *Joshua Then and Now* (1980), the protagonist notices that his street is now “a thicket of À VENDRE / FOR SALE signs” and that Montreal has consequently become “a failing city, a wasting place, many of its shiny new

⁶⁹ The real or imagined threat for Anglophones in Quebec is made explicit by the titles of studies published on the subject: William Johnson’s *Anglophobie Made in Québec* (1991), Garth Stevenson’s *Community Besieged: The Anglophone Minority and the Politics of Quebec* (1999), and Martha Radice’s *Feeling Comfortable? The Urban Experience of Anglo-Montrealers* (2000).

⁷⁰ While Uli Locher’s study puts forth the idea that language laws and political conditions motivated the departure of Anglophones from Quebec (and the low numbers of in-migration from other provinces), others have interpreted the phenomenon differently. Melanie Jane Lange differentiates between those who respond to pull factors and thus view their move as a “means of long-term personal achievement” (innovative emigrants) and those who consider that remaining “involves a risk of losing a position already attained” (conservative migrants) (129). Lange found that a little less than two-thirds of potential migrants in Quebec belonged to the first category (130).

⁷¹ It is estimated that between 1976 and 1981, approximately 131,500 individuals whose mother tongue was English left the province (against 99,100 in the interval 1966-71 and 94,100 between 1971 and 1976), while only 25,200 moved to Quebec from other parts of Canada (against 46,900 in the interval 1966-71 and 41,900 between 1971 and 1976) (Locher 34).

office towers crying out for tenants, the construction hammers silenced, the stock exchange mute” (72). For the novel’s protagonist Joshua Shapiro, the fact that “nobody he knew was redecorating. Or planting. Everybody was thinking hard” is representative of how the city is “teetering over an abyss” (73).

Those who chose to stay in Montreal either adapted to the changes in the social and political landscape or mobilized against what they considered an infringement on their rights as a newly-created social, political, and linguistic minority. Lobby group Alliance Quebec⁷² was formed in 1982 as a reaction to the 1981 elections, in which the Liberal Party was defeated once more by the Parti Québécois. In 1989, in reaction to the perception that Alliance Quebec’s leadership had been too passive and moderate, more confrontational organizations were formed: the Unity Party and the Equality Party. The twin parties⁷³ were convinced that Alliance Quebec “had betrayed the interests of its community, that it was merely a front for the Liberal Party designed to lull Anglophones into a false sense of security, and that its failure to prevent Bill 178 from being adopted demonstrated the folly and futility of attempting to appease Quebec nationalism” (G. Stevenson 203).⁷⁴

⁷² Alliance Quebec combined the members of Participation Québec, formed only two days after the election of the Parti Québécois, by a group of young professionals who were “bilingual, federalists, and committed to spending their lives in Quebec” (G. Stevenson 138) and Positive Action, founded by professors and other people associated with McGill University to “provide the intellectual framework to articulate the aspirations of Anglophones in Quebec” (140). It was believed that a single organization could better voice the concerns and opinions of the English-speaking community in the province, and would therefore stand a better chance of receiving more significant funding from the federal government (168).

⁷³ The Unity Party only ran outside Montreal while the Equality Party only ran on the island.

⁷⁴ Bill 178 was passed by the Liberal government in 1988 in response to The Supreme Court ruling that the imposition of unilingual exterior commercial signage went against freedom of expression. Robert Bourassa’s government overturned the decision by invoking the “notwithstanding” clause of the Canadian constitution in Bill 178. This amendment to the Charter stated that “public signs and posters and commercial advertising, outside or intended for the public outside, shall be solely in French” but allowed that those intended for customers inside the establishments might “be both in French and in another language” provided that “French is markedly dominant” (qtd in Hudon). The Charter was ultimately amended in 1993, so that English was permitted on exterior commercial signs, provided it was half the size of French.

The Equality Party, with Robert Libman as leader, won four seats in the 1989 election.⁷⁵ Personal and political tensions plagued the party from the onset. Richard Holden's support of the Meech Lake Accord "antagonized the party membership and divided the caucus" (211). Keith Henderson, an English teacher at Vanier College, became active in the party so as to protest against Holden's position (211). As the chair of the party's committee on constitutional affairs, Henderson eventually became the "effective leader of the party's militant extra-parliamentary wing" (211), contributing first to the expulsion of Holden from the caucus and then to the removal of Libman from leadership. Henderson became the party leader in 1993 and stayed in office until the official demise of the party in 2003. In his memoirs, Robert Libman describes Henderson as a "constitutional purist" (171) and a "zealous and morally overbearing hardliner" (169) whose clique was "unwilling to accept any progressive notion of renewed federalism" (171).

What is particularly striking about the mobilization against Quebec language laws is to what extent space, especially urban space, became a central issue in the polemic. Certainly, the rules regarding English-language education were at the forefront of the debate. But the most visible effects of the Charter took place in Montreal, where changes in geographical names were enacted by the Commission de toponymie and especially where stores were now compelled to adopt unilingual signage in French. In these ways, Bill 101 changed the face of Montreal. Before 1960, the city was "festooned with billboards and commercial signs in English," so that "although Montreal's linguistic composition was predominantly French, its linguistic *character* was undeniably English" (Levine 7). Because language laws in Quebec were established in large part to counter what was considered a Montreal problem, the city itself became, during this period, "le principal champ de bataille et l'enjeu des luttes nationalistes et linguistiques" (Linteau

⁷⁵ The four elected members were Robert Libman, Richard Holden, Neil Cameron, and Gordon Atkinson.

Montréal 475). Thus, in the 1980s, the “reconquest” of Montreal meant the development of a French visage, and in the midst of this battle, Montreal became a contested city in which landmarks that ranged from street names to historical buildings became politically charged (Levine 7). Sherry Simon writes that “public language in Montreal has always been more than information: it has been a battleground” because “signage makes for a tangible target” (215). It is no surprise, then, that the most ardent forms of protest by Anglophones in Montreal were enacted through legal action against unilingual French signage and through flamboyant organized actions such as the boycott of English businesses that respected language laws.⁷⁶

A second spatial component to the tensions between Quebec nationalism and Anglophone self-consciousness can be found in the heritage preservation movements that were created and became increasingly active in Montreal during the 1970s and 1980s. A significant portion of the English-speaking population in Montreal seems to have channelled much of its energies and resources into preserving the Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage of Montreal. While both Anglophones and Francophones reacted to the widespread destruction of architectural heritage in Montreal, it was the buildings that belonged to “Victorian Montreal,” such as the Windsor Station, Shaughnessy House, and McGill University’s Morrice Hall, that represented what the heritage organizations like Save Montreal wanted to salvage (Drouin 44). In intending to protect a limited territory, Save Montreal was in fact fighting for an urban landscape that essentially represented the nineteenth century (44). The organization felt that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was privileging the Old City because of its distinctly French character. Buildings that embodied a vision of historical Montreal that clung to the image of Ville Marie (the name of

⁷⁶ Radio show host and founder (and only member) of the Quebec Political Action Committee Howard Galganov led the mobilization through a boycott of Fairview Mall in 1996. Former leader of Alliance Quebec William Johnson organized the boycott of Eaton in 1998. In both cases, the organizers claimed that the businesses did not respect Anglophones’ rights by refusing to hang signs in English despite the changes to Bill 101 which now allowed them to do so.

the city up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, that is, under French rule) were more adamantly protected under the 1972 “Loi sur les biens culturels.” The Ministry’s decision to favour the preservation of a Montreal reminiscent of the French regime to the detriment of “Victorian Montreal,” along with the Federal government’s refusal to get involved in these quarrels, thus threw into relief several competing forces: “une certaine hégémonie étatique qui tentait de définir les contours de l’ ‘identité québécoise,’ les difficultés qu’éprouvaient le gouvernement fédéral à valoriser une ‘identité québécoise’ au Québec et l’inertie des pouvoirs publics face à la ville vue par des promoteurs immobiliers” (Drouin 40). The architectural heritage of Montreal crystallized both tensions between federal and provincial instances concerning the shaping of a Quebec identity and tensions between public, municipal forces, and private promoters as to the future of the metropolis. This mutual influence between built forms and social processes not only underscores the dynamic nature of urban space but also finds its way into the fiction produced in English during these years.

Montreal Writers in the 1980s

The Anglophone community in Montreal both shrank and, to a certain extent, coalesced in the 1970s and 1980s. During these years, many Anglo-Montrealers asked themselves whether they should leave or stay, and this “shared interrogation” both “demarcate[d] an imagined community” of Anglo-Montrealers and in many ways intensified “their sense of belonging to the city” (Radice 29). Some left the province, some stayed and mobilized, but of course a large number stayed and changed very little in the way they interacted (or did not interact) with Franco-Montrealers. Nevertheless, as a group, “their identity [had] been displaced from unmarked and central to marked and marginal” (7). This newfound sense of themselves as marginal infuses the writing of Anglo-Montrealers, whether as a central theme, as in Keith

Henderson's *The Restoration* and Gail Scott's *Heroine*, or tangentially. Linda Leith argues that much of the English Quebec fiction produced during the 1980s "perches precariously on the social and literary periphery. The centre having been lost, or proving to be elusive, the peripheral becomes central in this fiction" ("Marginality" 101). The works of fiction produced during these years therefore present a marked interest in marginality, which is expressed spatially through a renegotiation of the relationship between centre and margin.

Perhaps the most ostentatious portrayal of English-speaking Montrealers occurs in the dystopian novels of William Weintraub and Hugh MacLennan, which effectively describe Anglophones as a persecuted minority. Weintraub's *The Underdogs*, published in 1979, and MacLennan's *Voices in Time*, published a year later, both predate the first referendum on sovereignty-association and clearly express the concerns of an increasingly self-conscious minority. In the satirical *The Underdogs*, the Anglophone protagonist Paul Pritchard (whose name designates him as a possible allusion to the protagonist of *Two Solitudes*) lives in what is now the post-referendum Republic of Quebec, where the English language has "no more status than Swahili, Esperanto or Pig Latin" (10) and where, in the Région Sud-Ouest which comprises the amalgamated neighbourhoods of Pointe Saint-Charles, Verdun, Crawford Park and Lasalle, "Montreal's Anglos now lived, in varying degrees of poverty" (18) because they cannot get a decent job without a "Certificate of Linguistic Purity" (27).⁷⁷ Paul ultimately joins the "Anglo Liberation Army" (102), whose intent is to separate and form an "independent and Sovereign Anglo state made up of the Western half of the Island of Montreal and a portion of the Eastern

⁷⁷ Other Anglo-Quebec novels produced during these years express their interest in marginality spatially. Trevor Fergusson's 1980s fiction, which includes *Onyx John* (1985) and *The Kinkajou* (1988), features marginal characters (alchemists, circus performers) and takes place in Park Extension, "an extension of the city, an appendage tacked on as an afterthought, the hobo jungle on the fringe of a civilized community, the squatters persevering on the edge" (*Onyx* 101). Geoffrey Chadwick, the protagonist of Edward Phillips's *Sunday's Child* (1981), studied law at the Université de Montréal, where he "never cracked the code. [He] remained outside looking in" (110). As the novel opens, Geoffrey lives and works in what he calls the "Westmount Ghetto" (15).

Townships” (199). Weintraub’s novel inverts the colonizer/colonized rhetoric invoked by the Quebec sovereignty movement so that the oppressed have effectively become the oppressors.

In MacLennan’s *Voices in Time*, which takes place in 2032, the central narrator John Wellfleet lives on the outskirts of what was once Montreal but has now been reduced to ashes. This elderly Anglophone has been “shucked off into nowhere” (15) by the Francophone “Third Bureaucracy” (7), which has “obliterated the Past” (7). Wellfleet must create a narrative out of the family documents a government official, André Gervais, has recovered. Thus, the novel jumps back in time and space, from Germany before and during the Second World War to 1970s Montreal.

MacLennan’s approach is more subtle than Weintraub’s, but his novel, like *The Underdogs*, clearly aligns the nationalist Parti Québécois and its separatist agenda with the 1930s Nazi Party in Germany in its treatment of the Anglophone minority. In *The Underdogs*, Mona’s parents try to escape the newly formed republic of Quebec because “It’ll be bad for the Jews. [...] They’re going to have to have somebody to blame for the mess they’re going to make” (30). The Anglo Liberation Army’s manifesto declares that Anglos of Quebec are forced to live in a “suffocating ghetto” like “second-class citizens” and forced to stand by and witness “the gradual disappearance of our noble and historic culture” (199). MacLennan’s novel makes the parallel between Quebec nationalism and Nazi ideology even more explicit. Conrad Dehmel, the most respectable character in the novel and clearly a stand-in for MacLennan himself, tells two younger men, “both of you are far too young to know what it was like in Germany before the Nazis came to power. Well, let me tell you that there are symptoms here, there is language here, that I have heard before” (112). The rise of nationalism in Quebec, he continues, can be likened to the rise of nationalism in Germany after the First World War. He compares “some of the wild

propaganda and emotions here to similar propaganda and emotions in Germany when I was young” (114). Because he encourages FLQ members to come on his television show and express their views, Wellfleet’s uncle Timothy is accused by his Jewish girlfriend Esther of wrongfully targeting his fellow Anglo-Saxons. She tells him, “What’s the matter with people like you? Do you want to turn yourselves into the Jews of the future?” (56). Through their dystopic representation of Quebec, Weintraub and MacLennan provide extreme examples of Anglophone marginality by projecting the province into the future; conversely, Keith Henderson’s novel *The Restoration* relies on the factual resonance of the past to demonstrate the way in which urban space factors into marginality.

The Restoration: Allegory and Nationalism

Keith Henderson’s novel *The Restoration* predates the novelist’s involvement in politics by about two years, but in his work we find the concerns and questions that shaped his political engagement and action. Henderson still teaches at Vanier College, where he has worked since 1976, and he has been acting as managing editor of DC Books since 1992 (McCormick, “Luxton”). In 1986, Henderson and Steve Luxton, whom he met while teaching at Vanier, bought DC Books from Louis Dudek and his wife Aileen Collins for the symbolic sum of one dollar (Frédette 45). Dudek and Collins founded the small press in 1971, but it was officially inactive from 1981 to 1986 and in fact did not publish a single title since between 1975 and 1986 (55). The first book published by the new imprint was Keith Henderson’s *The Restoration: The Referendum Years*, the thesis he completed in order to receive his M.A. in Creative Writing from Concordia University in 1985. In a 2005 interview, Henderson stated that the novel “was about family breakup and the sort of anglo diaspora that the election of the Parti Québécois produced. That was its major theme. And it was a kind of analysis, too, of French-Canadian nationalism”

(qtd in Donnelly H5). However, in the abstract of his thesis, Henderson writes that while the subject of his work is “broadly political,” its focus is on “architecture and the politics of urban restoration” (n.p.). In fact, they are the same: in Henderson’s novel, architecture is myth and architectural restoration is one of the ways in which nationalism is made concrete.

In *The Restoration*, Henderson does explore the dynamics of a dysfunctional family, but this family is a stand-in for a dysfunctional country on the brink of separation. And it is as much a study of Anglo-Quebec anxiety toward its minority status in a new Quebec as it is an analysis of French-Canadian nationalism. Henderson’s novel depicts the marginalization of English Quebec spatially, both through its focus on urban architecture and in its treatment of the suburb as a physical representation of the alienated state of Anglophones. The clear-cut opposition between French and English is represented through a static treatment of urban and textual space.

The Restoration takes place during the six months preceding the 1980 referendum on sovereignty-association. It follows Gilbert Rollins, an Anglophone doctoral student attempting to write an architectural history of the city of Montreal, who returns to Quebec while “everybody else is abandoning ship” (16). In Montreal, Gilbert renews contact with his family, just as his mother Adèle announces that she is leaving his father, and reconnects with his friend Jacynthe Danielle, for whom he develops romantic feelings. Gilbert’s father, Norm Rollins, has worked for the Mercer-Granville Printing Company for over 20 years but, as Gilbert arrives in town, the company has just locked out its (primarily French-speaking) workers. While sifting through the company files, Gilbert discovers that the (fictive) Mercer-Granville building situated in Old Montreal contains the foundations and walls of the (real) Couvent des Récollets, one of the rare architectural artefacts of the French régime. The files also reveal that the Mercer-Granville management bribed a municipal official in order to prevent the building’s classification as a

cultural property. Thus, although he is opposed to the separation of Quebec, Gilbert finds himself battling Anglo-capitalist interests and associating with the Québécois workers against his own father in an attempt to covertly recuperate the incriminating documents from the company safe and bring the current provincial government to classify the building as a cultural property. In his endeavours, he is assisted by Francophone filmmaker Suzanne Legendre and encouraged by Matthew Oates, Jacynthe's boyfriend, a defrocked Franciscan from England who now serves as special assistant to the Ministry of Cultural Affaires and petitions for the Yes in the referendum.

The action culminates on the night of the referendum when, shortly after results are announced, the No winning with a rough 60%, Gilbert witnesses the destruction of the Mercer-Granville building by fire. Gilbert's father accuses the locked out workers, but Gilbert suspects his father is behind the fire, especially after he learns that it will benefit the company. With the insurance money, Mercer-Granville will relocate to Ontario. Gilbert also discovers that Matthew and Suzanne, who have been having an affair, have manipulated him, using the compromising documents in order to blackmail the implicated city official into dropping his support for the No side. Significantly, the destruction of the Mercer-Granville building is complete, but the fire leaves the foundations of the Couvent des Récollets untouched. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs announces that the original Convent will be restored, though the south wing, later added by the Anglicans, will not be rebuilt. As the novel closes, Gilbert brings Jacynthe along for a family gathering during which his mother announces that she and his father are getting back together. Norm and Adèle will be following Mercer-Granville and moving to Ontario.

Surprisingly, much of the criticism directed at Henderson's novel concerns its title. Trevor Fergusson wrote that *The Restoration: The Referendum Years* "has to be the worst title given to a novel in many a decade" ("Timely" J13). Stephen Henighan claimed that Henderson's

novel “featured the worst title of any novel in ages” (“Conjuring” K4). But perhaps it was T.F. Rigelhoff who pinpointed the exact weakness of the title by underscoring the “oddity and awkwardness of a title that is more evocative of a conservative historical treatise” than of a work of fiction (C17). Nevertheless, the consensus among critics seems to be that Henderson takes on an important theme, one that few novelists have chosen to address directly, but fails in his attempt to mix two different modes, allegorical and realist.

This, I think, is a fair assessment, and it reveals Henderson’s use of textual space as an empty container in which the reader finds “two narrative levels [that do] not meet,” that is, “an uneasy juxtaposition of allegory and realism” (Leith, “Allegory” 40, 35). The novel works best when in the allegorical mode, and in these instances, the title seems less ill-advised as it alludes to the figurative restoration of the Rollins family and of the country it represents, as well as to the literal restoration of the Mercer-Granville building, upon which are acted out the socio-political tensions around the referendum and Quebec nationalism more broadly. But the realist mode suffers from this arrangement, and the result is that Henderson’s characters feel singularly one-dimensional; his protagonist arouses very little sympathy. Henderson’s use of the allegorical mode may well be representative of his interest in the minoritization of Anglo-Quebec. As Linda Leith argues, 1980s Anglo-Quebec novelists’ turn to minor forms parallels their interest in marginality: “the marginal, which is the subject of English-language fiction written in Quebec during the 1980s, is in these fictions also the form” (“Marginality” 106). But his inability to let the two modes interact weakens the novel’s structure. In fact, Henderson’s use of language, narration, and structure recalls MacLennan’s treatment of textual space in *Two Solitudes*, not only because of this juxtaposition without interaction of two modes, but also in light of his third

person omniscient narration, use of the past tense, and perfunctory introduction of French words (even in a conversation between several Francophones).

In Henderson's novel, the dysfunctional Rollins family stands in for a country facing disintegration. As the novel opens, and as the referendum looms, less than six months away, Gilbert's mother Adèle announces that she is leaving his father, "this time for good" (7). Adèle is the neurotic, unhappy, neglected province of Quebec, unfaithful for the last twenty-nine years (that is, since the early 1950s and the very first sparks of the Quiet Revolution). Although she has been "threatening this for years" (43), Adèle is now ready to go all the way. There will be no trial separation, because, as she says, "the way I'm feeling, hell, I might just as well have a divorce" (12). Henderson's treatment of the Rollinses is effectively an indictment of Quebec in its movement towards separation. It is difficult to take Adèle seriously; her decisions are entirely guided by Dr. Boll, under whose influence she has remained for "seven and a half years" (46). Just as Adèle has been under Dr. Boll's influence since 1972, so too, Henderson argues, has Quebec been guided by Lévesque's minister Camille Laurin,⁷⁸ a psychiatrist and the father of Bill 101, who, in 1972, published *Témoignage de Camille Laurin*, in which he compares Quebec to a patient in need of a treatment:

C'est ma profession qui m'a d'abord permis de connaître comment naît un compromis névrotique, l'entrave qu'il constitue et les souffrances qu'il entraîne [...]. Les compromis plus ou moins névrotiques qui caractérisent le comportement de l'homme québécois [...], je les ai finalement compris à observer mes patients, ma propre vie et les ambivalences de mes frères québécois. J'en ai conclu qu'une psychothérapie collective s'imposait, à laquelle éventuellement je ne saurais refuser mon apport. (55)

⁷⁸ In her article "An Allegory of Quebec" (1990), Linda Leith writes that the minister of cultural affairs mentioned several times in the novel "would be Camille Laurin, but he, like René Lévesque, to whom Henderson also refers, is never named" (37). In fact, the minister of cultural affairs in 1980 would have been Denis Vaugeois.

According to Guy Rocher, Camille Laurin was “l’analyste et le thérapeute du Québec” (72). But just as the intellectual elite of Lévesque’s cabinet has been criticized for embodying a new, secular clergy (in the religion of nationalism) in “la république des professeurs” where Quebec has exchanged “un cléricalisme contre un autre” (Pelletier 424), so too does Pam, Gilbert’s sister, voice concerns about Dr. Boll’s influence on Adèle: “she’s just substituting one authority figure for another” (47).

Adèle wants her independence from Norm, but she cannot invoke a good reason to petition for divorce and when she pleads “mental cruelty” (79), the judge not only dismisses her case expediently but also admonishes her for wanting to divorce a steadfast father and provider: “rather than trying to compromise all this, madame, you should be thanking God that He has been kind enough to provide for you so generously as this. I’ve seen enough cases in my years to know that you are a fortunate woman” (102). The judge, because of his use of the word “madame,” seems to be French Canadian and Adèle feels certain that he is “an old-school judge – Catholic” (102), his admonitions seeming outdated and insensitive. As an allegorical figure representing simultaneously the French-Canadian rear-guard and the judicial apparatus, however, the judge also rules against separation. In this sense, his attitude parallels the judicial saga to invalidate Bill 101⁷⁹ and the subsequent efforts of the Equality Party (Henderson among them) to bring the courts to rule that a unilateral declaration of independence by Quebec would be unconstitutional.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ In early 1984, a court challenge was launched by Valerie Ford who had been charged with displaying a bilingual sign (G. Stevenson 187). Ford claimed the right to include English as well as French on the commercial sign of her wool store in Pointe-Claire. The superior Court ruled in her favour on December 1984. The government appealed, but the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled in her favour in 1986. The Supreme Court finally ruled in her favour in 1988, a decision that prompted Bourassa to invoke the “notwithstanding clause” in Bill 178.

⁸⁰ In 1995, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that “a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by Quebec would be unconstitutional” (Morton 431). However, the Court ruling proceeded, if separatists were to win “clear majority on a clear question, then there would be a constitutional duty for Ottawa and the rest of Canada to negotiate

Henderson's depiction of Quebec through Adèle is harsh, but his attitude towards the rest of Canada, visible through his portrayal of Norm, is not whitewashed either. As a "great believer in free enterprise" (26), Norm has spent the last forty-two years working as the treasurer for Mercer-Granville and has become "a faithful reflection of his firm," which, like him, represents the English old guard. Mercer-Granville is a family-owned concern with the dowager owning "94% of the outstanding shares" (27), a relic of the aristocratic nineteenth-century WASP business community. The company has begun to dwindle because only about 10% of its profits are returned to the company, a decline compounded by the company's refusal to invest in a French market. Like the company for whom he works, Norm is a "decent, faithful sort of taxpayer," but he is also "mule-headed, narrow-minded," "temper-choked" and "pedantic" (8). Nor are Adèle's recriminations altogether groundless. Norm's devotion to the company has continuously eclipsed her needs, just as the economy-driven Canadian government has continuously ignored the province's desire for cultural recognition. He refuses to take a day off work when their child dies, never tells her how much money he earns, so that even his daughter thinks that "he's just so – so old-fashioned," "so uptight" (44). But Adèle's greatest grievance is that "you can't talk to Norm. At least *I* can't" (81), just as the main grievance of Quebec is the failure of dialogue with Ottawa in its attempts to be recognized as an autonomous nation within the country. Norm's obstinacy towards his wife parallels his obstinacy towards Quebec nationalism and independence. He refuses to think about leaving the province, his refusal stemming not from a genuine appreciation for the place but from a sense of pride: "he's going to fight it out. Leaving would be giving in to them. That's what he says" (76). In this sense, Norm

the terms of separation with the Quebec government" (431). For a better idea of Henderson's role in the equality Party's endeavour, see his book *Staying Canadian: The Struggle against UDI* (1997).

represents the closed-mindedness of English Canada towards the affirmation of a Quebec identity.

In Henderson's novel, most of the minor characters also serve as social paradigms; sometimes they come to represent more than one thing. Gilbert's sister Pam and her husband Randy are para-psychology enthusiasts, but they are also the slightly xenophobic West Island Anglophones who will relocate to Ontario once the referendum is over. Jacynthe's sister Mélanie and her husband Jean-Louis are the anti-semitic anarcho-separatists who see English colonialism everywhere. Matthew Oates, formerly a priest, now "devotes the same energies to political causes" (91). Jacynthe complains that, like the province of Quebec during the Quiet Revolution, he is "exchanging one priesthood for another" (89). The fact that Matthew is English significantly complicates his role as one of the holders of power. However, like Jeff Hotham, the American who "sprinkle[s] his speech with French phrases and parlous anecdotes about the *parti québécois*" (50), and whose use of the pronoun "we" in advocating independence Gilbert finds "strangely offensive" (51), Matthew is Henderson's version of the misguided Anglophone who champions a political cause that has "nothing whatsoever to do with him" (91). Finally, Suzanne Legendre is the *artiste engagée* who subordinates her art to her political convictions and who is, quite literally, in bed with the PQ government.

