FACES OF REVOLUTION IN THE ENGLISH QUÉBEC NOVEL: A STUDY OF HUGH MACLENNAN'S *RETURN OF THE SPHINX*, LEONARD COHEN'S *BEAUTIFUL LOSERS*, AND SCOTT SYMONS'S *PLACE D'ARMES*

BY

LINDA DYDYK

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Hugh MacLennan's Return of the Sphinx (1967), Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers (1966), and Scott Symons's Place d'Armes (1967) all deal with Québec's Quiet Revolution in the 1960's. In these novels, the Québec situation is interpreted, not only in its local social and political context, but in its wider implications. For MacLennan, revolution is the inevitable outcome of the spiritual decay of modern civilization, and as a man of reason he fears the consequence of what happens when spiritual anxiety finds its release in political action. Both Cohen and Symons are romantics who believe mankind is far too concerned with reason and logic. Cohen sees revolution as a means to liberate the soul of man through spiritual, political, sexual, and psychological confrontations of the systems that the human race has created. Symons advocates a revolution aimed at the renewal of sensibility, and he declares war on the New Canadian Establishment, which defines Canada's culture according to its American business mentality. All three authors see revolution as ~~something~~ beyond the realm of politics.

Linda Dydyk
English Department
McGill University
Master of Arts

Résumé

Les visages de la révolution dans le roman anglais au Québec

Les oeuvres Return of the Sphinx (1967) de Hugh MacLennan, Beautiful Losers (1966) de Leonard Cohen, et Place d'Armes (1967) de Scott Symons traitent tous de "la révolution tranquille" au Québec durant les années soixante. Ces romans interprètent la situation Québécoise non seulement selon les contextes sociaux et politiques du temps mais aussi, quant à ses implications plus profondes. Selon MacLennan, la révolution est le résultat inévitable de la décadence spirituelle de la civilisation moderne et, en tant qu'homme de raison, il craint les conséquences de ce qui arrive quand l'anxiété spirituelle n'a que pour débouché l'action politique. Cohen et Symons sont des romantiques qui croient que la race humaine se concerne trop avec la raison et la logique. Cohen voit la révolution comme un moyen de libérer l'âme humaine des systèmes qu'elle a elle-même créés par l'entremise de confrontations spirituelles, politiques, sexuelles, et psychologiques. Symons promovoit une révolution visant le renouvellement de la sensibilité et il combat le "nouvel ordre établit canadien" qui definit la culture canadienne selon sa mentalité américaine du monde des affaires. Les trois écrivains perçoivent la révolution comme quelque chose au-delà de la politique.

Linda Dydyk
English Department
McGill University
Master of Arts

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Linda Dydyk
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INTRODUCTION

Hugh MacLennan's Return of the Sphinx (1967), Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers (1966), and Scott Symons's Place d'Armes (1967) were published in the 1960's: a period of political unrest in Québec. Each of these novels deals with the mentality of revolution and how it is manifested in Québec society. This period of political unrest, subsequently known as the Quiet Revolution, coincided with a cultural renaissance, in which French Canadian literature played a dominant role.[1] French Canadian writers became the voice of the Québec people whose awakening national conscience revived an interest in Québecois art, and because of this, literary activity became as important to the cause of Québec independence as political action.[2] During the Quiet Revolution a number of novels, such as Ethel et le terroriste (1964) by Claude Jasmin and Prochain episode (1965) by Hubert Aquin, expressed terrorist ideologies in the dramatization of revolution. In The Shouting Signpainters, Malcolm Reid says English Canadian literature was never affected by the Quiet Revolution, and he records the sentiments of Paul Chamberland, the Québec nationalist poet, who, when asked about English Canadian writers, mentions that he met Leonard Cohen, but adds that they had nothing in common, for the situations between English and French Canadians are so different that "the national isolation, the defensive and revolutionary postures"

French Canadian writers "feel driven to take don't make any sense to them" {English Canadians}.[3] According to Reid, the problems of English and French Montréal never engaged Cohen, never "sucked him into a life of shouting, signpainting, or even reacting to the shouts from the other side". In Reid's estimation, English Canadian writers during this period are "guilty of a colonial complacency", and he adds that they concentrate on presenting an urbane internationalism because they need to shed the image of dull Canadianness. Reid concludes that there "is something tragic in our quest for universal engagements when we haven't come to grips with a situation in which we are ourselves implicated".[4]

In my study of Return of the Sphinx, Beautiful Losers, and Place d'Armes, I discovered a different picture of English Canadian literature than the one presented by Malcolm Reid. These three novels confront the Quiet Revolution, which MacLennan, Cohen, and Symons see, not only in its local social and political context, but also in its wider implications. Each author has a unique approach to the universal themes of revolution; nevertheless, they share a common interest in Québec's social, political, and psychological problems. MacLennan, Cohen, and Symons believe that Québec and Canada are suffering from the same malady, and, like their French Canadian counterparts, they too are looking for what it means to be a Quebecer and a Canadian.