If, amidst these conflicting and sometimes conspiring forces, Norm and Adèle Rollins represent pre-referendum Canada and Quebec, the outlook for their future is not a positive one. Adèle grows sentimental when, at the christening that closes the novel, she sees "all [her] family together like this" (199), but sentiment has very little to do with her reasons for "getting back together" with Norm (196). As Pam surmises, Adèle reunites with her estranged husband for financial gain, having found out that "all that talk of his about what a lousy pension he had

wasn't true. He's really quite well set up" (196). Her move towards reconciliation also occurs after she realizes that living on her own is more difficult than she anticipated: her commute to work is long and tiring, and the property she has bought is regularly flooded and overrun by ants (146). Norm's attitude is to "forgive and forget" (8), under the assumption that Adèle is "not a well woman" (97). The outlook for the future of their union is bleak, a fact symbolized by their intention to follow Mercer-Granville in its move to Kitchener, Ontario. Far from illustrating a hopeful future for Quebec and Canada, Norm and Adèle's patched-up marriage is simply the lesser of two evils. It is clear that neither party has changed, and that the past is bound to repeat itself, most likely in the form of yet another one of Adèle's trial separations. If things stay as they are, Henderson implies, Quebec is heading for another referendum that may well reveal the Yes side as victorious, as Norm's emphasis on René Lévesque's "À la prochaine" (183) underscores.

The hope for a resolution between Quebec and Canada in Henderson's novel, and the indication that Henderson, like Hugh MacLennan and Scott Symons, still clings to a nationalist conception of Canada, comes in the guise of Gilbert and Jacynthe, who represent more reasonable, more accommodating versions of Norm and Adèle. Gilbert is the mild-mannered Anglophone who speaks French, understands and sympathizes with the grievances of the Québécois, while Jacynthe, the Francophone, is proud of her culture but will "*not* be voting Yes" (88). English Canada needs to be more sympathetic to the province's claims, Henderson is arguing, while Quebec itself must think about its future with less passion and more reason. Like Gilbert, Jacynthe just wants "to be left alone": "I want to cultivate my garden. I want to look at beautiful things. I want to feel serene" (92). Both Gilbert and Jacynthe are more conciliatory than their forerunners Norm and Adèle, but their diluted forms of assertion admittedly come off as

colourless, uninspired and, as Linda Leith points out, somewhat “unconvincing” (Leith, “Allegory” 34).

Despite this weakness in characterization, Henderson manages to redeem the interest in Gilbert and Jacynthe by making them focalizers for the novel’s central theme of architectural heritage. Gilbert and Jacynthe may represent Henderson’s solution to the future of the country, but they do so mainly by demonstrating an attachment to the past, a nostalgia of sorts for the epoch of the “Bonne Entente”; they have a profound respect for cultural heritage and understand that this heritage is both French and English. Opposed to separation, Jacynthe refuses to become politically involved, arguing that journalists and politicians are “always primed to set the buildings on fire” (88). Her reference to the burning of the Montreal parliament by English Montrealers upset at Lord Elgin’s lenience towards rebels in the Rebellion Losses Bill foreshadows the burning of the Mercer-Granville building, but it also makes clear the link between the destruction of historical buildings and the collapse of social order in Henderson’s novel. Somehow, the preservation of historical buildings is associated with moral rectitude. Jacynthe’s “great passion” is interior design, and the “converted warehouse” she lives in is a model of preservation, a “*vieux Montréal* restoration job complete with pine floors, a scattering of antiques, and the required tall dried flowers in rough pots” (15). The walls are “stripped to reveal the original stone” so that the overall effect is one of “grace and care” (49). Upon visiting her apartment for the first time, Gilbert is reminded of Ruskin’s line, “the one about good taste being an essentially moral quality” (49).

In light of his doctoral work and of his efforts to place the Mercer-Granville building under the protection of the *Loi sur les biens culturels*, Gilbert obviously shares Jacynthe’s inclination towards cultural preservation, but Gilbert’s intellectual attachment to architecture is

notably tinged with “recurrent nostalgia” (93) for the Montreal he left before the Parti Québécois and Bill 101. When he visits his father in Ahuntsic, he remembers how Kelly Street had been renamed Henri Bourassa, “Henry Birds-ass boulevard as his cousins had christened it in visceral protest over the change to French the year before they left for Winnipeg” (93). This nostalgia not only harks back to a city with a primarily English visage but also underscores the general stagnation and decay perceived and expressed by several 1980s English novelists. Gilbert notices the “shabby caf  s that were once colourful and alive” in the neighbourhood around Concordia University (63). After 1976, he explains, many of the “refugees turned restaurateurs” had left the province so that “what was left in mid-winter 1980 was the suspicion that good times, in a city as in a life, are fragile and evanescent and should be cherished while they last” (63).

Gilbert’s attachment to the past is expressed through his desire to study and protect architectural forms, but this desire is also inextricable from his federalist ideology. For Gilbert, the necessity of protecting historical buildings is aligned with the necessity of protecting the idea of Canada, as the preservation of architecture becomes a statement against change. It becomes “a bulwark against the very fears of dispossession he’d fallen prey to now – because architecture was permanent, because architecture had foundations, because architecture didn’t change and turn against you” (163). For Gilbert, the country is like an old building that deserves to be restored, not torn down. In his attempts to keep “an old world grace alive in people’s hearts,” Gilbert understands himself as a “silly sentimentalist of old buildings and constitutions” (73). Accordingly, his arguments against separation are expressed in architectural terms. He tells Matthew that “what you and your government are proposing is to me like putting up a highrise building in the middle of an historic neighbourhood” (66). Gilbert’s arguments are aesthetic – he pleads for Canadian unity not for the mutual benefit of its provinces but because the country, like

an old building, provides a sense of place. Independence would be like “ripping down a fine old home for a shopping mall” (66). The mall would work, but “in the process, they would have jackhammered a heritage, ripped out the spirit from the place” (66).

Gilbert and Jacynthe’s valorization of the past through its built forms causes Adèle and Norm to stand out in even sharper contrast as representative of a province that is willing to turn its back on more than one hundred years of constitutional matrimony and a country that values tradition and unity for the wrong reasons. Adèle is particularly unattached to the past, as is demonstrated in her desire to put the family house up for sale and give away its furniture as soon as possible. Norm’s vehement order to “keep what you build” (163) demonstrates none of Gilbert’s own attachment to the past for its intrinsic value; rather, Norm’s conviction stems from the economic reasoning that one must protect one’s material heritage because “gangs of them out there [...] just want to take it from you” (135). The Rollins house, which is ultimately sold, resonates in the allegorical context of Henderson’s novel. It represents the material heritage of the family, but it takes on additional meaning as the idea of Canada, which would be lost if Quebec should separate – if, “like Adèle, the people of the province decided they wanted a new house” (163). The restoration of the title therefore mainly alludes to the reconstitution of the family unit, of course, but it also refers to the restoration of the Mercer-Granville Building, which takes on mythical overtones in its allegorical representation of the province of Quebec.

Architecture as Myth

In light of Gilbert’s profound attachment to architectural forms, it is no great surprise that the action in *The Restoration* revolves around a central building, albeit a fictional one. The Mercer-Granville building is, like the Rollinses, representative of Canada in its depiction of architectural layers, each representing a different regime. It is also a symbol of the new province

of Quebec, in which government legislation contends with socio-economic forces in its attempt to establish the bases of a Quebec identity that excludes, or at the very least marginalizes, English contribution. Because of the historical and cultural charges it carries, the Mercer-Granville building gives credence to Walter Benjamin's claim that architecture is "the most important testimony to latent 'mythology'" (834). Although architecture speaks "only indirectly of its content," that language "bears testimony to a hidden mythology by making it available to interpretation in concrete form" (Spurr 1).

The Mercer-Granville building looms large over the action of *The Restoration*. As Gilbert suspects, it conceals "the walls of Père Joseph Danis' Couvent des Récollets, first built in 1702, supposedly demolished in 1867, having been loaned to the Anglicans twelve years before the *patriote* Rebellion" (33). The commercial building thus not only houses one of the rare vestiges of the French regime in the city, but it also includes a "south wing that jutted to the rear, added by the Anglicans" (195). The building's layered structure corresponds to a neat succession of historical periods. Its three structural entities represent three distinctive epochs of Montreal: the walls of the convent, recalling a French city under the French regime; an addition that represents the English conquest and regime; and the commercial building itself, representative of a modern, economically-minded metropolis. Yet these different layers in no way interact with one another: the French and English foundations are superimposed; the commercial building effectively covers and conceals both foundations.

To Gilbert, the building, with all the layers that constitute it, deserves to be protected because the mythology it expresses dovetails so nicely with his own federalist ideology. The building embodies the myth of two founding nations that engage in an "entente cordiale": "for forty seven years from 1820 to Confederation, the Couvent des Récollets had been a Protestant

Church too, on loan to a congregation of Anglicans whose church had burned to the ground in one of the city's successive conflagrations" (101). The charitable act of the Récollets towards the Anglicans, of the French towards the English, of the conquered towards the conquerors, symbolizes a *bonne entente* that no longer exists, and for which Gilbert is nostalgic. It is "a link to a past he valued, a layered, hybrid sort of past in its own way precious" because of the "spirit of graciousness and charity" that seems to pervade it, although it is difficult to read the Mercer-Granville building or Gilbert's idea of the past as hybrid in any way, considering the neat distinction of all its layers (101).

It is this past, real or imagined, that motivates Gilbert into believing that "this place – the city, the country could be a model" (69). The building is representative of the city, the province, and, in turn, the country. The building as a symbol of cordial relations between French and English is all the more significant in the midst of tensions around the upcoming referendum, in which, Gilbert believes, the "whole fabric of understanding and tolerance is being torn up" (70). The addition of the south wing by the Anglicans, an additional architectural layer, thus becomes an inverted parallel to the intended separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. For these reasons, Gilbert is particularly invested in bringing the Mercer-Granville building to be classified as a cultural property. In this sense, Henderson's novel echoes many of the concerns of Montrealers, both French and English, as to the encroachment of commerce on the cultural heritage of the city, and his depiction of the forces that conspire to either save or destroy the building is the only exception to an otherwise static treatment of urban space in the novel.

Henderson's treatment of the fictive Mercer-Granville building is clearly inspired by the social and political backlash to the urban renewal movement led by Jean Drapeau in the 1960s. If a majority of the city's population was behind mayor Drapeau in his great endeavours in the

1960s, from the early 1970s onwards, an increasing number of voices were heard against the demolition of historical buildings that swept over the city and inevitably accompanied his projects. As early as 1962, the Jacques Viger Commission was created in order to “advise the city Planning Department on such actions that might further the preservation and redevelopment of Old Montreal” (Wilson and McLean n.p.). Under the recommendation of the Viger Commission, the Historic Monuments Commission of Quebec classified Old Montreal as a historical area, in which it was “forbidden to demolish or alter a building, or to construct anything new, without government approval” (n.p.).

This new historical area protected a section of the city that ran east-west from Berri Street to McGill Street, and north-south from Notre-Dame to Commissioners and de la Commune (“Commission”). The fictional Mercer-Granville building, situated at the corner of rue des Récollets and rue Sainte-Hélène, should have been included in this classified area, and Gilbert expresses surprise and dismay because “this is already supposed to be an historic site” (40). But Mercer-Granville, objecting “on the grounds that designation might cripple its plans for expansion” (37), was obviously successful in avoiding classification.

According to Gilbert’s account of the Mercer-Granville papers, the matter of the building’s classification as cultural property resurfaced again in late 1971 “with the intervention of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs” (37). This event coincides with the first examples of the provincial government’s interest in cultural heritage and the “Loi sur les biens culturels” it passed in 1972, which aimed to facilitate the classification of buildings as cultural property. While the law was initially applauded, many people were subsequently disenchanted: the “Commission des biens culturels,” a consultative body attached to the ministry, could recommend classifying buildings, but the Minister of Cultural Affairs ultimately had, and made

use of his discretionary power. In Henderson's novel, the minister's attempt to register the Mercer-Granville building as a cultural property is ultimately thwarted by corrupt city official Lucien Bolduc, who is involved in a kick back scheme with the company, proof that legislation must also contend with economic forces in its protection of cultural heritage. For Gilbert's father, in fact, economic growth and cultural heritage preservation are mutually exclusive: "Take a look at the street signs around here. Same as every other kind in the city. No fancy red and gold 'Viger Commission' signs, and I thank the good lord for that or we'd have been in the poorhouse long before this" (40). In Norm's mind, the city of Ville-Marie and Victorian Montreal no longer hold relevance in what has become the metropolis of commerce.

An additional complaint towards the Commission des biens culturels came mainly from Anglo-Montrealers, who felt that, in developing its concept of cultural sovereignty, the Bourassa government's Ministry of Cultural Affairs was privileging buildings that embodied a conception of historical Montreal as the product of the French colony, thus disregarding the buildings that constituted "Victorian Montreal" (Drouin 34). With the election of the Parti Québécois in 1976, this affiliation between cultural sovereignty, national identity, and heritage preservation came into sharper focus. As Martin Drouin writes in *Le Combat du patrimoine à Montréal*, the Quebec state "prit les commandes de la conservation du patrimoine en tentant, à partir des années 1970, de légitimer l'existence d'une nation, étendue à l'ensemble du territoire de la province, et en identifiant un patrimoine porteur d'une 'identité québécoise'" (11). Heritage preservation became one of the ways to shape cultural identity. As David Harvey explains, the city is a dynamic entity in which built forms, precipitating out of social and economic processes, in turn affect and constrain these same social and economic processes. Therefore, if we understand architectural mythology as a "set of symbols and narratives through which society gives meaning

to itself' (Spurr 1), the efforts to save Montreal's architectural heritage demonstrate not only to what extent certain buildings may embody different historical periods, but also how the social and political forces that bring about the restoration of such buildings may recuperate, adapt, and adjust a certain mythology in order to construct a specific narrative. In short, while the Quebec government sought to protect architectural heritage that told one story (by invoking New France), a portion of the Anglo-Quebec community strove to save the Victorian Montreal buildings, which told another story, as a way to resist Quebec nationalism.

For Gilbert, the provincial government's decisions concerning cultural property are in line with its efforts towards independence: in both cases, he pleads, valuable things get destroyed. Echoing his conviction that the country is like a historical building that merits preservation, Gilbert watches the preparations for the referendum with growing dismay: "it's like watching what happened after that old crone sold the Van Horne mansion and the wrecking balls moved in" (70). Gilbert's reference to the destruction of the Van Horne mansion underscores his fear at the provincial government's disregard for English cultural heritage in its establishment of a rallying Quebec identity. No matter what the outcome of the referendum proves to be, Henderson's character suggests, the progressive minoritization of Anglophones in Montreal is sure to be expedited by the destruction of the cultural property that recalls their former influence as a "dominant minority" (Radice 128).

Gilbert's comment is an indictment of the Quebec government's inaction in the attempt to save the Van Horne mansion. The mansion had been bought in 1967 by a promoter who wished to demolish it in order to build a fourteen-story commercial building. The Ministry's refusal to put the building under government protection under the new law stemmed, one newspaper reported, from its feeling that the building was "not typically québécois" (qtd in

Drouin 37). Van Horne himself, an American of Dutch extraction who was president of the Canadian Pacific Railroad in its first years of activity, hardly fit the national hero mould. At the municipal level, the city of Montreal's permit agency saw no legal objections to the destruction of the mansion for economic reasons. In the efforts to save the Van Horne mansion, as well as in the creation of citizen-run architectural heritage conservation groups such as "Save Montreal / Sauvons Montréal" in 1973 and "Heritage Montreal" two years later, the inevitable dichotomy between French and English resurfaced. It was clear that the movement to save the Van Horne mansion was in great part an Anglophone initiative (D'Iberville-Moreau 13). Architect Michael Fish wrote in *Le Devoir*, "Le nom de Sir William Van Horne n'évoque pas grand-chose pour la communauté francophone de Montréal. C'est un des aspects les plus désolants de la division de notre communauté, qui ne rend que plus vivante l'expression si souvent employée des deux 'solitudes'" (4).⁸¹

The example of the Van Horne mansion, as mentioned by Gilbert Rollins, throws into relief the link between cultural heritage and national identity, underscoring by the same token the minoritization of Anglophones in Montreal. The interrelation of cultural heritage and national identity is evidenced by the fact that the intention of classifying the building, though it may be authentic, is also a pretence to gain access to the incriminating documents in order to blackmail the city official, Lucien Bolduc, into ceasing his campaigning activities for the No. The climax of Henderson's novel, the burning of the Mercer-Granville building, reveals to what extent architectural preservation is fraught with political intent. When Gilbert meets his father as both men are observing the blaze, the latter accuses the Mercer-Granville workers of arson. Gilbert,

⁸¹ Surprisingly, in light of Van Horne's role in overseeing the development of the Canadian transcontinental railway, the appeals to the federal government to save the building went unanswered. In *The Gazette*, Donna Gabeline wrote, "how ironic is it that at the same time Canadians are searching for a national identity, we are systematically tearing down beautiful and historical elements of that identity – such as the Van Horne mansion – and replacing them with anonymous stacks of concrete and glass?" (qtd in Drouin 39).

however, has reason to suspect that the company, and perhaps even his father, are behind the fire, especially after he speaks to Suzanne, who points out that it is “the easy way out for them, eh? A little bit of insurance money and then good-bye Charlie Brown!” (192). Indeed, as the novel closes, Gilbert learns that Mercer-Granville will be re-opening in Kitchener, Ontario. The convenience of the fire is not lost on the reader, as it precipitates Mercer-Granville’s long-planned move out of the province while allowing the company to circumvent any classification the government may have had in mind, and which would have forbidden the company to go ahead with its alleged plan to “sell to a hotel developer” (108).

The Mercer-Granville fire recalls the burning of the Parliament in 1847, when Montreal was the capital of Upper and Lower Canada. Like the Mercer-Granville fire, the fire of 1847 is the result of racial tensions. The “Montreal English” demonstrated their ire by “heaving the furniture out the windows of the Parliament Buildings and then burning them to the ground. All because a British governor had decided to be lenient to some of our rebels” (89). The burning of the Mercer-Granville building thus becomes a symbol of extreme Anglophone protest, both past and present, while it also remains an explicit representation of the kind of urban destruction and decay some Anglo-Montreal writers associate with the minoritization of English-speaking Montrealers.

Indeed, one of the ways in which Anglo-Montreal writers in the 1980s seem to express their anxiety or malaise towards the changing character of the city and the social status of Anglophones to which it can be linked is through the recurring images of burning or exploding buildings, especially buildings that embody or are in some way attached to a form of English presence or authority. In Ann Diamond’s *Mona’s Dance* (1988), the character of Richard Loewen, who ultimately replaces the physically identical Prime Minister, is followed everywhere

by unexplained fires. The climax of Trevor Fergusson's *Onyx John* (1985) is the explosion, voluntary or accidental, of the narrator's father's alchemy lab, situated in the basement of the family house. In Fergusson's *The Kinkajou* (1988), the protagonist Kyle Elder's childhood love Cindy Bottomley, whose father, a fireman, died while on duty, develops into a pyromaniac and lights fires in the Park Extension neighbourhood. The central trope of Kenneth Radu's second novel, *Home Fires* (1992), is the burning of houses and buildings. Radu's Montreal is "fire city" (243), in which Nick, a pyromaniac family man, sets fire to a set of symbols: the library (where he spends time assiduously transcribing French idioms) and the gazebo of his neighbour (a Vietnamese man whose French is so flawless it infuriates Nick).

In Hugh MacLennan's *Voices in Time* (1980), several references are made to the destruction of Montreal, but it is clear that "it had been made ugly many years before the Destructions came" (20). In John Fleetwell's memory, the city had become an unwieldy urban entity ruled by developers, who blotted out the evening star "with another huge oblong of concrete and glass. Not long afterwards the local bureaucracy renamed the historic old place Metro" (19). Significantly, the entire history of John's family disappears when he is young because, while John's mother was away, "a developer had bought the property, smashed the houses down, and dug a hole thirty meters deep and a block long" (7). Upon her return, there is "no sign" of the boxes in which she had stored the notes that documented her own life as well as those of Conrad Dehmel and Timothy Wellfleet (7). MacLennan emphasizes the lack of morals of the kind of developers that turned Montreal into its near anagram Metro. They "thumbed their noses at zoning laws by the usual expedient of bribing officials" or "let loose batteries of lawyers

against any citizens' group that tried to keep them out" (128). If that did not work, "they hired arsonists to burn the place down" (129).⁸²

In some Anglo-Quebec fiction, what is not destroyed is just as symbolic as what is destroyed. In Edward Phillips's *Sunday's Child* (1981), protagonist Geoffrey Chadwick claims a kinship to Anglophone Montreal through his cultural property patronage: "I was a friend of Windsor Station, having donated a small, tax-deductible sum to keep that hideous pile of Victorian architecture from being torn down. I don't much like Windsor Station, but at least it is a known evil, better no doubt than the high-rise instant slum, which would be knocked together in a matter of weeks to replace it" (75). In Keith Henderson's *The Restoration*, significantly, the Mercer-Granville fire destroys the most recent commercial construction but leaves the foundations of the Couvent des Récollets intact. Gilbert intends to suggest that both the convent and the Anglican addition be restored, and when, a few days after the fire, Gilbert meets with the provincial minister of cultural affairs, the latter shows himself very enthusiastic about restoring the convent, but Gilbert's visit teaches him to what extent political motivation is inextricable from the efforts towards restoration. Not only will Gilbert be denied a permit to investigate the ruins, thus cutting short any possible objection to the nationalist bent of the restoration project, but the Minister himself goads the corrupt and coerced city official Lucien Bolduc in front of Gilbert, emphasizing that Gilbert is the reason "we know as much as we do" and that "it's quite amazing what a good shake-up can do to get at the truth of things – as I'm sure M. Bolduc would

⁸² In William Weintraub's *The Underdogs*, the Sun Life Building, an icon of Montreal's English-speaking business community, having once boasted of being "the largest office building in the British Commonwealth" (11), is not destroyed or set on fire; rather, it is appropriated by the provincial government and transformed to serve the least capital-driven activity possible, agriculture. The building itself may not be destroyed, but its purpose is completely subverted. The sheer inefficiency of the building in its new vocation is Weintraub's indictment of the Parti Québécois's policies, but the travesty of its original use comments ironically on the idea of "rural Quebec" as one of the pillars of Quebec identity.

agree” (193). In his position as city official, Bolduc will be forced to support the provincial government’s decisions, lest he be prosecuted for corruption.

To Gilbert’s suggestion that the ministry should encourage a restoration “in keeping with the layers of the building’s history,” the minister responds with a “studied coolness” (194). The government’s plan for restoration calls for the recuperation of a specific mythology, one that glorifies the French regime and minimizes the historical presence of the English in Montreal. Matthew explains most efficiently the creation of this narrative by stating that the Prime Minister himself equates the mythological signification of the building with the mythological underpinnings of Quebec nationalism: “He sees it as a small version of what it is we’re attempting to do. Un grand projet de restauration. His phrase” (112). Henderson’s emphasis on the recuperation of architectural mythology by political ideology is evidenced by the fact that the scene in which Gilbert visits the minister is the only passage that was added to Henderson’s thesis before it was published as *The Restoration*, and that the evocation of an additional wing built by Anglicans is the only historical inaccuracy in the novel. The addition stresses to what extent the government’s endeavours to promote the Yes in the referendum (through the blackmail of Lucien Bolduc), though ultimately fruitless, are tied to its valorization of the kind of cultural property that supports its conception of Quebec identity. To this conception of identity, the history of Anglo-Montreal has nothing to contribute. A few days after his encounter with the minister, Gilbert learns that

Nothing was official, but it looked very likely that there would be a restoration under the supervision of the Ministry, though, of course, only of the original convent itself.

The south wing that jutted to the rear, added by the Anglicans, would not be rebuilt.

Instead, the land at the back would be leased, probably to European developers, for the construction of a small hotel. (195)

Not only will the English architectural contribution be ignored, but the space it occupied will be dedicated to commercial use, an ironic echo of Mercer-Granville's own plans before the fire and the building's classification.

The Suburbs

Henderson's treatment of the Mercer-Granville building as a layered entity that presupposes an opposition between these layers mirrors the spatial dichotomy of centre and margin, more specifically the opposition between city centre and suburb, enacted in *The Restoration*. By the late 1970s, Montreal was facing a problem: an unusually large proportion of the housing stock in the city lay in rental tenure and thus offered very little opportunity for young adults to "fulfil their housing aspirations by becoming home-owners as they grew up and moved into the family-formation stage" (Germain and Rose 160). Because the opportunities for home-ownership were more readily available in the suburbs, the city began to develop a "doughnut effect," in which "the core of the city clogs up with traffic and starts to empty as cheaper land, lower property taxes and ever-expanding roads and highways lure city dwellers to the suburbs" (Lalonde A14). Certainly, the move of so many Montrealers to the suburbs was not a typically Anglophone phenomenon. The opposition between city centre and suburb cannot be superimposed onto a French-English dichotomy. Yet Henderson's interest is specifically in West Island suburbs such as Roxboro and Pointe Claire, where the proportion of Anglophones is among the highest in the province. These municipalities not only "have their own security force,

fire brigade and public works department,” but they also “adopt a model of grassroots local government which seems particularly British” (Radice 71), so that Henderson clearly associates the Rollins family with an ex-centric British Anglophone enclave. At the same time, the suburb itself is representative of the alienation of the Rollins family from the social and political events happening in Montreal in the months leading up to the referendum.

According to critic Catherine Jurca, the suburb is “the exemplary location, not only of middle-class advantages, but of middle-class abasement” because, while the material benefits are substantial, they are also “cultural and spiritual handicaps” (4). Jurca contends that twentieth-century literary treatments of the suburb tend to “convert the rights and privileges of living there into spiritual, cultural, and political problems of displacement, in which being white and middle class is imagined to have as much or more to do with subjugation as with social dominance” (10). Because the suburb is represented as “the ground floor of bourgeois alienation as well as affluence” (17), it represents a fertile ground for Henderson’s depiction of the growing alienation of Anglo-Montrealers from the reality of their own city and their perceived subjugation despite financial privilege.

In *The Restoration*, Gilbert Rollins remembers how his mother spearheaded the move from their lodgings in the northwest of the city to the newly developed suburbs in 1953. There is a very obvious significance of the suburb as spatially removed from the city and thus a real periphery to the centre. In moving her family out to the newly developing Roxboro, Adèle demonstrates how a portion of the Anglophone community closes in on itself. But there is an added symbolic value to the Rollinses’ move, as it is a move west, inching always closer to Ontario. The West Island is “Montreal’s English preserve,” where “most everyone wished he could dig up his house and truck it wholesale to Calgary or Mississauga” (42). When the city

encroaches too visibly on the suburb, the suburb stretches further west. When, for example, a cheap shopping centre opens near the Lutheran church in the Rollinses' neighbourhood, the church mysteriously burns to the ground and a more costly church is built with the insurance money, "a mile and a half deeper into the suburb" (74). The incident not only foreshadows the fate of the Mercer-Granville building; it is also representative of the constant expansion of the Anglophone suburb towards the west, and in the general direction of English-speaking provinces.

The Rollinses's move west enacts Jurca's notion of "White Diaspora," a "fantasy of victimization that reinvents white flight as the persecution of those who flee" (9). Adèle's own sense of victimization is clear: the move is not only a step up the social ladder, but also, and more importantly, a move away from the encroaching diversity of the city:

She was moving up, out of the northeast of the city with its square-box duplexes and waves of immigrants, away from the backward French with their dingy orange maple woodwork and their backyard junk sheds, away from the garbage in the lane-ways, out to the new developments along the rail-lines north of Pointe Claire – Saraguay, A Ma Baie, Roxboro. English developments. (143-44)

The images of the "junk sheds" and "garbage" convey a sense of overcrowdedness, just as the consecutive "waves" of immigrants threaten to drown out the English. Adèle's motivation in moving west is associated with a sense of persecution, as if the English (to which she is associated despite her allegorical status as a stand-in for Quebec) are effectively being pushed out and can only find comfort in the uniformity of the suburb. But of course, the "English developments" so valued by Adèle are not completely homogeneous; as early as 1963, the city decides to assign street names in a proportion of English and French representative of the

population (65% English, 35% French), and the Rollinses end up living on “Avenue de Marguerite de Bourgeoys” (145).

Pam and Randy, who live in Dollard des Ormeaux, ultimately decide to leave the suburb after the referendum, whatever the outcome may be, because they perceive their environment as increasingly heterogeneous. Although they do express the fear that their daughter will suffer under the province’s new language laws, they seem rather more concerned that she will be “contaminated” by the newcomers to the suburb: “Already the neighbourhood around us is filled with French families – and if they’re not French they’re Italian or Chinese – [...]. I’ve got nothing against Chinese or Italians, but the last thing I want is for Emilia to grow up talking the way they do with their funny accents and their ‘deezes’ and ‘dozes’” (150). Pam and Randy’s move to Ontario, like the Rollinses’ initial move to the suburbs, is a form of self-segregation that is not felt as an unmotivated exclusion. Rather, it becomes “a necessary retreat from and defense against a colonizing presence that is metonymically figured as the city” (Jurca 11). As Montreal, through its reconquest, becomes a French city that threatens to encroach on an English enclave, Francophones and other cultural minorities are figured as invaders that are “imagined to interfere with the inhabitant’s basic right to self-determination” (7).

The spatial dislocation of Anglophone suburbanites in Henderson’s novel also leads to their alienation from the socio-political realities of the city.⁸³ Downtown, Gilbert notices how the

⁸³ A measure of the self-consciousness and sense of alienation felt by many Anglo-Montreal writers as members of a minority may be taken by the recurrence of the exile trope. While few writers actually describe their characters as feeling like “immigrant[s] in [their] own land” (Phizicky 17) specifically because of their status as Anglophones, the condition of exile is often used to underscore the state of alienation of several characters. In *Voices in Time*, Timothy’s father feels overwhelmed by the changes in 1960s Montreal: “He no longer could recognize the world he was living in. He had become an exile in it” (81). At the end of *The Underdogs*, the members of the “Anglo Liberation Army” who took part in the kidnapping must go into exile, to London, from where they can continue to work for independence; they know that they will not be able to “come back to Montreal until [they] get [their] independence, which may be many years away” (166). John Fergusson’s Onyx John lives as “an exile” (13) in Camden, Maine, where he reminisces about his life. Onyx imagines his father comforting his mother as they leave

tensions between federalists and separatists infuse the cityscape, transforming it into a “battleground”: the Complexe Desjardins stands opposite the “future federal counterpart, Place Guy Favreau,” Craig Street has been renamed Saint-Antoine Street, and the building that housed *The Montreal Star* is now abandoned, the newspaper having fallen victim to “a pervasive obduracy and a narrowing clientele” (124). Signs of the upcoming referendum are ubiquitous. The “giant blue OUI banners draped over the balconies” attest to “every building’s place in the public quarrel” (123). In the West Island, however, the reality of the referendum is mediated through radio and television, thus fostering a paradoxical sense of distance from events that may prove to have a profound impact on the lives of its inhabitants. In the Anglophone suburb, “people glue[] themselves to the radio hotlines to keep abreast of what is happening in the federal election or, more importantly, on the referendum front, all the time wondering if they [can] get out if the catastrophe [strikes]” (42). The measure of Adèle’s sense of dislocation is visible in her conviction that if the referendum passes, she will no longer be able to get medical treatment (76) or access the money in her account (146).

Ultimately, the entire Rollins family relocates to Ontario, with the exception of Gilbert. Every family will inhabit suburban-type areas. Norm and Adèle will follow Mercer-Granville to Kitchener, which, while not part of the Greater Toronto Area, is nevertheless on the fringe of the Golden Horseshoe urban agglomeration. Gilbert’s brother Lowell and his wife Brenda are “thinking of buying in Mississauga” (199), and Pam and Randy have already settled on the new suburban development of “Darlington Acres” (150), just east of Guelph. Henderson underscores the British character of these areas, which highlights their clear opposition with the increasingly French character of the city of Montreal. The new development is adjacent to the “English Bay

Saskatchewan after one of his alchemy experiments goes awry: “Exile is the basic human condition. Banishment is our heritage” (68).

Game Sanctuary” (150). The houses are furnished with a “Brittany fireplace” and “Devonshire oak parquet” (150). The lots themselves are separated by streets bearing names such as “Royal Brixton Way” or “Queen Anne Commemorative Road” (151). The alignment of the Rollinses with a predominantly British suburb, even as it marks them as rear-guard Anglophones with outdated notions of Canadian identity, also singles out Gilbert as a new type of Anglophone more accommodating in his federalist beliefs, one who, instead of having to choose between exodus or mobilization, chooses to stay in the heart of the tumult and act in the limited sphere of his influence.

Nevertheless, Henderson’s depiction of the Mercer-Granville building as representative of a city whose new visage effectively aims at burying the different layers that constitute it, just like the spatial dislocation enacted by his portrayal of the English suburb, inevitably infuses the novel itself with Gilbert’s nostalgia for a lost city. It is the same nostalgia exhibited in Henderson’s later work, for example in short stories such as “The Denial,” whose narrator wants to reminisce and talk about the city of his youth, but cannot find anyone to sympathize with his feeling of loss: “Lots of the people I work with are French and not too sympathetic to those days. The few anglos around weren’t born here, but came from Kitchener or the States and wouldn’t understand” (76). While *The Restoration* closes on the defeated referendum and Gilbert’s budding romance with Jacynthe, one senses Henderson’s wariness towards the future of Quebec and his own nostalgia for a past Montreal.

Gail Scott and Feminine Space

Gail Scott’s interest in marginality as evidenced in *Heroine*, while it does raise interesting questions about the place of a specific female Anglo-Montrealer involved with the political left, is, unlike Henderson’s novel, neither an indictment of Quebec language laws, nor a statement on

Anglo-Montreal more generally; its treatment of both urban and textual space is dynamic and dialectical. From the onset, Scott's experimentation with form and style demonstrates a desire to stretch the limits of the novel, to write on the edge of language and narrative, but in her work, the city enacts marginality insofar as the heroine constructs a city of the mind at the same time as she is constructing herself as a marginal subject. Furthermore, in *Heroine's* Montreal, a contested city in which languages are always in tension, influencing even as they resist one another, the centrality of marginal figures works to unsettle traditional opposition between centre and periphery. Scott's depiction of marginality, whether as an Anglophone or a woman, explores both the pain and the creative opportunities that come of being on the outside looking in.

Published in 1987, the same year as Henderson's *The Restoration*, *Heroine* is Scott's first novel.⁸⁴ Set in 1980, *Heroine* is written (mostly) from the perspective of G.S. or Gail, who is lying in the bathtub of one of the Waikiki Tourist Rooms (and remains there for the entire length of the novel), as she revisits the last decade of her life since she moved from a small mining town in northern Ontario to Montreal. Battling depression and a strong proclivity towards nostalgia, the narrator moves seemingly erratically from one memory to the next, following no linear progression and repeatedly revisiting many of the same scenes, trying to come to terms with the end of her relationship with her lover Jon, the end of her involvement with communist F-group, and, to a certain extent, the end of her association with Quebec feminists. Gail has been trying, but has consistently failed, to write a novel "with the heroine a free spirit (although you can taste the fragility of her chances, for self, for love) radiating from the middle of the story" (*Heroine* 42). The difficulty in writing this novel stems from the tension between the heroine's free spiritedness and her frailty. Although she must be central to the novel, "radiating" from its

⁸⁴ *Heroine* is Scott's first novel, but her second book. *Spare Parts*, her collection of short stories, was published in 1981.

“middle,” her several signifiers (Anglo-Quebecer, woman, communist) designate her as marginal.

As a fully bilingual feminist Anglo-Montrealer, novelist and essayist Gail Scott has always skirted the edges of power. Her youth, spent in a bilingual community in eastern Ontario, ensured that she would navigate between French and English her entire life. Scott studied English as an undergraduate at Queen’s, but she did graduate work in French literature at the Université de Grenoble. She spent most of the 1970s working as a journalist, explaining Quebec current events to English Canadians, before teaching journalism at Concordia University in the 1980s. As a feminist, Scott has consistently associated with Quebec intellectuals such as Nicole Brossard and France Théoret, whose work she has translated. She has also been involved with several journals in both languages: she was the founding editor of *The Last Post* (1970), an alternative political publication, *Des luttes et des rires de femmes* (1970s), a feminist magazine, and *Spirale* (1979-83), a French-language cultural magazine; she was the co-founder and editor of the bilingual journal *Tessera* (1981); and she co-authored *La théorie, un dimanche* (1988), a collection of texts by her feminist writing group (Moyes, “Brief Biography” 231-32). In addition to this extensive experience in dealing with both languages, and often between them, Gail Scott is a Montrealer at heart. She has lived in the city for more than forty-five years, and, in her exploration of the place she refers to as “My Montréal,” there is a self-awareness that is not self-consciousness, an invocation of the female Anglo writer in Montreal as a possible “porous machine” producing “a porous text” that is on the other end of the spectrum from more reactionary Anglo-Montreal novelists like Keith Henderson (“Montréal” 8).

Scott readily acknowledges Anglo-Montrealers as a minority but seems to reject the idea of a community brought together solely by a shared language. In fact, Scott openly supports Quebec's language laws and advocates French as the dominant language in the city:

A writer represents her city as she wishes it to be. I have long tried to imagine my city – against all indications to the contrary – as essentially French-speaking. That is – and in this I differ from the penchant for bilingualism of many Montréal anglophones – I wish it to be overwhelmingly French-speaking. (4)

Scott puts much importance on the status of minority, suggesting that it fosters creativity. A few other writers have also expressed this view, including Charles Foran, who concedes that Montreal is “not self-sustaining for anglo writers. To earn money, you have to work for Toronto media outlets” (qtd in Polak E4). However, Foran insists, living in Montreal affords a unique opportunity, because the English-language writer can “enjoy the perspective of being on the periphery” (E4). For Gail Scott, however, being on the periphery is only conducive to creativity if one actively interacts with the majority. Therefore, in order to create in English in Montreal, one must be “un peu à l'écart,” but one must also, importantly, participate in “la vie sociale, culturelle, et littéraire québécoise” (“Miroirs” 24). It is this sense of being both outside and inside that allows for the type of writing subject that can, “by a kind of osmosis, absorb the voices around her, can have fluid boundaries without losing her own modest centre” (“Montréal” 8-9).

Significantly, in her interactions with both Québécois feminist writers and English-Canadian writers and critics, Scott refuses to fall into the role of “a bridge from French Québec to, say, English Vancouver, or Toronto, or Windsor,” claiming that the function of bridge “obliterates the self in the name of some ill-defined patriarchal rigour” (“Visit” 48). The function

of a go-between loses the body in the interest of objective pedagogy (48). Therefore, while Scott construes her writing as one that explores “a space, a gap (never pretending to close it) between two or more ways of thinking,” she stresses that it is “the antithesis of a bridge” (47). In its celebration of space(s), *Heroine* also eschews any attempt at reconciling opposing cultures or languages, rather addressing these two cultures at once and thus illuminating tensions and interactions between them. Its narrator, like Scott herself, is a porous subject constantly skirting the margins, a subject whose “fluid boundaries” make her liable to lose her “modest centre.”

Of course, because Scott, like her narrator in *Heroine*, is a woman and a feminist, the cultural margin is only one of the peripheral spaces with which she is preoccupied. The sense of being simultaneously inside and outside a dominant ideology also comes from the fact that, as feminist critic bell hooks writes, “to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (n.p.). hooks helps her reader conceptualize the place of women vis-à-vis patriarchal ideology by explaining the relationship between centre and margin spatially, describing her childhood as an African-American in the south of the United States:

We could enter that world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks, to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town. [...] Living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the centre as well as on the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and centre. (n.p.)

That women are part of the whole but outside its main body is visible in Scott’s *Heroine*, perhaps nowhere so well as in its depiction of the left wing organization of which the narrator, G.S. or

Gail, is a part. As a “comrade,” she is “inside” the whole but as a woman she is excluded from the main body, the decision-making centre of the group. She remembers that the comrades “suspected me of being part of the feminist phalange. They called us *les sorcières* behind our backs” (59), an attitude that leads Gail to remark that “Leninism is really like a man. The same constant pushiness” (77).

In the preface to her collection of essays *Spaces Like Stairs* (1989), in many ways a companion piece to *Heroine*, Scott acknowledges that the alienation of women within “sexist language / cultural practices starts from the fact that [they] are writing from the socially marginalized feminine” (11). As a result of this marginal condition, Scott emphasizes the importance, in writing, of pushing “on the edges of the blanks in discourse, the gaps in history, the spaces between the established genres of a male-dominant literary canon” (10). This interest in interstitial writing stems, in large part, from Scott’s involvement with Québécois feminists such as Nicole Brossard and France Théoret, who have led her towards a focus on language rather than content. Radical experimentation with form and style are at the forefront of her project, which allows textual space an equally dynamic treatment as the novel’s representation of urban space. In *Heroine*, Scott thus explores the possibilities of a marginal genre and style, steering clear of central ideas about narration in favour of an approach that leads her “towards the uncanny edge of language” (“Story” 62).

Living as a minority Anglophone in Montreal and interacting with French-speaking feminist intellectuals in the late 1970s influenced Scott’s writing of *Heroine*. She began writing fiction in Montreal, geographically and culturally dislocated from a strong realist tradition in English-Canadian women writers and therefore closer to a budding feminist literary movement in which writers were more concerned with issues of language than with narrative. As Scott sees it,

“English-Canadian feminist writing has tended to be content-oriented compared to the more radical contestation of language and form that has taken place in Québec” (“Virginia” 39).

Certainly, as Scott explains, Quebec’s cultural affiliation with France made it more susceptible to the influence of poststructuralist thought, as well as to the ideas of French feminists on language, so that she considers Quebec women’s writing in the late 1970s as an “energetic fusion” between feminism and “revolt in language and form” (38). In Quebec, furthermore, as I discussed in the previous chapter, experimental writers and poets such as Hubert Aquin and Paul Chamberland were central to the nationalist movement, thereby leading Scott to the conclusion that, “in Québec, language has always been a political issue” (38).

An important way in which Scott’s use of language in *Heroine* affects the form of her writing is through her sustained use of the present participle or gerund, a direct influence of “French syntax’s emphasis on the verb” (“Montréal” 6). Not only does this use of verb tense allow Scott to write against a realist tradition anchored in the simple past (as seen in the writings of Hugh MacLennan or Keith Henderson, for example), but it also signals the way in which her narrator is always in the “process of becoming” (“Feminist” 134). The progressive form hovers between past and future, in the here and now. At the same time, it does not have the assertiveness of the simple present; it is self-aware and tentative. It is also open. Significantly, the narrator first signals her presence in the novel by stating, “I’m lying with my legs up” (9). Like the progressive form, which exists in a continuous present, the narrator is stuck in her bathtub, incapable of moving forward but gaining nothing from moving backwards through memory. When she finally succeeds in writing her heroine, and thereby herself, out of the bathtub, the narrator (by this point conflated with her own heroine) briefly switches to the simple present, but the assertiveness of this verb tense is tempered by the ambivalence of her thoughts: “She thinks:

Maybe I should talk to someone. [...] She thinks: Maybe I should get a job” (183). The novel closes with an emphasis on the process of becoming of its narrator / heroine: “In the grey light, she’s standing on the sidewalk (snowy of course), her pale red curls her one sign of beauty. Looking to the left, the right. She – ” (183). The novel’s last word can be read as an interruption of language and action, but it is more convincing to read it as a sentence in the process of becoming. The dash signals the possibility for the text to continue; in fact, it opens up the ending (which is not truly an ending but a continuous middle) and invites the reader to enter.⁸⁵

This openness, a porosity of sorts, is an additional characteristic of Scott’s novel which allows it to dwell on the edge of traditional storytelling. Scott explains that in Quebec, the death of the author “left a gap into which women writers moved; and towards that space I drifted. Women authors, being in the process of ‘becoming,’ were less anxious to kill off the author, than to then resuscitate her as a new, far more fluid figure” (“Montréal” 7). Accordingly, *Heroine* lacks any “privileged centre of consciousness” (Moyes, “Biography” 234). Her memory does not move in a linear way; rather, the narrator constantly revisits specific moments of her past and moves between them almost in a circular way. Almost, but not quite. As Gail’s friend tells her, “La science dit que la répétition n’existe pas. Les choses changent imperceptiblement de fois en fois” (Scott, *Heroine* 15). In the same way, every time Gail revisits memories, different details are emphasized. For example, the memory of her arrival in Montreal in the winter of 1970 is recounted three times in all: the first time in the third person, as it would have happened to her fictional character; the second time envisioned as the starting point of her novel but narrated in the first person; and the third time as a memory triggered by the thought of her mother. The

⁸⁵ Scott Symons’s *Place d’Armes* also ends with an incomplete sentence. Scott’s novel refuses closure by maintaining a continuous present of “becoming” while in Symons’s novel, meaning ultimately disintegrates as language fails to communicate experience, but ultimately, both novels invite the reader into the text.

scene is never described quite in the same way, so that the narration resembles a spiral, circular but progressive, from a feeling of detachment to a sense of immediacy.

In this sense, *Heroine* emulates its main intertext, Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, by providing different accounts of a single character. In Lessing's novel, the protagonist Anna Wulf separates her writing into four notebooks: the black notebook contains the narration of her years spent in Africa, the red notebook narrates her involvement with communist politics, the yellow notebook holds her ideas for future works and unfinished chapters of an upcoming novel, and the blue notebook acts as a diary. Often, a single event is narrated several times from different viewpoints (subjective, fictional, or omniscient). Scott uses a similar technique in *Heroine*. Gail recounts how she sank "below the line of pain" after her break-up with Jon and wrote "in the black book" about their reconciliation (25). Later in the novel, her heroine returns home after a reconciliation with her ex-lover, "opens her black book, draws a thick black line in it and gives it the title UNDER THE LINE OF PAIN" (171). What Gail and her heroine write "under the line of pain" is similar but not identical, two accounts of one event. A third account occupies the penultimate section of *Heroine* in the form of a diary that begins with an actual "line of pain. Like in Doris Lessing's (black) notebook, I think" (173). Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* ultimately reveals itself as Anna's novel when the reader notices that the very first line of Lessing's novel is in fact the very first line of Anna's novel, as dictated by her lover. In a similar fashion, *Heroine* ultimately collapses Gail (or G.S.) and her own fictional heroine in its last section. Both *The Golden Notebook* and *Heroine* attempt to re-centre their subject by bringing together all the strands that make her up.

The discrepancy between the different descriptions of events also opens up the text in a way that leaves space for the reader: "the scenes are separated by spaces, quite big ones, as if spit

forth from a snowstorm. Spaces where, hopefully, interesting things might happen in the reader's mind" ("Paragraphs" 102). In Scott's novel, there is not only space for the reader to pause, but there is also space for the reader to enter. If "straight writing" brings about closure and "firm conclusions" (102), the spaces and unanswered questions in *Heroine* keep it "open for reader intervention" (102). The novel's structure, then, allows for an interaction to emerge between the reader and the text, one in which the act of interpretation both informs and is informed by the text.

In light of Scott's experimental form and style, it is tempting to draw a parallel between *Heroine* and Scott Symons's *Place d'Armes*, with its playfully open approach to narrative, language, and culture. Both works emphasize the dynamic possibilities of textual space and destabilize the realist novel in a radical way. Like Symons, Scott ignores any unifying impulse that would lead to a synthesis of Canadian culture, and her narrator's porosity bears some resemblance to Hugh Anderson's cultural openness. Scott and Symons convey a similar wariness of bilingualism and biculturalism. They are both adamant about the importance for Quebec to avoid the dangers of cultural dilution. Although almost exactly twenty years separate their works, the two authors consider their status as Anglophones in a French-speaking milieu as a possible creative impetus.

Gail Scott's attachment to Montreal, however, is entire. Whereas Symons still believes in the idea of Canada, still engages in a national project, Scott is invested in Montreal in and for itself, an urban entity that is almost a political one as well.⁸⁶ Where Symons enacts a punctual self-marginalization that some Québécois see as an "aventure surréaliste au pays des indépendantistes" (Deschamps 56), a trip to study the natives (Godbout, "effigie" 24), Scott has

⁸⁶ Scott's vision of the city in this way anticipates Marianne Ackerman's and Heather O'Neill's treatment of Montreal as a city-state.

spent most of her adult life in Montreal, has made the city hers, and her rootedness comes through in *Heroine*. Symons's inspiration comes from the self-marginalization he cultivates. Conversely, Scott refuses to see herself as somehow living in exile: "I have the impression that French language and culture in a sense also belong to me; it is part of my cultural background, makeup. No, I am not in exile, nor in the alienating situation of a Kafka, writing in German, in Prague" ("Montréal" 5). While Symons views himself as a bridge between two cultures, Scott refuses that role and prefers to view herself and her heroine as the porous subject through which the voices of two "often clashing but also nourishing cultures" pass (7).

Contested City and Public Language

If Scott's use of style and form in *Heroine* is both experimental and political in her exploration of feminine space(s) of speech, her representation of language in Montreal is also coloured by the tensions and mutual influences that characterize the relationship between French and English in the "reconquest" of the city (Levine 7). For Scott, both the language used in writing fiction and the public language of the city are politically charged: "In *my* Montréal, it is impossible to treat language quite simply as a vehicle of communication. Language hits you like mud in the eye: it is a matter of argument, of jousting, it is background music. A background that competes eternally with foreground attempts at narration" ("Montréal" 5). In *Heroine*, this "background music" consists not only in snatches of conversation overheard by the narrator and conducted sometimes in French, sometimes in English, and sometimes in both languages. It also takes the shape of a multitude of posters, commercial signs, political slogans and banners, and graffiti spread out over the city, which attract the attention of the narrator and the reader, as they are set off in the text by the use of capital letters. Just as these instances of public language erupt

into the landscape of the city, so too do they disrupt the progression of the text, thereby competing with Gail's attempts at narration.

In retelling her first arrival in Montreal, Gail is constantly interrupted in her narration by the public language of the city. Upon leaving the bus, she enters a place advertised as a "BAR / RESTAURANT: LICENCE COMPLÈTE" only to focus on the red signs advertising "CUISINE QUÉBÉCOISE: TOURTIÈRE, FÈVES AU LARD, TARTE AU SUCRE, SOUPE AU POIS" (44). The next day, as she tries to find a flat, she walks along a wall on which the fresh white paint spells out "QUÉBEC LIBRE. AMOUR ET ANARCHIE" (45). The language here is indeed "a matter of argument" between a traditional, rural conception of Quebec and a left-wing nationalist idealism. But this "background music" is also loud enough that it contributes to Gail's sense of excitement and inspiration, even as it interrupts her train of thought. When she recounts the event from the point of view of her heroine, she emphasizes how the latter "saw the letters FLQ screaming on an old stone wall. Dripping in fresh white paint. Climbing the stairs to her room she knew she'd come to the right place" (22).

Scott's focus on instances of public language aims, among other things, to capture the music of Montreal, but it is also representative of her position both inside and outside the main culture. Sherry Simon explains that while public displays of written language transmit "official conceptions of the linguistic citizen" and "make assumptions about the capacities of its readers," cities also allow the proliferation of "underground print cultures, the free for all culture of posters and stencils, ads, and petitions that create alternative zones of linguistic citizenship" (215). As she walks the city, Gail's heroine "tries to absorb the rhythm of the street" but also pays close attention to the graffiti "strewn on wall like music notes" (140). Gail herself takes in the commercial signs in French, as seen above, but she mostly dwells in these alternative zones of

linguistic citizenry: she participates in hanging up surrealist posters that state, “LA BEAUTÉ SERA CONVULSIVE OU NE SERA PAS” (78); she takes part in the unfurling of huge banners that read, “DOIGTS COUPÉS À UN GUITARISTE DE GAUCHE,” “DES CENTAINES D’ENFANTS DISPARUS,” and “FEMMES ENCEINTES VIOLÉES EN PRISON” (86). This “alternative zone of linguistic citizenry” is also a space that fosters Gail’s creativity, no matter how much difficulty she has in expressing this creativity coherently. The attention she pays to graffiti on her long walks stems from her constant need to “find other forms in life and art to express the diffuse and varied tones of poetry in her” (162).

This recurrence of public language in Scott’s novel also demonstrates to what extent the Montreal of *Heroine* is a contested city. Just as Scott’s own writing is inflected by French, so too are instances of public language in French inflected by English. Gail’s heroine notices, for example, a graffiti that reads “Le MONDE SUCE” (140), a literal translation of “the world sucks” that underscores one of the ways in which French and English interact in the city. Despite Quebec language laws, the visage of Montreal in *Heroine* is only slowly changing, and English is still very much present under a layer of French, enacting the dynamics of a palimpsest in which what is submerged always threatens to erupt at the surface and in this way engages in a dialectical relationship with what is at the surface. Gail imagines her heroine stepping into a restaurant where, on the black glass in white letters is written:

BAGELS’

UN DINER [DA-Y-NÈRE] – (the French way to pronounce the English word, in concession to the law which says signs shall be in French only).

OUVERT 24 HRS. (122)

The transition from English to French on commercial signage is underway, but the presence of English in public displays of written language is still evident. The apostrophe, which signals the restaurant's name as English (though it does little else, the roaming apostrophe not truly indicating possession of any kind), but the article "UN" has been added to turn the English word into a semblance of French. Sherry Simon writes that the modern city is characterized "not only by forgetting or 'mis-translation' but by a form of translation more akin to 'writing over.' Taking possession through naming is a reflection of historical conquest. Each new regime brings about its own forms of re-writing and over-writing, sponging out and erasure" (203-04). In this process of reconquest by writing over, however, layers remain visible underneath one another so that written instances of public language, whether in commercial or alternative zones of linguistic citizenry, reveal the city as a palimpsest. The French "UN DINER" has been imposed over the English word diner, but it has not become "un dîner," the French word for lunch; potential clients read the expression as a Gallicized English word. As David Harvey contends, the "life process" works "in and around" the different layers of this palimpsest. This "life process" not only interacts with the different layers but also ensures that they interact with one another, thus giving each other "new meanings" and constructing "new possibilities" (22).

This type of linguistic layering is evident elsewhere in the city, and contributes to the depiction of Montreal as a contested city in which languages speak back to and influence one another. Significantly, French does not always emerge atop English. Gail notices, for example, that the "QUÉBEC INDÉPENDANT" graffiti has been painted over by "STARVING DOGS EAT SHIT" (36). The sequence of these graffiti points to the use of language as more than a marker of possession; it becomes a marker of time: "language is engraved into the surfaces of the city, through signs, through inscriptions, through graffiti. And the writing-over of these

inscriptions indicates the relentless progression of languages as they come to represent time-periods in the city's history. Language is the materialization of time" (Simon 204). The layering of graffiti, which Gail notices in 1980 in the wake of a failed referendum, signals the changing times: economic concerns are replacing revolutionary ideals, and the "bottomlessness of the 80s" (Scott, *Heroine* 123) is superseding the idealism of the 60s and 70s. The old graffiti is still visible under the newer one, however, so that both graffiti also seem to comment on each other, perhaps ironically. The two graffiti may thus be in tension (the implication being that it is more important to thrive economically than to achieve independence) or they may support one another (in that the Québécois are "starving dogs" who, having failed to declare independence, are still "eating shit") but the interaction between them is undeniable.

For Catherine Leclerc, the coexistence and interaction of French and English not only as "background music" in Scott's Montreal but as a driving force in her narrative signals *Heroine* as an example of "colinguisme" that borrows as much from the hegemony of English as from a society that claims a French character and promotes the use of French (30). Unlike *The Restoration*, and while it is written predominantly in English, *Heroine* "ne s'occupe pas seulement de représenter le français: il le convoque pour une multitude de fonctions et le fait participer à l'acte de représentation" (238). But, just as Scott acknowledges that her English is inflected by French, so too does she anticipate "un lectorat imaginé comme étant en partie francophone," thus lending her writing "le potentiel d'affecter autant la culture québécoise francophone que le monde anglophone où le découpage des littératures par langue principale tend à inscrire son oeuvre" (195-96). This linguistic dialectical relation (not unlike the cultural one put forth by Scott Symons) opens up a heterogeneous, dynamic urban and textual space in which hierarchical structures between centre and margin are unsettled. Scott herself admits that

“it’s very possible the sound-effects that trouble my narratives and even my syntax, and that have always underscored my writing are, among other things, a formal response to the question of how to best represent my city. Its pulse, its tensions. Its ceaseless plethora of strong minority voices constantly challenges any notion of authority” (“Montréal” 5).

Architecture of the City / Architecture of the Self

To a certain extent, Gail’s meditations in the bathtub are a way to deconstruct her past by revisiting specific memories under different angles. She is “stuck in the past” (Scott, *Heroine* 20), but in her attempts to become free of this past, she is deconstructing both her personal and her cultural mythology, only to reconstruct the city and herself as a writing subject within it. Gail tries to come to terms with her failed relationship with Jon; in their open relationship, Gail remembers that they seemed like “the perfect revolutionary couple, tough yet happy” (16). Gail’s memories are fissured, however. She remembers that during their trip to Morocco and Europe, “Everything was perfect” (18), but even that memory is problematic because the single statement is immediately followed by an exception: “except, at Ingmar’s, your mother’s boyfriend’s winter house on the Baltic, something started going wrong” (18). Gail’s constant remembrance of painful moments (her encounter with Jon and the green-eyed girl, her moments spent waiting for Jon) is a way to better understand the failure of their relationship not as a teleological process but as a problematic situation from the onset. She destabilizes her conviction of having been wronged by continually asking herself “who lied, my love, me or you?” (54). Gail’s process of undermining a decade of failed relationship leaves her severely depressed, and she is always striving to keep both herself and her heroine from “disintegrat[ing] like this” (170).

But Gail’s meanderings through memory, because they so often insist on her status as an Anglophone outsider, also participate in deconstructing the mythology of her own culture. Gail

Scott has insisted that living in Quebec and developing a friendship with feminist intellectual France Théoret had a great impact on her perception of her own culture: “The confrontation of our cultures, of our culturally different versions of feminism, facilitated for each of us the un-making of our respective mythologies – that is the mythologies with which we were each shouldered as female children growing up in the 50s” (“Virginia” 32). For the narrator Gail or G.S., a great component of that mythology is religion, or the ideological and symbolic heritage of growing up Protestant in a small mining village in northern Ontario.

Gail’s memories of the last ten years demonstrate to what extent living in Montreal and interacting with the French-speaking F-group have rendered her aware of the importance of her religious heritage. Trying to break free from her jealousy at Jon’s relationships with other women, despite his declaration that “Monogamy’s not for me,” Gail chastises herself: “Don’t be such a Protestant” (*Heroine* 25). Gail associates her Protestant upbringing with a rigidity that she deliberately ridicules in the self-consciousness of her jealousy towards the other women in Jon’s life. She imagines the comrades thinking, “uptight anglaise. No resistance” (85). In the steam bath, a hangout for feminists and lesbians, she must tell herself to “relax”: “Fais pas ton anglaise” (38).

Gail’s repeated references to the cross atop Mount Royal also underscore the weight of this religious heritage. When she arrives in town, she finds refuge in a bar: “Through the window rose the mansions of the mountainside. Topped by a brightly-coloured cross” (39). While the cross on Mount Royal was erected by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste and is therefore clearly a symbol of the Catholic religious heritage of Montreal, in *Heroine* it takes on a symbolic role as the reminder of Gail’s Protestant religious heritage, as its implicit association with the Anglo-Protestant mansions in the Golden Square Mile on the mountainside indicates. The balcony of

the apartment Gail shares with Jon “on Esplanade by the mountain” (62) opens up on a narrow street of “two-storey red brick flats culminating in a mountain with cross on top” (49), so that the cross oversees Gail’s attempt at an open relationship with Jon, “shin[ing] from the mountain over [their] little flat” (73), silently condemning it. When she comes home to an empty apartment, fearing that Jon is with another woman, the light “outlining the mountain with the cross on top is reflected in the window of [their] door” (77).

Other images of the cross abound in the urban landscape of *Heroine*. They consistently sit in judgment of Gail’s evolving sexuality. The cross witnesses Gail’s first encounter with Jon and foreshadows the pain they ultimately cause each other: “Suddenly I looked up and there was this funny picture. A cross stuck in a bleeding loaf of bread. You were sitting under it smiling at me through your round glasses” (9). Later, when there is some sexual tension between Gail and Marie, the former notices that “the beam from Place Ville Marie,” a cross-shaped skyscraper, “shines over the park” (152), thereby illuminating her own “beautiful slim back” for Marie. Anne, Gail’s English friend, shares the burden of a religious upbringing in the enjoyment of her sexuality. She admits that “once at seventeen, she found out if she turned the cross with the pink ribbon over her bed in Manchester to the wall, she could really come. In fact she couldn’t stop” (157).⁸⁷

If Gail’s act of remembrance is a deconstruction of her personal and religious mythology, it is also a deconstruction of her cultural mythology. In an interview with Barbara Carey, Scott suggested that belonging to the Anglophone minority in Quebec has helped her frame her own culture: “It has taught me more about my own culture than the francophone culture, because I learned to see it – my own culture – through the other person’s eyes, with all its crazy

⁸⁷ I am grateful to Eli MacLaren for suggesting that, while emancipation from religion is one possible reading of the abundance of religious imagery, another possibility is that the novel explore and redefines Christian passion as the suffering of the outcast.

permutations – including its role of political oppressor” (qtd in Carey 17). In *Heroine*, Gail also sees her own culture through the eyes of her Québécois friends. They continually remind her that she is an outsider, insisting that despite a Métis grandfather, she is “English regardless of [her] blood” because they believe that her culture necessarily defines her: “one is a social product, marked by the conditions he grew up in” (14). When the Parti Québécois wins the 1976 election and “everybody’s happy” though they have all spoiled their ballots, Gail, as “la seule anglaise,” feels the need to “stand up, raising her glass, and shout: ‘Vive le Québec libre’” (90). Her involvement in F-group is thus always achieved from the margin. In an attempted occupation of the Chilean consulate, Gail remarks that her role is “peripheral but essential: that of a bourgeois woman” (86). Gail’s sense of being simultaneously inside and outside, included in and excluded from F-group (whose very name designates it as a predominantly “French” group), stems in great part from her Anglo-Protestant upbringing, which marks her as other in two ways: she represents the political oppressor among Québécois, and she represents the Anglo-American military-industrial complex among communists.

Not only does Gail understand that she represents political oppression, but she is also very critical of her own recuperation of Quebec for artistic purposes. When Jon creates a sequence on east-end Montreal for the group’s revolutionary newspaper, though he is technically as much of an outsider as Gail, coming, as he does, from Poland, the comrades are pleased. Gail herself understands the value of the pictures of “the highway being built over smashed two storey flats; the pretty curtains of the little house next to the city dump” (112). But when Gail herself engages in “la cartographie du hasard,” the game her surrealist friends play in letting a tossed coin on a map decide where they must perambulate and write automatic poems, she admits that “voyeur that I am, I want to go east” (76). And when she explores the same symbols

of despair as Jon, she understands that “what seemed exotic to the colonizing nation was often a representation of oppression” (76).

Gail’s framing of her own culture through the eyes of her friends fosters both the self-awareness that provides her with the impetus to write and the self-consciousness that prevents her from doing so. Her lucidity is such that she can adopt a self-deprecating tone in describing a picture taken by Jon that shows her “explaining how artists from rich minorities like les anglais du Québec need marginal lives in order to feel relevant” (23). At the same time, her self-doubt is such that she cannot bring herself to begin her novel, stuck on the issue of “how the English heroine (of a novel) might look against the background of contemporary Québec” (89), too afraid that “une anglaise haïe par l’Histoire” (122) may not prove a worthwhile subject.

This process, by which Gail revisits memories over and over, pushing herself towards the edges of her own memory, deconstructing the idea of herself as a young Anglophone revolutionary in love, spans almost the entire length of *Heroine*. Even as Gail is deconstructing herself, however, she is preparing to (re)construct herself as a writing subject by constructing the city outside her window. Frank Davey writes that in *Heroine*, G.S. or Gail “constructs [Montreal], as so often in the English-Canadian imagination, as a place of glamour, romance, sophistication and art” (“Avant-Garde” 56) so that, despite the evolution of its protagonist, the novel consistently depicts the city as “exotic and idealized” (59). Certainly, Montreal as seen through the eyes of the newly-arrived Gail is full of promises; she thinks “welcome to Montréal,” “feeling anything was possible” (Scott, *Heroine* 44). Her creativity is fuelled when she walks on Sherbrooke: “I felt so good, so free I started looking for a café where I could sit and write about it” (45). But Davey’s assessment does not take into consideration the Montreal that Gail constructs while in her bathtub, the Montreal just outside her window.

Because she knows that “nostalgia can’t penetrate a real city” (32), Gail imagines and thereby constructs Montreal in the present. Gail may remain in her bathtub, stuck in her exploration of the past, but, as she repeats over and over again, “this is the city, 1980” (31). This city of the mind is grittier, dirtier, filled with danger, decrepitude, and a sense of despair. It is Montreal first framed by the lens of the black tourist on the Mountain, and then described objectively by Gail when the tourist starts down the mountain and into the city. Here, the grey woman, with her “stained” “stockings” and her “skirt a “filthy undeterminable colour of suede,” walks on the Main, “hugging a fence along a demolition pit” (24). Here, also, the “little girl in the yellow raincoat” runs away from the threatening, lurking “sandwichman” (118), and at each breath, her heart “leaps painfully in her throat” (131).

In Gail’s own imagined Montreal, we follow these “emblems of marginality” (Leith, “Marginality” 101) as they move between the mountain (north) and rue Sainte-Catherine (south), between the mountain (west) and rue Saint-Denis (east). Through this depiction of Montreal, Scott’s novel succeeds in destabilizing the traditional opposition between centre and margin, for in this city, the marginal takes centre stage. Gail places all her marginal characters at the heart of things: at the centre of her attempts at narration (by placing descriptions of her movements at the beginning of each new section), at the geographical centre of the city (the tourist begins atop Mount Royal), and at its social centre (the Main). They, and Gail with them, through her often interchangeable memories of drifting from one café to the next, gravitate towards the Main, that “moveable site of the in-between” (Godard, “Border” 129). As Ellen Servinis writes, the Main is the place “where the marginal can be made central, where various identities and discourses ‘othered’ by the rest of the city find expression” (252).

Gail's emphasis on the centrality of marginal figures allows her vision of Montreal to emerge; projecting her thoughts onto the tourist, she imagines him thinking that "in this city everyone's a minority" (Scott, *Heroine* 63). This is a city in which her heroine can dwell because it allows her to be both marginal and central. Because both her insistent revisiting of the past and her attempts to write are effected alongside her imagining of the city outside, Gail's construction of self is closely linked to her construction of the city, in a way that underscores the extent to which, as Patricia Hampl writes, "true memoir, like all literature is written in an attempt to find not only a self but a world" (qtd in Bastéa 6). Gail's construction of Montreal as a city of her mind is thus the same as her attempt to transform her experience into literature.

Decentred/Recentred Heroine

What emerges from Gail's recollections, haphazard though they may be, is the sense that although she has tried to be a centred woman, she has slowly been drifting towards the margins of her own self. Despite her disavowal of Dr. Schweitzer's repeated claims, communicated through the radio as she lies in the bathtub, according to which modern women have "a great difficulty of personal synthesis" (Scott, *Heroine* 41), Gail acknowledges that she has indeed "lost [her] boundaries" (175). Her emphasis on the need to "pull [herself] together" (61), to be "a woman who maintains her equilibrium" (65), invokes the desire for centrality: Gail has become decentred.

Gail's feeling of being decentred is echoed by her marginal status, not only as an Anglo-Quebecer in F-group but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a woman. First, she somehow finds herself on the margin of her own relationship with Jon. Delving into one of their moments together, Gail exclaims, "Oh my love was that really us? With me at the centre and you watching from the margin of the picture. So what went wrong? I mean how did I slip out of focus in your

retina?" (50). Gail feels that she "slipped" from being at the centre of Jon's attention; the great majority of her memories are laden with images of an inside-outside dichotomy, or a "feeling of control" (associated with a "centred" heroine) versus a "melancholic space" (one that constitutes the margin) (119). When they visit Gdansk and get caught up in a demonstration, the crowd moves towards a church with such intensity that "when they closed the huge oak door I was out and you were in. How could you have let it happen? How?" (19). The incident foreshadows the way in which Gail constantly feels excluded from what she believes is going on between Jon and other women.

But this feeling of being marginal is not only a question of sentiment; it affects and, to a certain extent, also stems from, a complicated rapport to language. Certainly, Gail is jealous, but, as her memories seem to indicate, Jon has also been the authoritative force in the couple, unconsciously belittling her ambition to write, her relation to language, and pegging her, in a way, into a political role. He assumes that the month she took off work to write will be better spent working "at the Grill to start a union organization drive among the staff" though he adds, as an afterthought, "I'm sure you'll still have time to write" (134). Gail's inability to write (she has been trying to write for the last ten years) is explained most coherently by Marie, who asks, "how can a woman be centred if she isn't in charge of her words?" (59). Her statement echoes Scott's own, when she writes in her essay "Shaping a Vehicule for Her Use" that women evolve in a "man's world" and must therefore wield the "'fathertongue' of education, the media, the law – all patriarchal institutions" ("Vehicule" 67). Language, as Marie argues, is patriarchal, for "there is a relationship between their language and their laws. You can't have one without the other" (*Heroine* 59). Jon's mantra in regards to his and Gail's relationship is, significantly, that "everyone does what *he* wants" (emphasis mine 68).

Gail's artistic aspirations also mark her as an outsider in F-group, where the comrades think that she'll "never be anything but a fellow traveler" because "[she's] an artist" (98). Gail's relation to language as an artist is closely related to her feminist convictions. When she attends a talk at the feminist drop-in centre, she reflects that

maybe we feel resentment towards men because there's deference to the male in all sectors of society, including the left (a few boos). But this obvious exclusion at least points to the possibility we have another place to speak from (I got this from a book Marie lent me). And understanding this might even alter syntax. (130)

Political organizations such as F-group are also patriarchal institutions, in which there is a need for a women's caucus because "oppressed groups have the right to discuss their problems away from the oppressor" (65). This oppression is systemic in the sense that it pervades language as well. When Gail is criticized by a comrade for demonstrating too much of a motherly instinct toward Marilù, a young Chilean refugee, she is told that "un vrai révolutionnaire appartient 100 pour cent au groupe" (98). The use of the masculine article "un" when the feminine "une" would have worked just as well indicates to what extent the political organization is patriarchal, and the way in which its language is a vehicle of that patriarchal ideology. The very fact that Scott chooses to render this sentence in French, where the difference between the two genders is clear in the article (as opposed to the gender-neutral English article "a") places a heavier emphasis on the underlying sexism of F-group.

Just as Gail Scott attempts, with *Heroine*, a form of fiction that is much more language-oriented than content-oriented, so too must Gail, if she wants to succeed in writing herself out of the bathtub, make different use of language in constructing her heroine and, by extension, herself. Once more, Marie provides the necessary insight for Gail, arguing that "it's as if the

words or maybe even the syntax have to be invented to close the space between what you're living now and future possibilities" (130). Putting one word after another on the page may "give a feeling of moving forward" (21), but these words need to be arranged in a way that effectively moves between present and future in a movement of becoming.

In the final section of *Heroine*, Gail succeeds in constructing her heroine:

The heroine stands up. Drawing her blanket close, she takes the blue sheets and puts them on a violin stand beside the television. She steps back. Now they're at a distance. She smiles, liking how those pages on which she's written pain in curved letters change the context of the room. [...] She looks around at last night's storm flashing on the television screen. At her own veined, slightly swollen feet standing on the old linoleum. Elements for a novel. (180)

These last five pages represent the longest segment in which Gail's heroine is present. At this point, of course, the character of Gail and the character of the heroine are conflated: like Gail, the heroine has just stepped out of the bath and wrapped herself in a blanket, her feet "slightly swollen" by the time spent in her bathtub. The alignment between Gail and the heroine has always been evident, but it has also always been in the past. Now, Gail and the heroine act simultaneously, so that both are in the process of becoming. Just as the heroine understands that the copied passages from her diary, studied "at a distance," provide the raw material to write, Gail herself, by writing her heroine's enlightenment, has also quite literally written herself out of the bathtub and into the city.

In "My Montréal," Gail Scott writes that in working alongside Québécois feminists, "it became increasingly clear to me that if we could think new female subjects through language, we could think new anglo-Québécois subjects through language as well" (7). Thus, in the last

section of *Heroine*, Gail / the heroine is constructed through language not only as a female writing subject, but also as an Anglo-Quebec subject, both marginal and central. Her construction is signalled by her re-integration into the city. And yet, the city she re-integrates is also the city she has constructed; as she walks, she encounters some of the characters she has described through the lens of the observatory: the grey woman, the young girl with the yellow coat. It is no longer a city from which she is cut off, the city outside her window; now she interacts with the city, walks its streets, listens to its music, identifies with it, her face “a divided map of the present moment” (182).

In Scott’s *Heroine*, Montreal has become a centre in its own right; it more closely resembles the multicultural, multi-ethnic metropolis, the quasi city-state it will become in twenty-first century Anglo-Quebec fiction. Its centrality allows the protagonists of *Heroine* to explore the creative possibilities that come with being both inside the whole and outside the main body, culturally peripheral but in constant interaction with the centre. Conversely, Gilbert Rollins’s conviction that Montreal might “be a model” inscribes Henderson’s novel in the tradition of Hugh MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes* and Scott Symons’s *Place d’Armes*. With the Mercer-Granville building at its centre, a concrete embodiment of the myth of the two founding nations, the Montreal of *The Restoration* emerges as somehow more representative of Canada than the British Ontario where Gilbert’s entire family will relocate; Montreal is here, like in *Two Solitudes* and *Place d’Armes*, more Canadian than the rest of Canada. Henderson’s omniscient third person narration, use of the intercultural couple trope (in which both individuals are bilingual), and differentiation between an older, narrow-minded generation and a younger, more conciliatory one, are all reminiscent of MacLennan’s technique in *Two Solitudes*. Like MacLennan’s in *Voices in Time*, Henderson’s reaction to the “reconquest” of Montreal is

vehement. Those novelists who still cling to the idea of a unified pan-Canadian identity shaped by two founding nations are those for whom the nationalist impulse of the 1970s and 1980s was the most distasteful.

Chapter IV

From the Contact Zone to the Magical City:

Marianne Ackerman's *Jump* and Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*

Introduction: The Contact Zone

In their introduction to the 2005 special issue of *Voix et images*, Catherine Leclerc and Sherry Simon suggest that Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "contact zone," by which the latter designates a social space in which different cultures enacting different power dynamics meet and interact with each other, might be an adequate model to approach Anglo-Quebec literature from a Francophone critical perspective: "la proposition de Pratt pourrait-elle servir de modèle à une interprétation de la littérature anglo-québécoise à partir d'une institution littéraire qui se définit par la langue française? Nous croyons que oui" (24). Simon takes up this notion of contact zone in her book *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City* (2006), although her application of the term is geographical in referring to specific neighbourhoods like the Mile End as contact zones (8). Since its first mention by Pratt, the concept of the contact zone has gained traction in several fields of study and been applied to both literal space (the workplace, for example) and virtual space (publishing, visual arts),⁸⁸ but Leclerc and Simon are the first to apply the concept to a literature more generally.

Mary Louise Pratt coined the expression "contact zone" in her 1992 book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* in order to designate the "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of

⁸⁸ Pratt's notion of the contact zone has been used in such diverse areas of study as sociology (see "The Feminization of Clerical Work in Early Twentieth-Century Montreal" by Laura Kate Boyer), history (see *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Visual Culture, Sport, and Spectacle in the Construction of National Identity in Montreal, 1840–1885* by Gillian Poulter), and communication studies (see "Publishing in the Contact Zone: Linguistic Properties of the Book Publishing Field in Montreal" by Lina Shoumarova).

domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (7). While Pratt mostly applies the concept to her own exploration of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel literature, the second edition of her book contains a new chapter on neo-colonialism, modernity, mobility, and globality, suggesting that her study of the contact zone and the several phenomena it gives rise to are in no way limited to the past but also help explore the dynamism of a city such as contemporary Montreal, because the latter features and embodies the cultural interactions pertaining to the “aftermaths” of colonialism “as they are lived out across the globe today.”

Leclerc and Simon argue that envisioning “littérature québécoise” as a contact zone would allow for the emergence of “recoupements partiels, des influences à la fois divergentes et réciproques, des traces éparses de rencontres parfois fortuites, agencées et réagencées d’une manière qui en déplace les significations” (25). Their approach thus underscores the heterogeneity of the members constituting a more inclusive conception of the Quebec literary community but also, and perhaps more importantly, the diverse modes of affiliation one might adopt towards it. This larger definition of Quebec literature, in which the texts produced are heterogeneous both on the production and on the receiving end, insists on the dialogic quality of Anglo-Quebec works, in that they “apportent une perspective nouvelle sur la réalité sociale québécoise,” while, conversely, “les lectures de ces textes par des francophones en renouvellent l’interprétation, alimentant l’hétérogénéité de Pratt” (25).

Catherine Leclerc’s own book, *Des langues en partage?: Cohabitation du français et de l’anglais en littérature contemporaine* (2010), adopts such a perspective and explores the phenomenon of “colinguisme,” which I have evoked in discussing the novels of Scott Symons and Gail Scott, and in which some texts allow French and English to cohabit in a way that

questions, or destabilizes, the very notion of “langue tutélaire,” that is, of an overarching language, in this case English. In the texts she discusses, “le partage des langues dans la narration devient effectivement une métaphore puissante de leur hiérarchisation à l’échelle sociale, tout comme il ouvre sur la possibilité de contrer cette hiérarchisation et de développer de nouveaux modes d’interaction entre les langues” (380). “Colinguisme” then becomes an appeal to rethink interaction between languages from a more equitable perspective. In the case of Anglo-Quebec texts, more specifically, English, as the Canadian and international language, enters into contact with French, which, in the case of Quebec, is what Leclerc calls “la langue véhiculaire”: “Il s’ensuit une détutélarisation partielle de l’anglais qui ouvre la porte à l’appartenance de ces textes à une littérature – québécoise – dont [les auteurs anglophones] reconnaissent la langue principale sans la partager entièrement” (282). This “colinguisme,” a form of transculturation, which Pratt identifies as a phenomenon of the contact zone, thus allows for a larger interpretation of the meaning of Quebec literature.

While the ramifications of such an approach reveal new orientations for comparative studies and Quebec literature more generally, my own approach to Pratt’s ideas about social space are focussed on applying her notion of the “contact zone” simultaneously from a spatial and a textual perspective, reading the novel both as a means of representing physical space and as a textual space in and of itself. Thinking of Montreal as a “space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations” (Pratt, *Imperial* 7) could, in this context, shed light on representations of the city as a space of difference (rather than otherness) in which different cultures, primarily but not exclusively French and English speaking, engage in diverse forms of interaction, from mutual ignorance, to friendship, to open conflict, which constitute subject formation and contribute to

the emergence of new cultural phenomena. The city of Montreal has increasingly been represented as a contact zone in more contemporary Anglo-Quebec novels. It has become a space of interaction, interpenetration, and hybridity. This conception of urban space has not always been matched by a process-oriented form, however, as more traditional modes of narration and uses of language have prevailed. Nevertheless, the contact zone can also be conceived as a site of struggle in which cultural artefacts are heterogeneous both on the production end and on the reception end, thus making it a site that is rife with “creative potential” (8). Therefore, while the treatment of textual space may not always parallel the treatment of urban space in the text in similar ways as for previous novels, that is, by using “colinguisme” as a way of mirroring the dynamism of English-French relations in Montreal, other formal features might point to textual space as dialectical.

Looking more closely at depictions of Montreal as a “contact zone” in Marianne Ackerman’s *Jump* (2000) and Heather O’Neill’s *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014), this chapter explores the extent to which these contemporary English-language novels still engage to varying degrees with the myth of the two solitudes, though they attempt to destabilize it both geographically (in their representation of urban space) and formally (in the textual space). I argue that while both novels ultimately fail to embody through “colinguisme” what they attempt to represent thematically, this failure gives rise to new possible avenues in thinking about the arts of the contact zone. Why does Marianne Ackerman’s novel fail where her plays succeed? And how does Heather O’Neill’s use of voice appropriation and magic realism significantly trouble the notion of textual space with which this thesis has heretofore been preoccupied?

In their characters’ alignment with the city, these works eschew any larger system of meaning, allegorical or other, and treat Montreal as a self-contained unit, a city state, rather than

as the metropolis of Quebec or, as Hugh MacLennan, Scott Symons, and Keith Henderson suggest, “the heart” of Canada (MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* 4). Montreal is no longer a metaphor for Canada, but instead becomes a metaphor for the individual, who, in turn, also often represents the city. Both novels clearly convey the notion that Montreal is different from the rest of the province or the rest of the country. In this sense, both authors themselves “revendiquent leur appartenance” montréalaise, if not “québécoise” (Leclerc and Simon 15). Both novels portray the city as a dynamic space in which built forms and social processes speak back to one another, in which the individual and the urban are inextricable and thus mutually influence one another, and in which identity formation correspondingly occurs at the contact of, and in constant negotiation with, difference. While this dialectical treatment of space and identity does not find echo in the kind of “colinguisme” evoked by Leclerc, Ackerman’s novel acknowledges art, and specifically theatre, as a performance space that best allows for the kinds of interactions described by Pratt, while O’Neill’s novel, through its use of magic realism and voice appropriation, demonstrates that the novel itself, if not its content, might emerge as an interactive textual space, an artefact that could only be produced in a place where cultural and linguistic complexities and tensions make it possible, a product of the contact zone.

Pratt’s coinage is intended as an alternative to (and synonym with) the “colonial frontier” (*Imperial* 8). She explains that while the latter term implies a Eurocentric perspective, invoking the frontier as one defined with respect to ever-expanding colonial powers, the notion of contact zone “shifts the center of gravity and the point of view. It invokes the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect” (8). It is thus also a more appropriate term for a discussion of the representation of Montreal in more recent English language fiction. Postwar English Montreal

fiction (and much recent fiction as well) features the city as a container in which two solitudes are separated by the Main – which may or may not enclose a third, Jewish solitude – and “live their separate legends side by side” (MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* 4). This representation of the city, a metaphor for Canada, necessarily implies a western Quebec/Ontario-centred perspective, envisioning boulevard Saint-Laurent as a frontier of sorts. But much recent Anglo-Quebec fiction has shifted the center of gravity of its setting, honing in on the Plateau Mont-Royal and the Mile End as heterogeneous spaces of encounter and difference characterized by an intersection of not two, but several different cultures.

In a recent web panel entitled “Reinventing Montreal,” Gregory McCormick, Programming Director of Blue Metropolis, explained how Montreal has changed over the years, especially in the eyes of Anglophone writers based in the city and writing about it:

I think it's definitely changed. I think in terms of the generation maybe twenty, twenty-five years ago, the whole issue of the two solitudes, the two language groups was a huge concern for writers, particularly Anglophone writers. [...] French and English tend to come up in the plot very incidentally, just as part of the story. They're not really central to the story, to the plot, to the setting. And I think that is a real shift. Younger writers, they're just not interested in these questions; they're just getting on with the realities of living in Montreal. The other thing is that writers here *love* their city. They love living here.

McCormick's comment points to two realities in discussing fiction written in English about Montreal: the first is that, since 1995, the vision of Montreal as a binary city has been gradually replaced by the idea of the city as a space of difference, of hybridity; the second is that Anglophone writers tend to abandon any treatment of Montreal as representative of Canada or

Quebec, and rather identify with Montreal itself as a centre in its own right. The idea behind these two points is neatly summed up in a comment made by co-panelist Heather O'Neill, author of the acclaimed *Lullabies for Little Criminals* (2006) and the more recent *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014), who, tired of linguistic labels, exclaimed "Oh, stop calling me an Anglophone; I'm just a Montrealer" (qtd in McCormick "Reinventing"). And yet, both *Jump* and *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, while mainly concerned with the "realities of living in Montreal," also engage with English and French relations, though this engagement takes place on a more local level than *Two Solitudes*, *Place d'Armes*, or even *The Restoration*.

Just as writers have turned away from representations of Montreal as a metaphor for the country or the province, they also seem to have tightened their focus, demonstrating attachment and loyalty to specific neighbourhoods rather than to the city itself. The traditional emblems of separation such as boulevard Saint-Laurent, Mount Royal, Saint-Laurent River, and the suburb, when they are evoked, usually carry a different, personal significance for the characters. In more recent Anglo-Quebec fiction, the Main as the great divider is notably absent; like a wall that has come down, it has ceased to represent the static line that divides the French east from English west, as in *Two Solitudes* and its many followers. Space sometimes continues to be depicted as a static recipient in which characters evolve, and, in this way, as a representation of cultural cleavage, but that space has significantly shrunk in scope. Characters from different linguistic or cultural background might, for example, share the same building but engage in almost no interaction, as in Neil Bissoondath's *Doing the Heart Good* (2002). In the same way, the up-down binary opposing the wealthy mountain dwellers to the poorer inhabitants of the riverside has given way to more immediate concerns about gentrification and urban renewal in characters' buildings or neighbourhoods. Through this specific treatment of urban space, one that reveals a

more dynamic conception of the city (in which social processes such as the influx of a specific group of citizens – artists, for example – or the opening of popular restaurants influence the costs and of buildings just as they are in turn influenced by an architectural renewal of a neighbourhood), authors demonstrate that they are less concerned with the cultural value and significance of buildings (as Scott Symons or Keith Henderson seem to be), and more concerned with the socio-economic forces at play. Such forces are at the heart of novels like Stephen Henighan's *The Streets of Winter* (2004), Nino Ricci's *The Origin of Species* (2008), or Lance Blomgren's *Walkups* (2009).

For Pratt, the term “contact” highlights the “interactive, improvisational dimensions” of the encounters that take place in these spaces and emphasizes to what extent “subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other” in a dialectical relationship that recalls Symons's vision of French-English relations. As postcolonial scholars have pointed out, the contact zone is a site of “compromise and resistance, assertion and imitation, hybridity and adaptation” (Childs and Williams 185). Hybridity not only brings to light the engagement of cultures with one another but also underscores the process by which identity is always in the state of becoming, never quite fixed. In the context of the contact zone, then, “hybridization is a useful means of articulating the generative and dynamic potency of terms of engagement as a process, on-going and transitory, entangled and unequal” (Brittain, Clack, and Bonet 141). It becomes increasingly difficult to continue discussing neat categories such as French or English Canadian, or even Québécois.⁸⁹ Identity, and the way in which it is shaped by the interactions of

⁸⁹ I have purposefully avoided using the term “hybridity” in discussing the works of Scott Symons and Gail Scott because, although both *Place d'Armes* and *Heroïne* destabilize the traditionally binary relationship between English and French, margin and centre, both works still presupposed distinct and separate categories. In the novels of Ackemann and O'Neill, it is the very notion of culture and identity that is unsettled.

the “contact zone,” is therefore unsurprisingly a central theme of recent Anglo-Quebec fiction, and it is correspondingly often portrayed as shifting and miscegenated.

The theoretical framework of the “contact zone” thus allows for a treatment of the relations among Montrealers “not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices,” though these relations most often take place “within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (Pratt, *Imperial* 8). More importantly, in the novels of Ackerman and O’Neill, the focus lies on the development of individual identity, not communal or cultural identity. Their focus on the ever-shifting nature of identity, on its hybridity, inherently undercuts any essentialist notion of cultural identity and instead emphasizes its constructedness. Unlike in most of the novels discussed in previous chapters, the protagonists of these works do not represent any types. Both novels implicitly destabilize any conception of Quebec or Anglo-Quebec identity as homogeneous in an emphasis on heterogeneity that is inherent to the contact zone.

A second meaning to the term “contact,” as Pratt explains, is the definition borrowed from linguistics, where “the term contact language refers to an improvised language that develops among speakers of different tongues who need to communicate with each other constantly” (8). What emerges is a new language (referred to as a pidgin which, when taught to a second generation, becomes a creole), an effective hybrid of two or more languages in which grammatical forms have been simplified. In Montreal, no such pidgin has emerged between French, English, and the several other languages spoken in its neighbourhoods, though some suggest that “franglais,” or what René Étiemble referred to as “Atlantic pidgin” (33) in his 1964 call to arms entitled *Parlez-vous franglais?*, is threatening to supplant French. In fact, “franglais” might refer to several combinations of French and English (from a “mixture of the two

languages” like New Brunswick “chiac” to the phenomenon whereby native speakers “pepper their speech with lexis from the other language”), but in Montreal, it most often refers to “code switching between the two languages” (Rowlett 425). Thus, in the context of Pratt’s “contact zone,” code switching between French and English, or between other languages (such as Italian Yiddish, or Greek) and English becomes a hybrid mode of communication (a contact language of sorts) often alluded to or depicted in contemporary representations of Montreal, but less often embodied in the textual space itself.

The emergence of Montreal Franglais is one aspect of transculturation, identified by Pratt as a phenomenon of the contact zone. Pratt writes that transculturation refers to the way in which “subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (*Imperial* 7), but the original focus of the word, first used by Fernando Ortiz, is on the transformation of *both* cultures, colonizer and colonized. According to Ortiz’s definition, transculturation does not designate the acquisition of a new culture (acculturation) or the loss of a previous culture (deculturation) but “the process of transition from one culture to another” (102), which carries “the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation” (103). This larger definition of transculturation figures cultural contact as a starting point for a new culture. It describes the emergence of new cultural phenomena born of the cultural and linguistic interactions that take place in Montreal and are explored thematically, if not formally, in Marianne Ackerman’s *Jump*, a discrepancy all the more surprising in light of Ackerman’s otherwise experimental theatrical endeavours.

Marianne Ackerman and *Jump*

Although *Jump*, published in 2000 and largely inspired by her own experience living and writing in Montreal, is Marianne Ackerman's first novel, it "somehow sold 10,000 copies and [she] wasn't even around to talk it up" ("BYOW"). Indeed, by the time the novel was published, Ackerman had been living in France for three years. The time and distance, as Ackerman herself acknowledges, "no doubt contributed to its highly affectionate portrait of the Plateau Mont-Royal artistic crowd" ("BYOW"), but it is clear that Ackerman, like her protagonist Myra Grant, has always been very much attached to Montreal.⁹⁰ In an excerpt from her unpublished memoir, she describes this attachment as a romantic relationship of sorts: "between the ages of twenty-eight and forty-four, I lived for Montreal. Nothing could have budged me from this town. Pure blind love, I was utterly faithful and happy to offer up my youth. I had my heart broken a few times, and tried to break away, finally succeeding in mid-life. But I came back. I'm still here" ("Life"). Like her protagonist, Ackerman moved to Montreal from her native Ontario in 1980, attracted by the political ferment she perceived, educated as she was in political science. Ackerman explains that her sympathies "lay vaguely with the independence movement, on the theoretical level at least, although by 1980, politics in general had started to bore me" ("Life"). What interested her rather more was the cultural richness of "post-Wasp, post-European immigrant Montreal" ("Life").

Perhaps more than anything, Ackerman's career in the cultural sphere of Montreal has been marked by a simultaneous engagement in the English-language artistic community of

⁹⁰ Ackerman moved back to Montreal in 2004 and has been a central member of the Anglo-Quebec literary community. She published her second and third novels, *Matters of Hart* and *Pier's Desire*, in 2005 and 2010. Her most recent work, a short story collection entitled *Holy Fools and Other Stories*, was published in 2014. In 2008, Ackerman founded the online magazine *Rover*, an "independent review of art and culture" (*Rover*) but also "a platform for some of the great writers and would-be writers of Montreal" ("Pier's Desire"). She has also contributed to *The Walrus* and *Maisonnette* magazine in recent years, and she still occasionally freelances for *The Gazette*.

Montreal and desire to work with Francophone artists. As fate would have it, her neighbours upon moving to Montreal were Nancy Marelli and Simon Dardick,⁹¹ who took over Véhicule Press in 1980 and, by favouring Montreal authors and Montreal-centred themes, turned it into “une maison d’édition anglophone aux accents francophones” (Frédette 21). In this sense, Véhicule Press, as Marelli and Dardick suggest, is decidedly “regional” and “anchored in the Montreal landscape,” though the quality of its output has gained pan-Canadian critical attention and readership (78). Inspired and encouraged by Dardick and Marelli’s work, Ackerman freelanced occasionally for the *Globe and Mail*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the *Ottawa Journal*, but wrote mainly for *The Gazette*. In fact, between 1983 and 1987, she was the official theatre critic for *The Gazette*, reviewing both French and English plays and writing more generally about the state of Anglo-Quebec theatre.

A year after she officially quit as a theatre critic, Ackerman co-founded the bilingual theatre company Theatre 1774. Ackerman not only acted as co-artistic director of Theatre 1774 but also wrote several plays which were performed by the theatre. Named after the year of “the first theatrical production by Anglophones in Quebec,” a play by Molière performed in French by British garrison officers “before an audience of francophone ladies and gentlemen,” Theatre 1774, according to its founders, took the incident as “a departure point in the belief that, contrary to the contemporary image of Two Solitudes, our society is the result of contact between two cultures” (qtd in Lieblein 381). The theatre’s first production was, quite appropriately, Robert Lepage’s bilingual adaptation of Ann Diamond’s novella *A Nun’s Diary*. These kinds of cross-

⁹¹ Simon Dardick was also actively engaged in the creation of the Quebec Society for the Promotion of English-Language Literature (QSPELL), a non-profit organization founded in 1988, which merged with the Federation of English Writers of Quebec (FEWQ) in 1998 to become the Quebec Writers’ Federation (QWF). The foundation and evolution of these organisms takes part in the establishment of an Anglo-Quebec cultural framework that not only answers the desire for English-language writers to congregate, but also provides outlets for their work and recognizes its value through the attribution of prizes such as the QWF Awards.

cultural interactions were part of the theatre's mandate, which was "to create projects in which Anglo- and Francophone artists can work together, and through their work, to explore both cultures, their perception of and influence upon each other" (qtd in Lieblein 381). As a result, the plays presented by Theatre 1774, many of them written by Ackerman herself, were bilingual and sometimes even trilingual.

Ackerman is an interesting case study in discussing more recent representations of Montreal in the Anglo-Quebec novel, not simply because she is both a playwright and a novelist, but because there is such a clear disjunction between her uses of these two genres. While her plays integrate Huron, Gaelic, and especially French to the extent that they not only assume a bilingual audience but heavily rely on the interplay between two or more languages for effect, thus recreating a contact zone in their performance space, the textual space of her novel enacts no such tensions or interaction in terms of language use or structure. In other words, her plays *do* what her novel merely aims to *represent*; her use of performance space is dynamic whereas her representation of urban space as dynamic is significantly undermined by a static use of language and narration. This disjunction between Ackerman's plays and her novel gives rise to important questions about the relationship between represented space and textual space. In the last three chapters, I have explored the way in which novelists (such as Scott Symons and Gail Scott), who portray urban space as dynamic, tend not only to depict French-English relations in the same way, but also to treat textual space as correspondingly dialectical. Inversely, I have argued that those (like Hugh MacLennan and Keith Henderson), who rely on more traditional uses of language, narration, and structure, tend to portray both the city and its inhabitants as divided and static. That Ackerman speaks French fluently and makes use of the language in her plays only serves to highlight the conservative formal features of her novel, posing the question as to

whether there is indeed something about the novel that makes the contact zone inaccessible, or whether issues of marketing and sales may have prompted her more traditional storytelling mode. After all, the mainstream novel and the experimental novel do imply very different audiences.

If Marianne Ackerman's *Jump* often reads like the author's love letter to Montreal, it is perhaps because the novel is essentially a love story between the protagonist and the city. *Jump* tells the story of fifty-year-old freelance journalist Myra Grant, whose two children, nineteen-year-old Sally and eighteen-year-old Mitch, are now grown up and moving out. Montreal, Myra explains, is her city, "a maddening town that dazzles and blinds. A place to be discovered. A time, a beginning. Imagination, soul, heart. The word itself is rock hard sleek magic beautiful blue. Montreal" (50). Myra and her husband Jack moved from Ottawa to Montreal just before the first referendum so that Myra, passionate about politics, could vote "Oui, absolutely yes of course, the aspirations of this obviously distinct nation for independence from sprawling, ill-defined Canada being noble and just" (46). After the marriage fell apart and Jack moved out west with his new partner Paulette, Myra stayed in Montreal and raised her two children. But after a fifteen-year relationship with Montreal, Myra must reassess her feelings in light of the upcoming 1995 referendum.

Both Myra's personal and political convictions are increasingly tinged with doubt. Jack, who now lives in Calgary with Paulette, suffers a form of mental breakdown, which exacerbates Myra's own crisis of uncertainty. This crisis is also precipitated by Sally's emergence as a visual artist and her relationship with a much older teacher, as well as by Mitch's relationship with Mandy, a struggling single mother to five-year-old James. As Myra ponders the upcoming referendum, her relationship with the father of her children, her children's need for

independence, and her own future, she struggles to “get her certainty back” (344). When Sally announces that she is leaving for Europe and Mitch moves his new family west to Calgary, Myra decides to accept a contract with *Country Living* magazine (despite her utter lack of interest in all things domestic) and move to Toronto. Ultimately, however, Myra’s move west down the 401 is interrupted by a chance encounter with Rowan Gaunt, a fellow Anglo-Quebec artist also leaving the city, and Myra’s decision to relocate to Toronto is ultimately revoked in favour of a spontaneous road trip down south. As the novel closes, Myra and her new love interest Rowan head towards Mexico, where Myra can gain the necessary clarity to write her book about the future of Quebec.

The City and the Body

Ackerman’s novel exemplifies the extent to which contemporary novelists writing in English about Montreal tend to avoid the trope that figures Montreal as the small-scale model of a bi-cultural country. These Anglo-Quebec novelists demonstrate affiliation with and loyalty to the city itself, rather than the country or even the province. In *Jump*, questions of language and culture are central but never dictate the plot and evolution of the characters. The 1995 referendum serves as a backdrop for Myra’s late coming-of-age but does not act as a larger political and historical force constraining or guiding the individual. It mainly echoes her own uncertainties by throwing into relief not only her growing political ambivalence (in doubting her separatist convictions), but also her ambivalence towards Montreal (in her simultaneous love for and need to leave the city), towards her career (between the precarity of freelancing and the security of regular employment), towards her children (between the desire to hold them back and the knowledge that they must enter adulthood), and towards her love life (a set of conflicting feelings towards Jack, as well as an unhealthy relationship with her ex-lover). It does not,

however, constitute a climax in any way, either for the novel (the vote takes place halfway through the novel) or for Myra herself. Although Ackerman avoids revealing how Myra has voted until the beginning of the novel's last chapter, the revelation itself is in no way climactic: still unsure of where she stands, Myra "took the pencil and marked a question mark beside Oui" (343). Myra is too uncertain to vote Yes or No but feels too intimately bound up with the future of her city to avoid taking part in the decision concerning its future. The question mark, symbol of uncertainty, underscores the ambivalence of her simultaneous involvement with and withdrawal from the referendum.

Thus, while political issues related to national unity may provide the context for the development of *Jump*, they do not seem to interest Ackerman as a novelist. Instead, the centre of gravity is Montreal, "a city state with the mythical force of a country" (50), and, even more specifically, the Plateau Mont-Royal, "less a neighbourhood than a village unto itself" (47). Unlike in *Two Solitudes*, *Place d'Armes*, and *The Restoration*, Montreal is not an excuse to address larger linguistic and cultural questions, though the novel certainly does address these questions as they apply to Myra's immediate surroundings. The city then becomes the "whole" to Myra's "part" in an alignment between Myra, the apartment building she inhabits, and the city she identifies with, all of which exemplify the way in which, for Myra, "the known world has already changed, the centre is moving" (17).

In *Jump*, this alignment between Myra, building, and city comments on the dialectical relationship between body and space that Myra enacts with her immediate surroundings, and which is inextricable from her shifting sense of self. Just as the apartment occupied by Myra and her children comes to symbolize Myra (both her life and her aging body), the novel also seems to conflate Myra with the city, suggesting that both are undergoing a period of transition and

uncertainty. However, Myra not only inhabits her living space but, in the course of the novel, actively transforms it and is, in turn, affected by it. As Richard Sennett explains in *Flesh and Stone*, a study of the relationship between the body and the city, William Harvey's new understandings of the body, especially the circulation of blood as it is explained in his 1628 study *De motu cordis*, led to "new ideas about public health, and in the eighteenth century Enlightened planners applied these ideas to the city" (256). The body thus served as a model of ideal city planning well into modernism, as planners "sought to make the city a place in which people could move and breathe freely, a city of flowing arteries and veins through which people streamed like healthy blood corpuscles" (256). Le Corbusier, in his proposition for the "Contemporary City," envisioned urban space as an organic whole in which open spaces were "the lungs of a city" and in which the elimination of congestion, the central concern of urban planning, is achieved through a better management of "main arteries" and smaller arterial roads (320-21). A similar conflation between body and city occurs when, in a moment of meditation, Myra thinks, "this city and self-made Myra are one and the same" (195).

The most pertinent example of the alignment of the city and the body occurs when Myra sees her daughter Sally's paintings at the art exhibit. Myra's attention is drawn by the painting, full of dark blues and blacks, a busy collage of cityscape with the cross on Mount Royal providing the main source of light. As she got closer, she saw that the skyline was actually a naked woman stretched out on her back, with bits of the city growing up from the crevices, orifices and folds of her body. (Ackerman, *Jump* 247)

The woman's hair becomes the Saint-Laurent River, and the city growing out of her body includes "vague photos of familiar buildings and angry newspaper headlines in both languages" (248). Myra initially believes that the woman is adopting a languorous pose, but upon closer

inspection, notices “a grimace on the woman’s face, the arms and feet twisted awkwardly” (248) and realizes that it is a woman in pain. A tiny masculine figure, who has “thrown himself against her breast,” slides down helplessly, “pulling the skin with him” (248). The overall theme of the artwork, she muses, is “aggression and lament” (248).

The painting moves Myra because it echoes her own crisis of uncertainty, by suggesting that “the known world has begun to tilt ever so slowly, and if people/places/things are not nailed/glued/held down, they will soon give in to the slide” (251). When Sally tells her that she has entitled the painting “Maman,” although her mentor and lover would have called it “Montreal,” the personal implications of the painting become clear. Jack’s brush with insanity marks him as the sliding figure, while Myra herself, both giving birth to the city and suffering under the weight of its tensions, is increasingly “tilting” herself. Sally, like the reader, aligns Myra with the city, so that both are sites of confrontation and aggression, but also of fertility. What from afar looks like a “fluid landscape” and “languorous” pose is, up close, an area of “aggression” and “agony” (248). The city itself, under a sometimes glossy image, exhibits some of the power dynamics of the contact zone. Likewise, Myra is undergoing a period of questioning and doubt under a seemingly assertive defence of Quebec independence. At the same time, however, the painted woman’s womb is “thrust toward an empty night sky” and from the folds and crevices of her body emerge the buildings and languages of the city, so that the image is also one of fertility and creativity, violent and hurtful though that fertility may be.

As Myra’s initial, erroneous impression of the painting suggests, her own experience of the city is consistently described in sensual terms, underscoring the relationship between the body and the city. In *Jump*, the Main is not the gateway to French Montreal; it is a heterogeneous assortment of restaurants and bars that she associates with the smell of “brine-soaked brisket”

(63); Notre-Dame Cathedral is not, as in *Place d'Armes*, a pillar of French-Canadian Catholicism but “an ideal place to think or just sit with an empty mind and breathe in the vastness” because “the building is magnificent” (170). The building’s cultural value has given way to architectural value ascribed on the basis of individual enjoyment. Similarly, when Myra accompanies Rowan on his motorbike, it is “freezing and scary and too loud to talk, but the night air tastes like well water” (196). The immediate, sensorial characteristics of urban space overcome its potential religious or cultural symbolism.

Similarly, the mountain and the river are not indicators of socio-economic standing but appeal sensually to Myra and carry personal meaning. In her dreams, Myra flies naked through the night sky above the mountain, “thick with shaggy pines and barren maples,” the luminous cross and dark city; she glides in the “silver river,” “cold but not unpleasant,” and lands in a “clearing in the pines” (291). The dream enacts a conflation between her body and the city; she not only occupies its entire space by gaining access to otherwise inaccessible spheres, but she repeatedly comes into collision with it without getting hurt. The sensation of “her body, the size of a small statue, flying through the night, and being pulled by the current” (293), is representative of her own uncertainty, an oscillation between the exhilaration of flying and the fear of falling, between wielding agency and submitting to coincidence.

While Myra is closely aligned with Montreal, her physical and psychological being is also repeatedly paralleled with the apartment she has inhabited for the last fifteen years. Her description of the building mirrors her own fight against “the slide” she associates with loss of certainty. The eight-and-a-half rooms on de l’Esplanade, facing Parc Jeanne Mance and the mountain behind it, are “sloping ever so slightly toward the St. Lawrence River,” with its thirty-six walls “standing against the slide, lightening cracks where they couldn’t bear the strain any

more” (225). The apartment, with its “ancient wiring,” chipped sills, and rusty tub, “white and porous as an old person’s skin, too fragile to scrub clean,” seems to “look back at her. Almost alive. Like an image in a mirror” (225). Only when she is confronted with her half-naked body does Myra acknowledge to what extent it, like herself, and like the apartment she inhabits, is precariously resisting “the slide”: “She looked at her body coldly, and thought how much it looks like the house, sloping unconsciously, resisting the drift, barely. Neglected, ignored. A place where things happen, but unremarkable in itself” (228). Myra’s psyche, her body, her apartment, her city are all slightly out of kilter, decentred.

This living space is more than a mirror, however. Ackerman’s novel suggests that the relationship between body and space is dynamic, so that both influence one another. As Myra undergoes a mid-life crisis, so too does she effect change in the configuration of the apartment. Initially, the change is small – she spontaneously moves the kitchen table, arguing to herself that she is making space for Mandy, Mitch’s girlfriend, and her son James. As Mandy and James move in with Myra and Mitch, the latter gaining maturity as he settles into something akin to the role of father and provider, the apartment imperceptibly gets cleaner, roomier, until one night Myra comes home and realizes that “this apartment is huge” (118). Once her children have both moved out, leaving her alone in the apartment, Myra undertakes its renovation, cleaning it thoroughly, emptying it, and applying a coat of white paint that “works wonders” (325). The symbolic purge of the apartment in turn affects Myra, both psychologically and physically, triggering a similar transformation in her. Myra’s body thus undergoes a transformation similar to the application of a coat of white paint. While the beginning of her political and personal self-doubt is signalled by her impulse to cut her own hair while visiting Jack in Calgary, Myra only takes decisive steps towards self-renewal after she renovates the apartment: “when the mound of

papers and useless junk disappeared, she realized that was only the beginning. She did not want a new life as a childless homeowner” (325). Following this new insight, Myra gets a new haircut, buys new clothes, and accepts a job in Toronto.

If the body and the building mutually influence one another in *Jump*, so too does the novel suggest that urban space enters a similar relationship with social processes. A significant portion of the Main, as Myra describes it, has already been “swept up by the taste of money” following the establishment of trendy shops and restaurants (63). Myra has always embraced precariousness, earning a living as a free-lancer and living in constant expectation of the landlord’s eviction notice, the apartment being “unbelievably cheap” and therefore subject to the kind of urban renewal rampant on the plateau: “any day now the landlord’s going to kick me out, sand the floors, move himself in for a month and then double the rent on a new tenant” (35). As it happens, however, Myra’s ex-husband Jack purchased the apartment and has been paying off the mortgage since their separation. Halfway through the novel, Myra receives legal documentation indicating that the condominium now belongs to her. Surprisingly, for someone who claims the necessity of “getting her certainty back,” Myra ultimately sells the condominium for the hefty sum of \$202,000, thus participating in the very gentrification she has identified as problematic. Although it is basically a “drafty barn,” Myra’s condominium benefits from its “location, square footage, location” (263). The heterogeneity of the Plateau is what attracts the buyer, a “Chinese-American computer nerd” (329), but the latter’s intention of “spending some money” to make it “lovely” points to the future socio-economic transformation of the neighbourhood (329).

Identity in the Contact Zone

Myra describes her neighbourhood as a heterogeneous contact zone on multiple levels. Architecturally, the “turrets, gables, slate roofs and ornate moldings, plant-lined balconies, window boxes, tiny flower gardens” sometimes harmonize, sometimes clash to produce a “colourful mix” (48). Socially, the diversity in income is astounding. The Plateau is “a grab bag of flush yuppies, crooks and the able-bodied poor. Drug dens and daycares, students on skateboards, movie stars with Jags, deal-makers, missionaries, madmen, politicians, perverts, the homeless, the hopeless, the hip” (48). Even as Ackerman’s enumeration roams along a wide spectrum of different socio-economic classes, the general euphony of the enumeration, with its use of rhythm, alliteration, and occasional rhyme, suggests a fruitful interaction in which the whole is larger than the sum of its disparate parts. Finally, the Plateau is also culturally and linguistically heterogeneous: “Gaudy, noisy, seedy, slick, schizophrenic, the Main’s face is any colour, the Main’s voice a babble of English, French, a warped mixture of the two, and a dozen other languages spoken openly, loudly, persistently” (49). Once again, Ackerman’s use of poetic devices simultaneously underscores the various cultural and linguistic facets of the city and brings to light the way in which their interactions, “schizophrenic” though they may be, exhibit a harmony of their own. In a way, then, Ackerman’s use of prose here does enact a formal representation of the kind of “transculturation” her description attempts to convey, a resonant, hybrid new cultural phenomenon.

Nevertheless, and despite this poetic, almost impressionistic depiction of the city, interactions in the contact zone always occur, as Mary Louise Pratt underscores, “within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (*Imperial* 8). The immigrant population of the Plateau may provide its “great unifying attraction, savory, diverse, authentic” (Ackerman, *Jump* 49)

through the “noodle shops, black bread bakeries, pungent sausage havens, barbecues, caf  s, pasta restaurants” (49) and the “sweet salty aroma of sizzling chicken wafting out of a Lebanese takeout” (269), but this same population, as Myra emphasizes, is explicitly excluded from a nationalist project. While she is initially shocked by Jacques Parizeau’s claim that the Oui side lost because of “money and the ethnic vote” (187), her book project takes as its central thesis that Parizeau was right:

People whose names did not figure on the list of two hundred founding families of la nouvelle France, or at least slide easily off the French tongue, the people of the funny names had definitively voted Non en masse, because nothing and nobody in the independence movement circa 1995 gave them the faintest reason to believe this tumultuous project in any way concerned them, or even wanted them aboard. (326)

In the same way, Ackerman alludes, albeit in passing, to the complexity of the relations between Quebec and its First Nations and Inuit population, both vying for the role of “most powerful Canadian underdog” (102). Myra pitches a story to *This Magazine* about the Cree and Inuit of Quebec “holding independent referenda on whether native peoples want to join the move, should Quebecers vote oui on October 30” (101). Although the reader never receives details about the story itself, Myra later mentions that “as predicted, the Cree referendum came down heavily against being part of an independent Quebec” (146).

These asymmetrical power relations also provide the context in which “subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other” (Pratt, *Imperial* 8). As Myra explains, Montreal is “a city of impure language, fluid and changeable, infinitely supple, maddeningly inconsistent. Like the life it struggles to express” (Ackerman, *Jump* 49). Unsurprisingly, in light of such a description, identity itself becomes layered and hybrid, “impure,” “fluid,” and

“changeable,” as it is constantly questioned or reinforced by exchange and interaction. It is also, of course, informed by inherited colonial power dynamics. Thus, Myra Grant’s own identity is consistently confronted with what others think she is. Myra’s sense of self takes shape most evidently when she is designated as “English,” an appellation she vehemently resists. Lise Lamotte considers her a mouthpiece for Anglo-Quebec, but Myra “cringes at being identified with 600,000 disparate desperate English-speaking Quebecers, most of them raving federalists with little in common” (69). When Emmanuel, a young Francophone actor, fails to understand how Myra can say that “les anglais” “shoved” the language down the throat of her people, she exclaims, “I’m Irish, see. Née Myra Mary Callaghan. I’m telling you we had English shoved down our throats, by the English. Who were our enemies from, say, a few hundred years before you Frenchmen set foot on this part of the planet” (84).

For Québécoise Paulette, who does not understand how Myra can plan to vote Oui, Myra is English, to which Myra answers biting, “I definitely am not English” (29). In fact, Myra’s ancestry is a mixture of several nationalities, all of them influenced by the imperialism of England: her great-grandfather was Irish, while her mother’s people came from Boston after the American Revolution. Myra’s mother opted for her name in honour of her “ancient Jewish heritage” (302). Myra revels in her ancestry’s miscegenation, needling Paulette by stating that her grandmother “always claimed we’re cousins of René Lévesque” (30). Ultimately, Myra asserts, “I live in Quebec. I have lived in Quebec for 15 years. My children live there. Je suis québécoise” (32). But to Paulette, she is “a goddamn rich anglo Péquiste” (36).⁹² Montreal

⁹² Jacques Parizeau’s unfortunate statement shortly following the official results of the 1995 referendum, according to which “l’argent et les ethnies” were responsible for the loss of the Yes, suggests the extent to which the racial and cultural makeup of the province, and specifically of its metropolis, was diversified to an extent that could no longer be ignored. That Parizeau did not designate Anglophones as a deciding factor in the outcome of the referendum is noteworthy. The face of Quebec minorities had changed, so that by 1995, more inhabitants of Montreal designated themselves as Allophones than as Anglophones. Furthermore, Anglophones in the city were predominantly of other origin than British, especially among the younger generation. As Jack Jedwab argues, for a majority of separatist

therefore becomes a space in which identity is constantly questioned and reaffirmed through cultural encounters.

Myra's efforts to be recognized as something other than "English" throw into relief the power dynamics, both colonial and sexual, that inevitably enter into play in her interactions with others and that take on their full meaning in Montreal. While Myra invokes her Irish, Jewish, and possible French-Canadian ancestry to dissociate herself from the "English" signifier, Jack is loosely identified with Anglophone Western Canada and "Englishness" more generally.⁹³ Although Jack's act of buying the apartment and paying off the mortgage only to give it to Myra is an act motivated by "guilt, pride, generosity, concern, affection, even love" (257), Myra perceives it as a power play, a loss of control, and feels nothing but "cold, fast rage" (223). Significantly, she not only reverts to her maiden name towards the end of the novel, as she and Jack finally opt for divorce, but also sells the condominium, the immediate space with which she has heretofore interacted.

The new generation, represented most prominently by Sally and young actor Emmanuel, perhaps best exemplifies the malleable and hybrid nature of identity. Sexual identity, for example, is less rigidly defined. As Myra tells one of the actors, "What is gay, Bill? It's the end of the Twentieth Century, the age of continuum" (86). Instead of a dichotomous choice between heterosexual and homosexual, sexuality is inscribed across a continuous spectrum. In the same way, cultural identity has become malleable, versatile. Emmanuel intends to vote Yes in the referendum, but ultimately, he "has no opinion on cultural politics" (83). To him, the play is a

Francophones, "les ethnies" and "les Anglais" were conflated into one entity preventing them from achieving independence (90). Paul-André Linteau explains that "by 1996, one third of people living in and around the city had neither French nor British ancestry, making Montreal the only place of its kind in Quebec. And so, just as French regained its place of honour in the city, Montreal was also becoming more multicultural" (177). In 2001, 31 percent of people living on the island had a mother tongue other than French or English (186).

⁹³ The absence of Francophone communities outside Quebec in Anglo-Quebec fiction is almost as striking as their absence from Quebec fiction in French.

stepping stone “en route to the U.S. entertainment industry” (83). Sally exhibits a similar internationalism. To Myra, she is “nineteen, going on 30,” “a flawlessly bilingual product of the francophone school system” (287). Sally, however, is utterly uninterested in politics. Although she does sport a “Oui” button when Myra meets her at the voting poll, a probable side-effect of her relationship with Jean-Marie, she “[isn’t] exactly taking notes” when Myra outlines the thesis of her projected book on the future of politics in Quebec. Sally and Emmanuel are representative of a younger generation whose interest in the independence movement, since 1995, has been declining steadily. It is estimated that since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the voting intention for Quebec sovereignty is situated at little more than a third of the population (“Évolution” 44-45). If youth was the motor of the PQ and the sovereignty movement for the first referendum, driving the Yes to close to 50% of votes during the second referendum, the two generations that held the spirit of independence, the baby boomers and the generation X, were ultimately replaced by younger generations for whom sovereignty is no longer a central concern (Gagnon). During the 2014 elections, young voters clearly signalled their disaffiliation for the Parti Québécois, emphasizing education, environment, and social justice as issues more important to them than independence (Ouimet). This generation’s comfort with in-betweenness and desire to transcend binary conceptions of identity also affect its relationship with space. Identity is fluid, and it is much less obviously tied to place.

Sally’s disaffiliation from the things that Myra considers important is also representative of the extent to which she moves seamlessly between traditional markers of identity. Upon preparing for her vernissage, she understands that “you can’t get far in Quebec with a name like Grant” and thus opts for Alexis Meilleur. She explains to Myra that “we tried translation. Accorder? Octroyer? Dumb. Something better. So, finally we came up with Meilleur. Isn’t it

great?” (Ackerman, *Jump* 248). Not only does the name Alexis Meilleur suggest a Francophone artist (which, arguably, Sally is, although her mother tongue, strictly speaking, is English), but it also suggests a male artist. Sally’s decision to adopt this pseudonym implies that she feels much more comfortable in areas of in-betweeness than her mother, refusing to let herself be defined by political or sexual entities. Significantly, the last news we hear of Sally is that she has decided to travel to Europe, a decision representative of her generation’s waning interest in the political configurations of Quebec, as well as its more general disengagement from a sense of place.

In Montreal, the encounters that contribute to influence Myra’s shifting identity are shaped by underlying power dynamics and expressed spatially. At Chez Eaton, an important site of the “reconquest” of Montreal following Bill 101, she speaks French to the Francophone saleslady, but is answered in English: “Something a little more, ah, vivante. Myra explained this to her in French, but even as she persisted, French still did not work at Chez Eaton. ‘Ow much did you want to spend?’ the saleslady asked” (228). That the interaction takes place at Chez Eaton is significant, as the store became the focus of attention in the upheaval of the language laws. During the Quiet Revolution, the store, perhaps because it was the largest Anglophone store in Quebec, was associated with its unilingual salesladies, a stereotype that lasted well into the 1980s, as the 1989 declaration by Bourrassa’s Minister of Commerce Pierre MacDonald demonstrates: “On est tanné d’aller chez Eaton et d’avoir une maudite grosse Anglaise qui ne sait pas parler français!” (qtd in Nault). Eaton’s became the target of the FLQ, who detonated two bombs in the Sainte-Catherine Street store in November 1968. Following Bill 101 in 1977, the store changed its name to Eatons, and then eventually Eaton.

Myra’s comment on the impossibility of being served in French at Chez Eaton is thus an ironic reminder of the linguistic battle fought in Montreal because her efforts and ability to speak

French are countered by the saleslady's eagerness to accommodate English; it also emphasizes the way she perceives herself as having taken part in that battle, on the side of French, having "learned to speak anglo-French with a Québécois accent" (Ackerman, *Jump* 47) during her first years in Montreal. Myra's French is faulty (her use of the adjective "vivante" should have been in the masculine form), but her persistence in speaking French demonstrates the extent to which her interactions are motivated by the desire to integrate and interact with a French-speaking majority. Nevertheless, and underscored by the very space in which the exchange takes place, the linguistic power dynamics between Myra and the saleslady are telling: the saleslady seems to be accommodating Myra in switching to English, but this instance of code-switching both singles out Myra as ineligible to interact in French and relegates her status to that of marginal, one who must be accommodated, like a tourist.

When Myra meets Paulette for lunch, a similar linguistic tug-of-war is enacted. Paulette is the one to suggest L'Express, on rue Saint-Denis. Although Myra decides that "this lunch on her territory would be in French," Paulette "surprise[s] her, start[s] off in English," so that most of the conversation takes place in English. Ironically, when the conversation becomes tense, Paulette understands that although "she could talk politics in English and have fun," the touchier subject of her infidelity to Jack would necessitate "the power of nuance" of French. However, Paulette is convinced that "turning back now would be an admission of weakness" and, unable to switch back to French, feels frustrated that her defence cannot be articulated properly. Later, Paulette reflects that "the arrogance of accommodation is a mistake" (181). Although demonstrating ease with English felt like gaining the upper hand in "the game," she thinks, it "handed victory to the other side of the table" (181). While Paulette and Myra's struggle to gain some kind of control over each other stems from their respective attachment to Jack and is not

initially related to culture, it is inevitably expressed in linguistic terms because in Montreal, interactions always carry the trace of colonial domination. These traces impact identity formation, so that only after Paulette has lunched with Myra can she mark “a solid, unequivocal X beside Oui” (182) despite her former indecision and well-established life in Calgary.

Ackerman’s representations of interactions between French and English and their impact on the individual’s identity is efficient, thus translating in great part the dynamics of the contact zone, but her depiction of Montreal as a space of difference rather than a space of otherness suffers from a too rare encounter with the several cultural minorities that inhabit the Plateau. While Ackerman does mention that Myra’s neighbourhood is inhabited and enriched by immigrants from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, the reader rarely encounters them so that the few mentions of visible minorities seem relegated to invisible spaces: Mrs Pagnos, who has been Myra’s neighbour for 15 years, babysits James when the family must attend to an emergency, but is spotted only in passing by Jack, who fails to recognize her and describes her as an “elderly foreign-looking woman” (270); Nanthia, the “superb Malay cook” (57) at Myra’s favourite bar, is briefly alluded to but never seen; and the musicians that Myra stops to listen to in Parc Jeanne Mance, “an East Indian on flute, a shaggy-haired drummer and a stunning black vocalist” “chanting an unfamiliar African language” are removed in their exoticism. Upon seeing them, Myra reflects that “you are never totally alone here,” yet the reader cannot help but notice that the cultural minorities in *Jump* are mentioned but not integrated to the narrative, seen but not interacted with.

In a similar way, although Ackerman’s novel makes much of the presence of French in Myra’s life, and while there are some instances of French in the text, it is often alluded to rather than integrated into the narrative. Ackerman often describes or references “franglais” but rarely

employs it. The few instances of code switching are almost always translated in subsequent sentences for the benefit of the reader. This may be because the novel is aimed primarily at a mainstream, Anglophone audience, but the result is that while it describes with great care the constant interactions of the urban space that is Montreal, the novel itself fails to embody the contact zone as a textual space. For Catherine Leclerc, Anglo-Quebec literature enacts “colinguisme” when “le roman ne s’occupe pas seulement de représenter le français: il le convoque pour une multitude de fonctions et le fait participer à l’acte de représentation” (238). Only when French participates in the narrative, as opposed to being represented, can we speak of “colinguisme,” and, I would argue, can we properly invoke the dynamics of the contact zone.

Just as there is very little interaction or tension between languages in the textual space of *Jump*, so too does the novel present very little in the way of openness, exchange, or even uncertainty in terms of structure and narration. Ackerman’s novel may depict Myra as a figure undergoing a crisis of uncertainty, its very title an incitation to an action with unknown repercussions, but its form suggests closure both for the reader and the protagonist. The novel is divided into two sections, “Question” and “Answer,” whose titles may allude to the referendum (which effectively signals the end of the first section) but may also be read in relation to Myra’s psychological state. While the first section is written in the simple present, underscoring the uncertainty of the developments in Myra’s life, the second section adopts the simple past, the storytelling tense that relies on the certainty of something that has already happened. Similarly, the novel’s third-person omniscient point of view allows the reader access to the thoughts and feelings of other characters instead of having to rely on Myra’s subjective assessment, which provides a different kind of certainty to the reader. As Rosmarin Heidenreich explains, it involves “close control of the appropriate reader responses, in other words, the creation of a

relatively passive role for the reader” (16). The form of *Jump* is closed, its textual space static; this precludes any opportunity for the reader to interact with the text, or, as Gail Scott has said of *Heroine*, to keep it “open for reader intervention” (“Paragraphs” 102). One might be tempted to argue that Ackerman’s training and experience as a journalist account for her formal conservativeness, but the argument carries little weight when considering that Ackerman’s plays enact much more faithfully the kind of interactions she only describes in *Jump*.

Theatre as a Contact Zone

Marianne Ackerman’s plays both represent Montreal as a contact zone in which “subjects previously separated by geography and history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect” (Pratt, *Imperial* 8) and embody this co-presence in their textual space. In other words, Ackerman’s plays themselves are contact zones. For example, *Alanienouidet*, a play she co-wrote with Robert Lepage, provides a fictional account of the historical visit of British actor Edmund Kean to Montreal and Quebec City in 1826 and his meeting with the Huron community of Lorette. The play explores the colonial power dynamics between the English theatre group, the local French settlers who serve as extras, and the Hurons, who admire Kean and believe he can speak in their favour in London. Perhaps most interesting about the play, however, is its trilingualism, for, as Ackerman herself explains, “The Huron spoke fluent Iroquois (their actual language has been lost). The rest of the cast spoke English and French” (*Venus* 11). Her 1993 play *L’affaire Tartuffe or The Garrison Officers Rehearse Molière* similarly brings to the fore the early contact between English and French. Ackerman writes that her goal with the play was to

counter the dubious myth of “two solitudes,” an image reeking of silent WASP-like vengeance which does not fit what I, as a Quebecer, have lived and learned. The reality

for Quebec is and always has been much more dynamic and symbiotic than the internalized, polarized snap-shot of two solitudes, backs turned, guns pointed. As a ruling metaphor, two solitudes is not only too simple for the way things are, but useless as a guide through the chaos of life. Why only two solitudes? Duality is an artificial construction. (“Foreword” n.p.)

In keeping with this argument, the play features the interactions, past and present, between Francophones and Anglophones in Montreal. These interactions are fraught with tension but, from them, “something creative might flourish” (“Foreword” n.p.). The play is bilingual (trilingual, if we count the Gaelic lines spoken). Finally, Ackerman’s play *Céleste* tells the story of the relationship between a Westmount Anglophone philosopher, a young Francophone housemaid, and their Jewish friend in the 1960s. In addition to linguistic power dynamics, the play also explores sexual and socio-economic tensions. Ironically, the trilingual script, in which characters slip in and out of either language, explores the failure of communication.

In these three plays, Montreal is represented as a space that implies exchange between two or more linguistic and cultural groups; in the same way, the textual space of these three plays destabilizes the “langue tutélaire” and offers the possibility of developing “de nouveaux modes d’interaction entre les langues” (Leclerc 380). One explanation for this correspondence between textual space and represented space in Ackerman’s plays may reside in the very nature of performance space, which encompasses both spaces, and which, without ensuring a parallel between both, certainly encourages one. Max Herrmann once remarked that “performing arts are spatial arts, for they unfold and reveal their most essential qualities in real space” (qtd in Wihstutz 1). This is because the audience is “not simply a receptive component, but an active part of the performance itself, so much so that without its involvement the whole thing can never

truly come to life” (qtd in Wihstutz 1). The dialectical nature of the performance (the interaction between the performers and the audience) may encourage a dynamic treatment of space more generally. As a result, the performing arts may be better suited to embodying as well as representing the contact zone, as the etymology of the term “theatre” indicates “not just an art but also a place and a space” (Wihstutz 2).

This conviction seems to guide Ackerman’s depiction of the theatre in *Jump*. In her novel, Montreal is predominantly an artistic and cultural space: almost all the characters in the novel are associated in one way or another with the arts: Myra sits on the board of governors of the alternative, bilingual theatre company Off the Main (and seems to be single-handedly responsible for its financial survival); Joey, Myra’s best friend, is the director of Off the Main’s shows; Rowan is a poet, a musician, and a photographer; and Sally is becoming a respected painter. Their attachment to Montreal stems in part from their conviction that here, “art matters” (82). Those who don’t associate with the arts ultimately relocate, interestingly, to the West: Jack, who quit art school for law school, moves to Calgary with Paulette, whose “lack” of “taste” irritates Myra; Mitch, increasingly resembling his father, ultimately moves west and gets serious about law school. If the city is depicted as an artistic and cultural hub, however, it is the performance space of the theatre that most adequately features the “meeting,” “clashing,” and “grappling” between groups.

Off the Main’s bilingual production of Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* features a mismatch of actors: Vladimir is played by ambitious and internationally-minded Emmanuel Paré, who wants to “make it in America” despite being only “faintly bilingual” (83); Bill Davies, a washed up alcoholic who played mostly classical roles at the Stratford Festival, is Beckett’s Estragon. Emmanuel and Bill are of different cultures, age groups, and sexual orientations. When

Myra first visits the set to watch a rehearsal, she describes them as “two actors from the proverbial two solitudes,” although “they touch, bump and tolerate each other, for love of theatre, in hope of success” (84). Ackerman’s deliberate reference to Rainer Maria Rilke’s expression, as used by Hugh MacLennan for the epigraph of *Two Solitudes*, highlights the way in which theatre, by simulating and stimulating love and ambition, is perhaps the best example of a contact zone in *Jump*. Rilke wrote that two solitudes protect, touch (or border on), and greet (or bow to) one another, thus emphasizing the protection of their “inalienable identity and solitude” (Willem L. Graff, letter to Hugh MacLennan June 7, 1944). Ackerman’s own play on the expression rather emphasizes interaction, and the way in which “touching” and “bumping” one another make identity anything but “inalienable.”

During performances, Emmanuel and Bill correspondingly adopt a constellation of positions towards one another, from friendliness to open hostility. Their interactions are layered and complex, and both inform and are informed by the public’s reaction. The two actors initially seem to be mutually ignoring each other, Bill playing Estragon as a “clown” and Emmanuel portraying Vladimir as a “fallen patrician” (87). On opening night, both actors vie for the public’s attention, and in this way they are rivals; Godot becomes “a duel of egos between the two actors” (152). Tension between them culminates during intermission, when Bill and Emmanuel get into a fist fight. The rest of the play runs smoothly, despite technical difficulties, with both actors cooperating, so that when they finally emerge from the dressing room after the performance, “they have their arms around each other and Davies is bleeding on Emmanuel’s Stones T-shirt, but neither of them seems to care” (156). These multiple power plays are made more complex by the fact that Bill is sexually attracted to Emmanuel and mistakes the latter’s

attention, in fact a character study (Emmanuel wants to base his character on a real “wreck of a man” [87]), for sexual interest.

Ackerman’s depiction of the world of bilingual theatre is, of her own admission, based on her experience with Theatre 1774, but her choice of play (a play that was never produced by Theatre 1774) strikes the reader as specifically pertinent, if only in light of its postcolonial ramifications. Beckett, an Irishman, actually wrote the play in French in 1949 and only translated it into English two years later. Beckett explained that writing in French allowed him to write “without style,” that is, to gain “a greater simplicity and objectivity” (Knowlson 324). In fact, the apparent simplicity of the play is what allows for such a diverse range of interpretations, some of them political. It is also what makes it a prime choice for a production put on in the weeks leading up to the 1995 referendum. For, as James Knowlson writes, the play’s asymmetrical power relations are undeniable: “although the play can in no way be taken as a political allegory, there are elements that are relevant to any local situation in which one man is being exploited or oppressed by another” (Knowlson 639). Accordingly, when Davies/Estragon suggests, “what about hanging ourselves?”, Emmanuel mispronounces his line and Vladimir ends up answering “Hmmm. It’d give us an *election*” instead of an “erection” (Ackerman, *Jump* 87). A small mistake in pronunciation is enough to make the play resonate with local politics, as the juxtaposition of suicide and election highlights the underlying tension of the last days of October 1995. Joey’s bilingual adaptation of *Waiting for Godot*, with its “carefully constructed mix of English and French” therefore “heightens the power plays of communication” (88).

In the space of the Off the Main theatre, there occurs the kind of transculturation mentioned by Mary Louise Pratt as one of the manifestations of the contact zone and in which, as Fernando Ortiz writes, “the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena” is

central (103). In other words, the tension and confrontation between Emmanuel and Bill also gives rise to something more than what it seems to represent. On the opening night, as a result of their battle of egos, the audience “cannot help but feel the energy created by the tension onstage” (152), which, in turn, feeds the actors’ duel of egos. During another performance, conversely, the cast offers “no energy” in response to the absence of audience: one actor is “mugging for laughs” while the other seems to be in a “totally different play,” “a tragedy by Racine” (174). On yet another night, when the audience consists of only one member, an elderly man, Bill’s “irrepressible desire for laughter” provides Emmanuel’s “studied seriousness with balance, and in the absence of an anonymous crowd, they have no one to talk to but each other” (214). The “magic” that is produced during the length of the play allows for the stage and audience to become “part of a single action” (213). A new play thereby emerges, one about “one man watching a performance of *Waiting for Godot*” (214). These three different representations give rise to three different plays, “interactive, improvisational dimensions” (Pratt, *Imperial* 8) of the contact between actors. In these new plays, differing central themes seem to emerge, from the interplay of language to “poor humanity’s desperate search for connection” (Ackerman, *Jump* 215).

As Mary Louise Pratt explains, texts produced in the contact zone are “heterogeneous on the reception end as well as on the production end” so that they “read very differently to people in different positions” (“Arts” 36). Thus, after attending the play, a critic from *The Gazette* writes that its bicultural existentialism is a failure, and that its two clowns “have long since gone their separate ways. These clowns don’t talk to each other, they talk to the audience. How Canadian. Ultimately, who cares?” (Ackerman, *Jump* 174). Conversely, a critic from *Le Devoir*, upon seeing the same play, writes that it “proves Quebec’s maturity and sophistication of culture” and

that the interplay of language is a “metaphor for Quebec,” “a country whose time has come” (175). Interestingly, the English-language critic sees the play as a “bicultural experiment” that represents the larger, failed bicultural experiment of Canada, while the French-language critic focuses on the play as representing Quebec itself. Neither critic can resist reading into a political allegory, but their differing approaches highlight the kind of narrower focus adopted by several Anglo-Quebec writers even as it underscores the extent to which the reception of “texts” produced in the contact zone is as heterogeneous as their production. The different readings of the play also exemplify the way in which practices of cultural exchange “might be enjoyed in difference” (Broeck 56).

Marianne Ackerman’s novel presents performance space, both the play itself and the textual space of the script, as a contact zone that creates something culturally larger than the sum of its parts. In the performance of the play, two actors act out intricate dynamics, which, in turn, affect and are affected by the public, thus giving rise to the ineffable. In the written play, languages collide and meaning is both altered and created. Unlike the two journalists, who recuperate the play as a political allegory, the players and those, like Myra, who revolve around the play, avoid any allegorical reading of the text in relation to Canadian politics, focusing instead on the events of the here and now (as in the case of the “erection” / “election” lapsus, which addresses the climate in Montreal rather than any larger, national question around the referendum). Emmanuel and Davies “touch, bump and tolerate each other,” not, as Hugh MacLennan would have it, out of respect for each other or overarching sense of Canadianness, but out of “love of the theatre” (84). In light of this stimulating approach, the failure of Ackerman’s novel to convey a correspondingly dynamic treatment of textual space is its most disappointing shortcoming. However, the novel’s suggestion that theatre’s performance space is

the most important crucible for “new cultural phenomena” that emerge from the interactions in the city as contact zone ultimately enlarges and diversifies our conception of space.

Heather O’Neill’s *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*

Heather O’Neill’s *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014) is more successful, not necessarily in its depiction of the city as a contact zone but in its use of textual space to embody the dynamism and potential risks of the contact zone. The novel tells the story of Noushka Tremblay, a young Québécoise who, against the backdrop of the 1995 referendum, strives to emancipate herself from the men in her life: her twin brother Nicolas, with whom she has always cultivated a symbiotic relationship; her mentally unstable husband Raphaël; and her once-famous father Étienne. Like Myra Grant in *Jump*, Noushka both views the city as “hers” and is aligned with it in the sense that any description of Montreal in the novel both echoes and comments on her state of mind. Like *Jump*, also, O’Neill’s novel attempts a representation of the city as a space of difference, as opposed to binarism, despite the political context and cultural affiliation of the narrator. The spaces Noushka inhabits are multicultural: she enrolls for night school at the Ukrainian Centre, she meets with Raphaël at the Polish Social Club (273), and she celebrates the New Year at the Armenian Confederation Ballroom (282). So, too, are the people who inhabit that space representative of the multiculturalism that characterizes the city. Whether it is Noushka’s occasional Russian lover Misha, Raphaël’s Uzbek stepmother, or the Czechoslovakian mother of Nicolas’s son, Saskia, the people who gravitate around Noushka and Nicolas rarely bear such Québécois names as “Tremblay.” When Nicolas acquires guns to hold up a bank, his description of the process insists almost mockingly on the plurality of the city’s makeup: “I bought them from an Armenian, who got them from a Polish guy, who got them from

a Moroccan, who got them from these Senegalese dudes” (323). As in *Jump*, however, these figures appear only peripherally in Noushka’s everyday.

O’Neill’s novel has done particularly well for itself, recently succeeding in making its way onto the Giller short list. The novel has not yet been translated into French, nor has it been reviewed by the French language press, but diverging reactions should be anticipated, from applause to indignation, to unawareness, for the novel, as a product of the contact zone, is “heterogeneous on the reception end” as well as the production end, and is “bound to be received very differently by different readerships” (Pratt, *Imperial* 9). While *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* does not engage in the kind of “colinguisme” that destabilizes hierarchical relations between languages, O’Neill’s use of voice appropriation might also be perceived as a form of transculturation. Perhaps the playfulness O’Neill adopts in her ironic reference to a homogeneous Quebec culture and the confidence her writing exhibits in its appropriation of voice are, ultimately, the proof of its status as a new cultural phenomenon and the sign that Montreal as a contact zone, with its “co-presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices,” though they are the result of “asymmetrical relations of power,” is also a space of neoculturation. In a similar way, the novel’s use of magic realism ensures a dynamic use of textual space that mirrors Noushka’s own double vision in describing the city as both a place of magic and a real place. In both its treatment of urban space and textual space, then, O’Neill’s work presents itself as a true product of the contact zone and the Montreal novel par excellence.

Textual Space: Voice Appropriation As a Product of the Contact Zone

The Girl Who Was Saturday Night is narrated from the point of view of a young Francophone Québécoise and includes a few French words and expressions. These French passages are italicized and are usually not translated, nor are they alluded to in a way that

explains their meaning, so that an English-language reader might not understand them. However, they are few and far between, and while the unilingual reader might lose the meaning of a specific exchange, the comprehension of the plot is never compromised. Therefore, while this presence of French adds texture to the novel, it in no way enacts the kind of destabilizing tension that would account for a description of the novel's textual space as dynamic, dialectical, or open. O'Neill's perfunctory use of French is perhaps surprising, as she, like Ackerman, is bilingual, but her comfort with French is expressed differently, in that her characters often appear to express French thoughts in English. O'Neill has reflected on this form of translation, stating that she "found writing French but in English sort of oddly appealing because it sort of captured the slipperiness of language. And how we are sort of trying to capture emotions in words and make logical sense of our experiences, but we never really can" (qtd in Reitmayer). Despite this layering, O'Neill's novel, like Ackerman's *Jump*, ultimately does not provide "un environnement immédiat où les langues cohabitent, s'interpellent, se contestent de manière telle qu'aucune d'entre elles ne peut plus être tenue pour centrale" (Leclerc 194). English is still clearly the central, dominant language of her work.

Nevertheless, while the novel's textual space does not accommodate the specific kind of openness attributed to "colinguisme," an "ouverture sur de multiples agencements discursifs qui sont autant de possibilités d'expérimentation avec les langues" (Leclerc 194), I argue that it is dynamic in other ways. First, O'Neill's use of voice appropriation can be read as a cultural phenomenon that reveals the textual space as a site of exchange in which the known linguistic and cultural affiliation of the author is in constant tension with her character's allusion to Québécois stereotypes. As a result of this tension, the novel emerges as a dialogue between English and French (mis)conceptions of Quebec identity. Second, O'Neill's use of magic realism

enacts a tension between two distinct and seemingly opposite modes, each informing the other and ultimately allowing for a productive form of textual hybridity.

As several novelists have argued,⁹⁴ voice appropriation and cultural appropriation more generally may be considered indicators of the kinds of interactions and exchanges that take place in the contact zone. In his essay “From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation,” Richard A. Rogers defines cultural appropriation as “the use of a culture’s symbols, artefacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture” (474). This kind of appropriation, he argues, is inescapable when “cultures come into contact, including virtual or representational contact” (474). Among the different forms of cultural appropriation, Rogers identifies transculturation as the most productive one, in which “cultural elements [are] created from and/or by multiple cultures, such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic” (477). This definition highlights appropriation and hybridity as “constitutive of culture,” which Rogers reconfigures as an “intersectional phenomenon” (478).

⁹⁴ An adamant participant in the debate on the appropriation of voice that took place in the early 1990s, Anglo-Quebec novelist Neil Bissoondath published *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism* (1994), a collection of essays written in response to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988, in which he insists that “internal censorship” in refusing to write from different perspectives is “even more deadening to the imaginative life” than external censorship (169). Just as he himself does not “define his writing by his gender or his colour,” so does Bissoondath believe that “a writer’s concerns go far beyond these boxes, extending to a wider humanity” (173) lest fiction give way to autobiography. In 1996, Montreal writer Stephen Henighan published an article in *The Matrix* to denounce the voice appropriation debate as a “media sham” (“Terrible” 69). For Henighan, the debate forces authors into a form of self-censure because it amalgamates the condemnation of voice appropriation with being “on the side of the progressives” (64). The debate also obfuscates the fact that “appropriation of voice depends for its legitimacy on the assumption that there exists an undiluted, ‘authentic’ core to each culture, reflected in its traditional art” (66). By critiquing this kind of essentialism, Henighan implies that voices in the contact zone are always already “impure, mongrelized” and hybrid (67). Bissoondath and Henighan’s views on the appropriation of voice dovetail with their ideas about Quebec identity. In 1996, answering Bernard Pivot’s question “mais enfin, me direz-vous ce qu’est un Québécois?”, Bissoondath answered by simply stating, “Un Québécois, c’est quelqu’un comme moi” (qtd in Reid, “Anglo-Québécois Literature” 77). Designating himself as the definition of a Québécois, Bissoondath deliberately blurs the lines of any definition of Québécois that relies on the appellation “de souche” and, with this gesture, destabilizes the kind of essentialism presupposed by the opposition to voice appropriation described by Henighan. Both authors suggest the constructed nature of culture, its inherent heterogeneity.

This view of transculturation is echoed by Norman Cheadle in his introduction to *Canadian Cultural Exchange: Translation and Transculturation*. Cheadle argues that Fernando Ortiz's notion of transculturation offers an alternative to the "twin positions of bad conscience and victimhood that tend to fuel postcolonialist discourse on cultural appropriation" (xi). Instead, Ortiz's broader conception, which figures transculturation as "the turbulent and unpredictable process resulting from the interaction among cultures in contact and which potentiates, in spite of unequal power relations, the emergence of new cultural forms" (xi), allows for a consideration of voice appropriation as part of the process that emerges from cultural exchange. Transculturation can thus be used as a critical paradigm to explain how exchange and transmission takes place "within and between cultures" (xi). The use of voice appropriation and cultural appropriation more generally in O'Neill's novel, then, denotes a kind of hybridity of form, a cultural element or a new cultural form in which it is difficult to identify which of Anglo-Quebec culture or Québécois culture is the origin.

Several contemporary novelists writing about Montreal in English have similarly adopted the perspective of French-speaking Québécois characters: John Brooke's *Last Days of Montreal* (2003), Jeffery Moore's *The Memory Artists* (2004), John Farrow (Trevor Fergusson)'s *Émile Cinq-Mars* trilogy, Mary Soderstrom's *The Violets of Usambara* (2008), John Lavery's *Sandra Beck* (2010), Alice Zorn's *Arrhythmia* (2011), and Claire Rothman's *My October* (2014). Significantly, however, none of these novels adopts the first person in its narration. It is thus easy for the reader to forget that he or she is reading about a Québécois character created by an Anglophone writer. In *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, Heather O'Neill emphasizes and problematizes subjectivity by joining the use of first person narration with an ironic insistence on Quebec stereotypes. The result is a constant tension between Noushka's generalizations about

Quebec culture and the reader's persistent awareness that O'Neill herself identifies more as a Montrealer than as a Québécoise.

In *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, Noushka's narration is quite often interspersed with frankly laughable generalizations about Quebec culture. Her account of what it means to be Québécois leads her to employ the first person plural in sweeping statements about Quebec culture. Noushka defends her decision to marry Raphaël at only twenty by explaining that "Québécois did everything so young. We lost our looks young. People died at forty-nine from drinking and lung cancer and a steady diet of white bread and Jos Louis cakes" (169). She remarks that Étienne inhales his cigarette "in the way that only a Québécois can inhale a cigarette" (136), that "We Québécois were always drinking spruce beer" (304), and that "We Québécois had to be particularly careful about the risk of joining motorcycle gangs. It was in our blood" (210). Noushka's comments are sometimes downright insulting: "There was nothing you could say that would dissuade the Québécois from believing that chocolate spread was good for them" (219).

These generalizations are all the more surprising when one considers how deeply engaged with Quebec culture O'Neill's novel actually is. Its numerous intertextual allusions not only evoke icons of high and low culture such as *Le Devoir*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, and *Allo Police*, *Passe-Partout* (77), *Bonheur d'occasion* (125), *Chambres en ville* (197), *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, (197), *Les filles de Caleb* (200), *Les Colocs* (212), *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* (287), and *La petite vie* (289), but, more importantly, the novel allows its characters to interact with cultural icons and participate in cultural phenomena. For example, the entire Tremblay family is the subject of Claude Jutras's fictive 1983 documentary,

La famille Tremblay dans l'hiver (53),⁹⁵ and Étienne, briefly successful again after the referendum, sings a lullaby for Papillon, Noushka's son, on "Jean-Pierre Coallier's show" (400).⁹⁶ These historical and cultural intertextual allusions are therefore more than an attempt to legitimize O'Neill's portrayal of Noushka as a Québécoise; they demand that we read O'Neill's novel not merely as Anglo-Quebec literature, but as Quebec literature, that is, "as literature coming from and defining a cultural space that is shared by both [English and French] yet experienced in singularity," an approach that might in turn "lead to a better appreciation of what that space is like" (P. Coleman 219).

In light of O'Neill's otherwise complex and sensitive portrayal of Noushka, then, one can only explain her generalizations of "we Québécois" as ironic. This irony is signalled not only by the insistence of Noushka on defining general Québécois traits based on mundane characteristics (such as drinking spruce beer or smoking) but also by O'Neill's self-reflexive evocation of the spectre of cultural commodification. Noushka understands that the future of Quebec culture is precarious: "our culture could disappear and all that would be left of it would be little French-Canadian bobble-head dolls dressed in lumberjack shirts next to the polar bear clocks in the tourist shops" (328). Noushka's own comments about "we Québécois," of course, are the equivalent of these bobble-head dolls, so that her frequent uses of Quebec stereotypes reveal O'Neill's ironic perspective on cultural appropriation.

As Jane Jacobs explains, while it is possible that tourism and heritage industries are in fact a "threat to authentic places or identities," it may in fact be more relevant to see them as producing "the melancholic fantasy that there are (somewhere) or were (sometime) authentic

⁹⁵ The mention of Jutras resonates in O'Neill's novel, as the famous filmmaker committed suicide by jumping off the Jacques Cartier Bridge, just as Raphaël did following sexual abuse by his figure skating coach, though the latter survived this first suicide attempt.

⁹⁶ This would have been *Ad Lib*, a popular evening talk-show hosted by Coallier from 1985 to 1995.

places and peoples” (*Edge* 155). Noushka’s mention of dolls dressed in lumberjack shirts thus also points to the constructed nature of any notion of “authentic” Quebec culture. Her comment might then be read as a signal to read any of her more general assessments of what it means to be Québécois as ironic. Noushka’s very insistence on defining the Quebec identity through such ridiculous clichés undercuts any impulse to read her as a type, or a character representative of a culture. Her insistence on telling the reader what is Québécois about being Québécois reads as a satire of ethnic nationalism, the kind of hyperbole that deflates any homogeneous idea of Quebec culture and rather insists on culture as an “intersectional phenomenon” that is always already hybrid.

The irony implicit in Noushka’s plethora of clichés about Quebec culture almost likens the novel to a kind of “autoethnography,” by which Mary Louise Pratt designates a product of the contact zone in which “colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s term,” that is, “texts the others construct in response to or in dialogue with” metropolitan ethnographic texts (*Imperial* 9). Noushka might then be seen as manipulating and responding to outdated stereotypes wielded in the past, among others, by Anglo-Montrealers (the image of the Jos. Louis-eating Québécois rather belongs to the post-war era than to 1995 Montreal). The term autoethnography cannot apply here, of course, because the author of *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* is an Anglo-Quebecer, though she has refused the appellation “Anglophone” in favour of the more general “Montrealer,” but O’Neill’s novel nevertheless emerges as a dynamic textual space that allows for a reciprocal influence between Québécois and Anglo-Quebec conceptions and misconceptions of Quebec identity. The oddness of Noushka’s affirmations indirectly points to the heterogeneous, hybrid nature of Quebec culture. O’Neill’s

novel might thus be considered as one of the “new cultural phenomena” to emerge from the contact zone that is Montreal.

Textual Space As Contact Zone: Magic Realism

If O’Neill’s use of voice appropriation creates an ongoing relationship between different conceptions of Quebec culture in the novel, so too, I argue, does her use of magic realism designate her use of textual space as dynamic. For Stephen Slemon, the magic realist mode of narration is inherently dialectical, because it

requires the reader to read the novel in a dialectical manner, forestalling the collapse of either one of the two narrational modes into the other, but recognizing the erosion in massive and totalizing system that the dialectic effects in each. The texts thus demand a kind of reading process in which the imagination becomes stimulated into summoning into being new and liberating “codes of recognition.” (20)

The magic and realistic modes of the novel affect and destabilize each other, but their interrelation also gives rise to new “codes of recognition” that greatly resemble the “new cultural phenomena” said to emerge in the contact zone. In this sense, magic realism becomes “a productive form of cultural hybridity” constituted by “culturally heterogeneous texts” (Stevens 601). As Wendy B. Faris explains, the combination of realistic and fantastical narrative “means that magical realism reflects, in both its narrative mode and its cultural environment, the hybrid nature of much postcolonial society” (2). Thus magic realism “partially reverses the process of cultural colonization” (29) by privileging hybridity over binarism, plurality over otherness. As a result, O’Neill’s use of textual space evokes the contact zone as described by Mary Louise Pratt.

The plurality inherent in O’Neill’s use of textual space is evidenced by the fact that while Noushka provides the bulk of the first-person narration, several seemingly impossible shifts in

perspective occur and are never explained. The narrative delves into the minds of the strippers on Sainte-Catherine, one of whom “drank a glass of water that made her feel cold inside, and she wondered if she was going to have a bladder infection” (O’Neill, *Girl* 2). Whether it adopts the point of view of a stray cat, who has “just been impregnated” and lays there, “reliving the evening nervously in her mind” (21), or of Étienne himself, who took advantage of a young impressionable girl and who suddenly can’t remember “why he hadn’t worn a condom” (106), or even of the devil, who, in the café of Place des Arts, does “his best business” reaping the souls of young ambitious ballerinas (204), the novel multiplies points of view and voices. It becomes the formal representation of Noushka’s conviction that “every writer has to invent their own magical language, in order to describe the indescribable” (336).

O’Neill’s *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, while not unique in its use of magic realism, belongs to a relatively small corpus of English-language novels about Montreal that stray from the realist mode. This corpus also includes Robert Majzels’s *City of Forgetting* (1997) and Michel Basilières’s *Black Bird* (2003).⁹⁷ Majzel’s use of magic realism echoes Stephen Slemon’s observation according to which magic realism as a literary practice seems to be “closely linked with a perception of living on the margins” (10). The novel, in which the “silenced, marginalized, or dispossessed voices within the colonial encounter themselves form the record of ‘true’ history,” allows for an encounter between these voices and the “dominant

⁹⁷ In Majzels’s *City of Forgetting*, the protagonist, Suzy Creamcheez, is a young woman who often finds herself with “no idea of who she’s supposed to be or how she got there” (35), but she is joined in her urban wanderings by Clytemnestra, Lady Macbeth, Che, Le Corbusier, DeMaisonnette, Rudy Valentino, and Marx, all homeless scavengers like her. These characters, drifting through the city, are simultaneously real disenfranchised people and ghosts haunting a city that tries to forget or overlook them. In this sense, they “testify not only to the violent history of colonization and exclusion” but also reveal “the contemporary city’s potential for violence toward women, the poor, and the homeless on its streets” (Beneventi “Exclusion” 87). Michel Basilières’s *Black Bird* features the aptly named Desouches family and takes place during the October crisis of 1970, but events and historical characters from other time periods, and literary works, overlap. Eugene L. Arva writes that magic realism re-presents extreme events: “Unlike representation, which involves some degree of interpretation, *re*-presentation captures the *feel* of a limit experience, not the facts” (4). The events of October 1970 made a “deep impression” on the novelist, who was ten at the time (“Michel”). In its deliberately erroneous re-presentation of events and characters, then, *Black Bird* evokes the feeling of a traumatic event rather than its facts.

modes of discourse” (14). In the case of Basilière’s novel, magic realism rather seems to be used, as Eugene L. Arva suggests it often does, to come to terms with historical trauma. In *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, magical realism serves a slightly different purpose. It does not treat the 1995 referendum as a traumatic experience that must be re-presented, nor does it truly represent a tool to challenge existing power structures by marginalized, silent communities. Instead, the dialectical relationship between the realist and the magical modes in O’Neill’s novel, while it emphasizes the dynamism and hybridity of textual space, similarly underscores the dynamism of urban space in highlighting Noushka’s conception of the city as both a real place and a magical one.

Montreal: City of Magic, City of the Individual

Like Marianne Ackerman’s *Jump*, O’Neill’s novel steers clear of any representation of Montreal as a metaphor for Canadian unity or biculturalism, and rather depicts this specific urban space as an embodiment of the individual, by the individual. Noushka’s descriptions of the city mirror her evolution, as she shapes the city in the same way that it shapes her identity. The result is a highly personalized conception of the city, an almost solipsistic view of Montreal that superimposes real and imagined space, allowing their co-existence and mutual influence.

At twenty, Noushka Tremblay understands that she must somehow gain her independence from Nicolas, her twin brother and the other half of her person. Raised by their grandfather Loulou, the twins have always exhibited extravagant behaviour, partly as a way of coping with their mother’s abandonment, and partly because of the fame they endured as the children of famous Québec folk singer Étienne Tremblay, a cross between Félix Leclerc, Gilles Vigneault, and Robert Charlebois. Étienne, whose star has now significantly faded after three stints in jail, is an absent and egotistical father, but as a result of the media personae Étienne

imposed upon them as children, Noushka and Nicolas walk around the Ville-Marie neighbourhood (specifically, the intersection of boulevard Saint-Laurent and rue Sainte-Catherine), like bankrupt aristocracy, poor but well known and loved. The twins are closely aligned with a city that has essentially invented them, as Noushka remarks: “the entire city had told us over and over again that we were lovable and special” (185). Through her disastrous marriage to mentally unstable Raphaël Lemieux and ensuing pregnancy, Noushka succeeds in living apart from Nicolas. But only when Raphaël commits suicide and Nicolas lands in jail for robbing a bank does Noushka truly succeed in defining herself according to her own perceptions and goals. Just as the city both reassures her and exerts pressure on her, Noushka’s own vision of the city changes as she acquires maturity.

The similarities between *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* and *Lullabies for Little Criminals* (2007), O’Neill’s first novel, are striking. The absent mother, the inadequate father, and the poverty and lack of education are recurring tropes. Baby, the 12-year old protagonist in *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, is raised by her junky father Jules after her mother dies when she is only two years old. The setting in both works is also the same: O’Neill has admitted that her second novel “is set across the street from her first novel” (qtd in Tien). Her interest in the area around the intersection of boulevard Saint-Laurent and rue Sainte-Catherine is representative of the tightened focus on space in Anglo-Quebec novels, from a treatment of Montreal more generally as a city divided by the Main and representative of the country at large (divided by the Ottawa River), to a description of specific neighbourhoods that embody the diversity of the city. Like *Jump*, which adopts the Plateau as its centre, O’Neill’s novels hone in on a specific area of the city.

At the same time, however, and in seeming opposition to this pluralistic view of Montreal, O'Neill's two novels also enact an opposition between Montreal, as represented by the Ville-Marie borough, and all that is not Montreal, that is, what exists outside the island. The epitome of this antithesis to Montreal is Val-des-Loups, a fictional town alluded to in *Lullabies for Little Criminals* (both Baby's parents are from Val-des-Loups) and in *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (the twins' mother Noëlle is also from Val-des-Loups, where, at fourteen, she meets Étienne and becomes pregnant). The sense of continuity between the two novels is further signalled by O'Neill's use of the last name Tremblay, Baby's mother's last name, which, in addition to being one of the most popular last names in the province, is also Noushka and Nicolas's last name. There is, then, a sense of overlap between the two stories, as if Noushka, Nicolas, and Baby all belong to the same mythology, one that figures Montreal as the centre where the best and the worst things happen. Noushka's descriptions of Montreal often seem to mythologize the city itself, an impulse in tension with her more grounded observations.

Noushka is so intimately bound up in her own city that her sense of self informs and is informed by its streets and buildings. Her imaginary re-mapping of the city is never expressed in the English/west-French/east dichotomy so popular even today but instead transforms (and is transformed by) the immediate space she inhabits. And, while her own story evolves alongside the campaign for and aftermath of the second referendum on the sovereignty of Quebec, her city never becomes representative of any Canada-Quebec split, as it is in *Two Solitudes*, *Place d'Armes*, and *The Restoration*. Rather, the ambivalence that the city itself enacts, implicit in the "telephone poles that each had signs that said oui and non right on top of each other" (319), comments on Noushka's feelings towards Nicolas and her family more generally. It is therefore no coincidence that the rare mentions of the referendum throw into relief Noushka's own

ambivalence between her desire for autonomy and her loyalty to her family. When Nicolas first rants about the politicians and the upcoming vote, Noushka thinks about her own independence: “the apartment suddenly became tiny again. For the first time it came upon me: the absolutely natural desire to move out” (129). When Nicolas later takes off his “oui button” and puts it on Noushka’s jacket, she thinks about their increasingly diverging lives: although they are “still fighting on the same side of that war” (251), other conflicts see them take opposing sides. The postponement of the referendum is the occasion for Noushka to absorb the shock of her own pregnancy, as both the referendum and her pregnancy feel like “the kind of thing that could never really happen” (264). Ironically, the rally in favour of independence for which Noushka writes Étienne a speech signals the final dissolution of the Tremblay family: “at the end of the day, when the audience went home, we were no longer a family” (346).

Ultimately, however, following the referendum and the birth of her son, Noushka goes back to “the business of daily life,” because, as she asserts, “most of our life was spent between the revolutions” (402). The referendum and its failure may have precipitated Nicolas’s desperate bank robbery, in that the latter equates the possibility of Quebec independence with the prospect of having a family and a normal life, an equation shaped by Étienne’s own separatist agenda and manipulation of his children, but for Noushka, the social and political turmoil of the city is simply an impetus to meditate on her own life and an occasional reflection of the events that constitute it. In *Two Solitudes*, *Place d’Armes*, and *The Restoration*, the city, like the individual, is representative of the national and the political; in *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, the city rather impacts and sheds light on the individual. In turn, the individual constantly reshapes the real and imagined city.

Like Myra Grant in *Jump*, Noushka is aligned with the city; this alignment also takes on a spatial aspect, so that Noushka's experience of the city outgrows her immediate surroundings on boulevard Saint-Laurent even as her figurative horizons expand. As the novel opens, Noushka still lives in the same apartment where she was raised by Loulou and rarely ventures outside her neighbourhood; even when she marries Raphaël, the couple move to a nearby building within walking distance of the place where she grew up. But as the action develops, Noushka gains access to remoter parts of the city in a way that parallels her maturation process. She and Nicolas visit their mother, Noëlle, who lives in a "residential neighbourhood" on the west side of town where "the lawns were clean and all the cars were new" (91); the visit is a catalyst for Noushka's disillusionment about parenthood and subsequent reflections on the complexities of child rearing when she herself becomes pregnant. Later, when she and Raphaël take the bus to a "steakhouse in the east end" to meet Raphaël's father and his girlfriend (215), Noushka learns that Raphael suffered from sexual abuse from his figure skating coach and better understands her husband's suffering, though she cannot alleviate it. Her application for a job as a receptionist at Place des Arts stems, significantly, from the desire to "have a job that was farther downtown," "make a bit more than minimum wage" and "make [her] feel like [...] an adult" (161-62).

Finally, Noushka's metro trip to the Université de Montréal to enrol in its literature program is a physical, spatial representation of her expanding knowledge and more comprehensive sense of identity. As she takes in the "sprawling wings" of the buildings, the "hundreds of bicycles locked outside the building" and the "kids of all races – Asian, black, Arab – hurrying down the hallways with their books and their school bags," she realizes that "there was so much about society at large that she didn't know anything about" (334). The literal, geographical expansion of Noushka's territory mirrors the expansion of her mind and the

consolidation of her autonomy. Riding the metro back downtown, she articulates a new sense of self that is both psychologically and spatially grounded: “I was not going to define myself by the traits that men found adorable in me. I was pushing myself to get on with life and to not chicken out. I warned myself not to be afraid of people who lived off of Boulevard Saint-Laurent” (334). In this sense, Noushka’s gradually expanding psychological and physical space suggests that she enjoys more mobility than Baby in *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, who, as Domenico Beneventi writes, “continually inhabits spaces of physical and psychological entrapment” (“Underground” 270). While Jules and Baby move from one apartment to the next, but always within the same area, re-enacting cycles of poverty, drugs, and exploitation, Noushka enjoys a relative spatial mobility, both by walking and taking public transportation. This spatial mobility entails an eventual social one, as Noushka’s pursuit of a university diploma in the novel’s closing chapter suggests.

While the urban space mirrors the individual’s progress in *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, it also takes on mythical proportions as a city-state. Seemingly cut off from, and bearing almost no relation to the rest of Canada or even Quebec, the island of Montreal cultivates its own distinct history and magic. Noushka’s narration, like Étienne’s songs, participates in this mythologizing process by making “the ridiculous squalor that [is] everyday life sublime” (11). Noushka is voted Miss Montréal by acclamation when the jury realizes that she is Étienne’s daughter and starts singing along to one of his songs (8). In a similar fashion to Étienne, Noushka transforms her downtrodden area of Montreal into a city of mythical proportions. Here, crime is an ancestral tradition in which thieves are “trained by uncles and fathers who were in the trade. They were organized and had proper capers” (35). The unemployed of the Main become tragic figures for whom “dreaming too big was the cause of much horror [...]. There was a whole

group of fallen Icaruses sitting under the blazing fluorescent lights at the soup kitchen” (41).

According to Lewis Spence, a myth, in telling of the deeds of supernatural beings or gods, is often devised in order to explain our relation to the universe or the environment (11). Noushka’s allusion to Icarus exemplifies her endeavour to understand her world; it helps her explain the pervading poverty of her neighbourhood by tying it to a larger story about ambition and failure. So too do mythical allusions help her make sense of her own immediate environment: as the apartment she shares with Loulou and her brother, like her relationship with Nicolas, proves too stifling, it becomes “a labyrinth” with Nicolas “the Minotaur in every closet and every room” (140).

Noushka’s description of Montreal invokes a plurality of myths that throws into relief the diversity of the city and disavows any unique cultural or historical legitimacy. As the previous excerpt makes clear, the “fallen Icaruses” are not defined by their language or cultural affiliation, only by their circumstances. Noushka’s Montreal is not the city of the “pure laine” Québécois; it is a city of difference. When she recalls her wedding day, this difference is made clear:

With immigrants coming from all over, it was a while before they settled on what would be the appropriate marriage ritual in Montréal. You carried a rooster under your arm all the way around the house of your betrothed. You rode a white horse over a chalk line in the street. For a while, if you jumped over a tool box, you were married.
(169)

Although the vestiges of the Catholic religion are everywhere, from the “Assomption de Marie” festival (141) to the use of religious words “in vain in almost miraculous ways” (142), Noushka does not consider her city exclusively tied to its French, Catholic heritage.

Noushka, like Baby in *Lullabies for Little Criminals*, experiences the city in a highly individualized, almost solipsistic way. In O'Neill's first novel, Baby's description of her surroundings, like the tone of her narration more generally, occupies a liminal space between naiveté and disillusion, as she herself weaves in and out of childhood. She still marvels at the most mundane things in her environment, like a seemingly ordinary bench on rue Saint-Christophe: "the bench was totally lopsided, as if it was made to go on a hill and then got put on this corner by mistake. It was a very popular bench. Hardly any kid could walk by and resist the temptation of sitting on it" (241). At another time, she watches snowflakes "light up like millions of tiny fireflies in the streetlights" (279). Still at other times, however, Baby's simplicity is heart-wrenching. Her city becomes the soundboard for her own sadness and sense of loss: "when I was really unhappy, I realized how much that street stank. It smelled like rats and beer. My body felt dirty, as if it was covered in too many fingerprints. The wind was a man with a lisp talking about people who had stabbed him in the back. [...] The moon was a child's face squeezed against a screen, yelling curses down at us" (297). Baby's Montreal changes and adapts according to her moods and feelings in a way that reveals the city as one closely aligned with the individual.

In O'Neill's second novel, Noushka, like Baby, undergoes a coming of age, albeit a much later one. While Baby's world is one of similes and metaphors that make clear the distance between the child and the city, however, Noushka's Montreal is a place of magic where lampposts that were "planted when Loulou was a boy" have actually "grown up" and are now "almost as tall as the buildings" (39), where print roses thrive so much they ultimately cover the entire couch (125), and where housewives watch the moon come down low over the buildings only to push it "back up into the sky with a broom handle" (183). This Montreal is a city in which one can enter strange stores that cater to essential needs. On rue Sainte-Catherine, one

store sells “mechanical hearts in the back. You could go in and have your broken one replaced” (225). In another store, there are “miniature jars of feelings on the shelves at the back,” which have been bought “off of poor kids in foreign countries” (387). When Noushka enters the store after Raphael’s death, she buys three jars, which “a pretty Romanian girl in a threadbare black coat and bare knees had filled [...] with that feeling that everything was new and anything was possible” (387).

The magical quality that characterizes Noushka’s Montreal often allows the past to impinge on the present in a sometimes figurative, sometimes literal haunting. The metro stations, which, she tells us, were all designed by 1960s “mad architects” with “enormous moustaches and wild hair” who were considered “geniuses” (162), are still laden with their presence: “the whole city reflected their strange talents and tastes” (162). In this sense, the magical elements in the city are sometimes conflated with a mythologizing impulse that appeals to historical figures, ghosts of the past that seem to invest the urban space. They manifest according to Noushka’s own state of mind. When Noushka, excited to be sitting in night school for the first time and learning about her history, channels the spirit of Jacques Cartier, she invokes his presence and her own in spatial terms: “He was wearing a ridiculously tiny black hat and looked so proud that he had finally managed to get to this new land. I felt the same way. I was here! I was back in school again” (42). To Noushka, knowledge is a new land to be discovered. Conversely, as her marriage to Raphaël disintegrates, she recounts how “love is cursed in Montreal” because Samuel de Champlain’s wife cursed it, repulsed by the husband she was forced to marry. The city is haunted by her presence, and Noushka says that one can “still hear her curses on very cold days” (229).

Although Noushka remarks that the city was built “to keep the wolves out” (190), the magical power of Montreal is so great that it often seems as though Noushka’s loved ones are in

fact prisoners of their own city. Loulou has never left the island. Raphael jokes that he is condemned to live on the same block for the rest of his life: “I try to leave, but every time I do I get thrown in jail” (146). Noushka and Nicolas, for their part, firmly believe that leaving the island can only cause disaster. Nicolas cannot bring himself to leave Montreal because, as he tells Noushka, once he crosses the bridge he loses all his “magical powers” (320). Noushka initially refuses to follow Raphaël when his mental anguish becomes so strong that he needs to leave the city; she is adamant that there is “just tundra and nothingness out there” (286). Unsurprisingly, the final rupture between Noushka and Raphaël occurs outside the city, where magic is conspicuously absent. The event confirms Noushka’s belief that “everything off the island is worse” (302).

It is, however, sometimes difficult to ascertain to what extent an objective magical element is assumed in O’Neill’s novel, which creates a kind of double vision of the city as both a magical place and a real place. For example, Noushka describes a few prostitutes eating at a restaurant, whose T-shirts feature horses: “if you put your ear up against her chest, you could hear them galloping. It was here on rue Sainte-Catherine that the most beautiful kisses in the world were grown” (155). In these instances, the reader is inclined to take Noushka’s description as a poetic flight of fancy, a reading supported by Noushka’s sensitive nature and developing ambition of becoming a writer. The comment might then simply be read as a whimsical take on the squalor of prostitution. This indeterminacy speaks to the interaction between reality and magic in Noushka’s evocation of urban space. The reader is thereby compelled to participate in this real and imaginary construction of the city, and oscillate between Noushka’s description as a literal reading of urban space and a treatment of Montreal as her “make-believe kingdom” (244).

This “make-believe kingdom” takes on the appearance of a fairy tale world in which Noushka projects herself. As Bruno Bettelheim argues, because the lack of detail and absence of moral ambiguity in fairy tales forces the child to identify with the good and condemn the bad, these stories reassert the rules of society in a way that is easily understood (9). Fairy tales thus “direct the child to discover his identity and calling, and they also suggest what experiences are needed to develop his character further” (24). Thus, if her projection of mythological qualities onto the city in turn explains its social process to Noushka, her allusions to fairy tales treat urban space as an imaginary place that, in turn, helps better explain her own inner processes. The Montreal she grew up in accordingly takes on the appearance of Neverneverland, in which the girlfriend of Raphaël’s father becomes “Tinker Bell” (219) and Nicolas, with his army of young boys and his own arrested development, “is Peter Pan” (274). When Noushka joins them just before the bank robbery, the would-be robbers, wearing animal masks, resemble the lost boys, Noushka acting as the reasonable Wendy figure. Noushka’s understanding of the final rift between her and Nicolas comes with her recognition of Nicolas’s refusal to grow up, his twisted “enfant terrible” (357) logic. Implicitly projecting herself as Wendy in this exchange becomes the means by which Noushka prefigures her acceptance of adulthood and responsibility.

As she is preparing to go out with Raphaël, Noushka asks her mirror on the wall “who’s the fairest of them all?”, and is shown a “skinny girl from Saint-Henri,” her stepmother “yelling at her in the background” (281). What is projected back to her from this real yet imagined place positions Noushka both as the evil queen in Snow White and as a spectator to the story of Cinderella. This displacement of Noushka, from the centre of her own story to the margin of the fairy tale, awakens her to her marital situation and stimulates her refusal of the role of victim, disastrous though her marriage to Raphaël might prove to be. It also signals a budding sense of

agency made clearer by Noushka's decision to hide some extra money from her paycheque under the bed (275).

Significantly, both Nicolas and Noushka refer to the process of growing up as one that precludes the world of fairy tales. Nicolas equates his attitude in prison with that of a "realist," a product of his not having any mother "telling him fairy tales about himself" (374), while Noushka reflects that the whole world conspires to impose its "strange fairy tales" on newborns, who must then spend their lives battling others' notions of themselves (403). Noushka's final emancipation from her own world of fairy tales, brought about by motherhood, is heralded by her dissociation between the city, now experienced as a real place, and the fairy tale world, which has become a distinct entity against which children should be warned. Noushka ends her narrative by sharing her conviction that adults advising children on what they should become might as well be telling stories about "knives and cats that wear boots," because the child's task is to "know that the life you have is completely yours" (403).

Noushka's double vision of the city enacts a back-and-forth movement between magic and reality, yet the precarious exchange between the two progressively gives way to a reestablishment of the city as a place that obeys the laws of physics. The evocation of Montreal as a place of fairy tales is replaced by a more realist approach as Noushka enters adulthood. In the same way, the magic of the city sometimes fails, and the increasing frequency of this occurrence is indicative of her progression towards maturity, lucidity, and autonomy. Noushka and Nicolas are disappointed in their meeting with Noëlle because, as Nicolas says, "it was like I thought that maybe, possibly, something magic would happen" (100). Because of the former popularity of Étienne, Noushka and Nicolas's own mythology has always been built on the song "Lily Sainte-Marie," which narrates the brief encounter between Étienne and Noëlle, then only

fourteen, that led to the conception of the twins. After the encounter, however, Noushka reveals that the song is nothing but a “creation story” which she has become “tired of believing” (291). Only this acceptance of Noëlle as a real individual instead of the figment of her imagination can bring Noushka to move on and come to terms with her own pregnancy. Noushka and Raphaël’s wedding goes awry when Nicolas throws a tantrum, prompting Noushka to state that “there wasn’t going to be any magic that day” (181). The wedding is thus a failure in many ways, though it also heralds Noushka’s hesitant but real progress towards an existence as a complete individual instead of one half of the Tremblay twins. As Noushka matures, her vision of the city changes, and, in turn, the increasingly realistic portrayal of her surroundings helps expedite the process by revealing the painful, necessary steps she must take towards independence.

Two Solitudes Remix

By privileging difference over otherness while they address relations between Franco-Montrealers and Anglo-Montrealers, both Marianne Ackerman’s *Jump* and Heather O’Neill’s *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* demonstrate to what extent the two solitudes trope is still omnipresent in Anglo-Montreal fiction and emphasize the widespread energy called forth by writers in actively trying to change the discourse around it. While Ackerman’s novel throws into relief the way in which theatre can act as a space of encounter and interaction, O’Neill’s novel is especially successful in defusing the binary mindset through its use of magic realism and narrative point of view.

Blogger Steven W. Beattie writes that O’Neill’s novel “has been called a *Two Solitudes* for the millennial generation” (“Longlist”). It is unclear whether the comment is meant to imply that because Noushka ultimately renews a romantic relationship with Westmount Anglophone Adam on the last page of the novel, his character necessarily takes on a larger meaning, or, more

likely, that because, although written in English, it takes a Québécoise separatist as its protagonist, the book might somehow prompt interest and empathy in the rest of Canada. It is true that O'Neill's writing in the last chapter hints at a cultural as well as an individual reconciliation between Noushka and Adam: "after all the polemics and all the debates about the two official languages of Canada, here was an English boy sitting in a stairwell, looking to be loved by a French girl" (402). This type of romantic *deus ex machina*, however, occurs more than three hundred pages after we have seen or heard of Adam for the last time; the relationship between Noushka and Adam, because it is peripheral to the story of Noushka's individual maturation, cannot be read as representative of the two solitudes. Early in the novel, Noushka and Adam cultivate a casual sexual relationship while Adam and Nicolas entertain a close friendship; all three sometimes fall asleep in the same room, which, while Noushka admits it might "sound" "odd," "seemed natural" (51). Both relationships come to an abrupt end when, after the twins meet Noëlle for the first time, Nicolas informs Noushka that Noëlle was Adam's nanny when he was young. Nicolas and Noushka were abandoned by their mother, who practically raised Adam. The incestuous overtones of the initial Nicolas-Noushka-Adam triangle, then, if they reference any larger meaning, point to the relationship between Francophones and Anglophones in Montreal as belonging to one big, conflicted, and confused family. Perhaps, as I have argued, it is less in its representation of Montreal (though urban space here is also treated dynamically) than in its use of textual space that *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* might prove a kind of reconfigured *Two Solitudes* for a new generation, not because it might somehow lead Anglophones to take interest in the point of view of a Francophone, but because O'Neill's dynamic treatment of form, which highlights interaction and exchange, emphasizes her depiction

of English-French relations as incestuous, inextricable, hybrid. Ultimately, O'Neill's playfulness is part of the magic that inhabits her city.

Conclusion

The idea for this project came into being after reading yet another review stating that Montreal was like a character in this or that novel, a statement I seemed to have read on several occasions without understanding what the reviewer intended exactly. My project therefore undertook to examine the representation of Montreal in the Anglo-Quebec novel. Specifically, I wanted to look at the ways in which urban space was depicted, the ways in which characters interacted, not only with each other *in* space but, more importantly, *with* space, and how these interactions impacted the development of their identity. It became clear as I was researching my topic, however, that any study of space is political, and that in Montreal, the politics of space are quite often, though admittedly not always, configured around a linguistic split that has existed since the conquest and that was articulated (in)famously by Hugh MacLennan in *Two Solitudes*. While I was writing this dissertation, student protests erupted in the spring of 2012, and in 2014, heated debates took place around the provincial government's proposed Quebec Charter of Values, arguably resulting in the defeat and near collapse of the Parti Québécois. The tumultuousness of these last few years has both underscored the centrality of space in social and political debates (in deciding, for example, where demonstrations take place, what spaces are occupied by demonstrators, what kind of occupation of space is legal, as well as in the difference between personal, public, and political space in deciding on whether religious symbols may be allowed) and reaffirmed linguistic tensions by dividing the population most prominently along linguistic lines.

While discussions around Anglo-Quebec fiction have mostly been channelled through the lens of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of a "littérature mineure," my own theoretical framework treats the linguistic and cultural heritage of two solitudes from a

postcolonial perspective that is informed by more recent approaches to urban space. Overarching these two axes, however, is my belief that form is ideology, and that the key to this project is a treatment of space not only as represented in the novel but also as embodied by the novel. The way in which these theories inform my reading constitutes a new way of reading Anglo-Quebec literature, one that purposefully redirects the discussion from a focus on the category itself to a closer attention to treatment of space in content and form.

My close reading of six novels, Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1945), Scott Symons's *Place d'Armes* (1967), Keith Henderson's *The Restoration: The Referendum Years* (1987), Gail Scott's *Heroine* (1987), Marianne Ackerman's *Jump* (2000), and Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014), is placed in a historic and cultural context that throws into relief the minoritization of English in Quebec and its impact on the English-speaking inhabitants of Montreal. The diversity of these authors' perception of themselves on a spectrum of marginality is a testament to the heterogeneity of a linguistic group we too often lump together and designate as a community, an appellation that implies unity of belief and purpose. Four of the six novels discussed in the thesis take place shortly before or during the 1980 and 1995 referenda on the independence of Quebec. This is not a coincidence, as a great proportion of Anglo-Quebec novels written since the 1980s are set during either referendum. Referenda both bring about and preclude uncertainty; they raise many questions but, because they crystallize any attempt at an answer in the form of a Yes or a No, they ultimately recall and reassert the binary established most prominently by Hugh MacLennan.

My main finding is that English Quebec novelists tend to treat urban space either as static or dynamic, as a container in which linguistic and cultural tensions are acted out or as a set of processes that both produce built forms and are, in turn, influenced by them. This treatment

mirrors their conception of relations between English and French speaking Montrealers: predominantly static depictions of urban space, as in *Two Solitudes* and *The Restoration*, emphasize a chasm between self and other or between centre and margin; more dynamic treatments of urban space, as seen in *Place d'Armes*, *Heroine*, *Jump*, and *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, tend to emphasize interaction and inextricability, however conflicted and subject to power dynamics inherited from a colonial structure these interactions may be. The way in which these novels represent space, in turn, mirrors their own treatment of the novel as textual space. *Two Solitudes* and *The Restoration* both adopt closed forms, while *Place d'Armes* and *Heroine* engage in radical experiment with structure and language. Both the novels discussed in the last chapter, *Jump* and *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, significantly trouble these otherwise neat categories: the formal features of *Jump* are conservative, but the novel depicts theatre both spatially and textually as a dynamic space of encounter. Similarly, Heather O'Neill treats textual space as dynamic, but in a way that is rather different than Scott Symons and Gail Scott. Her use of voice appropriation and magical realism reveals textual space as a space of transculturation in which exchange gives rise to new cultural phenomena.

A secondary finding lies in the shifting scope and meaning of Montreal in these novels. Whereas static depictions of urban space tend to coincide with a unifying impulse in the name of Canadian nationalism, in that the city becomes a metaphor for the country or the province, as is the case in *Two Solitudes* and *The Restoration*, depictions of urban space as dialectical tend to eschew larger systems of meaning such as allegory and rather align the city with the individual as in *Heroine*, *Jump*, and *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*. There are exceptions, of course. *Place d'Armes* stands out amidst the novels discussed in the dissertation as one that paradoxically refuses the synthesizing impulse of 1960s Canadian nationalism but calls for a

renewed sense of Canadianness in its playfully dialectic engagement with the forms of the city and the novel. In this sense, the Montreal of Scott Symons is, like the Montreal of Hugh MacLennan and Keith Henderson, a city whose meaning extends beyond it, though the ideology behind its depiction is certainly different than that of MacLennan and Henderson. It may also be that chronologically, these novels follow an evolution that mirrors the shift from budding nationalism (*Two Solitudes*) to nationalism (*Place d'Armes*, *The Restoration*), to post-nationalism (*Heroine*, *Jump*, *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*). Certainly, most contemporary Anglo-Quebec novelists tend to depict Montreal as a city-state in the same way as Ackerman and O'Neill. The novelists' treatment of space, however, does account for such a discrepancy between *The Restoration* and *Heroine*, published the same year but embracing opposing conceptions of the city, both in terms of space and in terms of significance.

The limitations of this project are, admittedly, many. In focusing exclusively on representations of Montreal in the English-language novel, I have excluded the short fiction of Mavis Gallant and Hugh Hood, which feels like a treason of sorts when discussing Montreal authors. I have also chosen not to engage in a comparative study of French and English language works about Montreal, an approach privileged by other critics. Finally, I have been forced to ignore important novelists past and present who set their works abroad, such as up and coming writers Miguel Syjuco and Jaspreet Singh, winner of the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2008.

Perhaps the restriction that will most irk my readers, however, is this project's focus on writers who stem from an Anglo-Saxon background. In keeping a tight focus on relations between English and French in Montreal, this dissertation does not specifically address the Jewish minority (though it has alluded to Jewish writers), nor any other minority that occupies an important place in the makeup of the city (Italian, Polish, Arab). The novels of Rawi Hage, Nino

Ricci, and H. Nigel Thomas, for example, are mentioned only in passing. This situation may seem ironic, as the discussion of my last chapter alludes to Montreal as a contact zone in which difference, as opposed to otherness, is enacted, a city where not only cultural and linguistic tensions and interactions arise, but generational, sexual, and socio-economical ones as well. In this sense, a dual perspective on Montreal threatens to reproduce and reassert the kind of binary thinking we associate with the very concept of two solitudes. The several other solitudes that constitute Montreal, whether cultural, sexual, or other, have not only produced important works, but represent the reality of the city. I have focused on a French-English split throughout because of my personal background and interest, as well as for the sake of consistency and concision. A more general or otherwise directed exploration of marginality and space remains to be made by better and more experienced scholars. While it was beyond the scope of my project to address so many writers and their works, however, I am hopeful that the way in which I am proposing to think about the city in Anglo-Quebec literature, that is, by adopting a three-pronged approach that combines postcolonial theory, urban theory, and a treatment of form as textual space, can open up new avenues in Quebec studies and Canadian literature more broadly.

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