The Québec revolutionaries, who formed the Front de Libération Québécois (FLQ), the most militant terrorist group during the Quiet Revolution, considered French Canadians to be a colonized people who were dominated by the British after the conquest of 1759, and later by English Canadian and American businessmen: "Le thème dominant de l'argumentation élaborée dans le premier manifeste du F.L.Q. est l'oppression, l'exploitation et la colonisation des Québécois".[5] In The Decolonization of Quebec, Henry Milner and Sheilagh Hodgins Milner, both of whom are anglophone separatists, explain the present situation of Québec as colonized on two levels:

> . . . 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. The economic development of Quebec which began in earnest at the end of the last century is a classic example of the colonial pattern.[6]

Whatever the validity of these observations, they express the feelings that were dominant during the Quiet Revolution. Pierre Vallières, an F.L.Q. member, wrote White Niggers of America (Nègres blancs d'Amérique) in 1968 to arouse the French Canadians to an awareness of their colonized existence. He also denounced American Imperialism and its control over Canada as well as Québec: "The Dominion of Canada . . . was changing into an economic colony of Yankee America. And within this vast colony, Quebec was no longer anything but the poor appendage of a foreign economy".[7] Vallières's main argument is that French

Canadians are "white niggers", and this refers to their inferior status in society, because, as Vallières points out, the role of French Canadians in the North American context is equivalent to that of slaves: "To be a 'nigger' in America is to be not a man but someone's slave . . . . the workers of Quebec are aware of their condition as niggers, exploited men, second-class citizens".[8] Though French Canadians dislike the image of themselves as "white niggers", this analogy helped to advance Québec's separatist aspirations.[9]

The comparison between the French Canadian people and the black race is an analogy that has been used by other Québec nationalists in their arguments against imperialism. At the beginning of the Conscription Crisis that divided English and French Canada in World War II, George Pelletier, then editor of the French language newspaper Le Devoir, said that French Canadians must act against imperialist propaganda or they " . . . will no longer be even 'quality niggers.' We will have become nonentities in the British Empire: propaganda will have melted us, by our own fault, into the great imperial whole".[10] During the fifties, André Laurendeau, who became joint editor of Le Devoir after an unsuccessful career as the leader of the provincial party Bloc populaire,[11] developed his "Théorie du Roi Nègre" (Theory of the Negro King) to describe Maurice Duplessis, the premier of Québec from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 to 1959.[12] Reid presents Laurendeau's "negro king" as a native ruler who

leads his people to believe he is defending them, while he accepts financial support from the very occupiers he has promised to vanquish.[13] The "negro king" became a popular metaphor for French Canadian politicians who were believed to take bribes from English Canadian and American businessmen for the exploitation of Québec.

Laurendeau's "Theorie du Roi Nègre" is indicative of Québec's internal political problems. Prior to World War II, French Canadians lived in an insular environment with the Roman Catholic clergy and the Québec politicians acting as the mediators between French Canada and English-speaking North America. French Canadians changed after the war; the experiences of the war years brought them in closer touch with the mainstream of western civilization, and this made them more inclined to question both the traditional authority of the church and the practices of their politicians. By the 1960's, anti-clerical sentiment and discontent with Québec's social and economic development became more widespread, particularly among young French Canadians.[14] According to Sutherland, the Quiet Revolution became the French Canadian revolt, not only against colonization, but also against their own past.[15]

The violence that erupted during the Quiet Revolution was brought on by the young Québecois revolutionaries who became frustrated with the political process, which, in their estimation, did not reflect the changes in Québec society.

In Prochain episode, Aquin's terrorist expresses this frustration and explains that violence will restore the dignity of French Canadians:

> The time will have come to kill and to organize destruction by the ancient doctrines of strife and the anonymous guns of the guerilla! It will be time to replace parliamentary battles with real ones. After two centuries of agony, we will burst out in disordered violence, in an uninterrupted series of attacks and shocks, the black fulfillment of a project of total love.[16]

The romantic interpretation of violence found in the idea that violence is "a project of total love" and the glorification of revolution as an "ancient doctrine" can be attributed to Frantz Fanon, who published Les Damnés de la terre (The Wretched of the Earth) in 1961. According to Marc Laurendeau, Québec terrorists were influenced by Fanon's work, and this influence is known as "fanonesque".[17] Fanon, a West Indian psychiatrist from Martinique, published his study on the Third World in which violence is presented as an existential act of redemption, for he theorized that it is only by violence that the victims of imperialism will overcome their oppressors.[18] Marc Laurendeau summarizes the parts of Fanon's theory that influenced the ideology of the Québec revolutionaries:

> Pour Fanon, le porte-parole des damnés de la terre, la décolonisation est toujours un phénomène violent, car elle implique le remplacement d'une espèce d'homme, le libéré. En ce sens, la violence revolutionnaire facilite déjà la construction de la future nation: au niveau des individus, la violence désintoxique, elle crée un homme nouveau.[19]

The success of Fanon's theory among Québec's revolutionaries is partially due to Jean-Paul Sartre who wrote the Preface to The Wretched of the Earth. Sartre was already an important figure to the young Québecois, and his Preface served as a recommendation for Fanon.[20]

In the succeeding chapters: I "Revolution: 'The Universal Disease' in Return of the Sphinx", II "Cohen's Vision of Annihilation in Beautiful Losers", III "Place d'Armes: The Revolution of Sensibility", I examine the novels and show how each author interprets the Quiet Revolution and the universal implications of this Canadian event. The conclusion: IV "The Spiritual Revolution", is a comparison of the themes of revolution found in these novels.

Notes

[1]I make no attempt to define revolution beyond the conventional idea of it being a forcible intervention to bring about change. Carl Leiden and Karl M. Schmitt admit that it is impossible to give a conceptual definition of what a revolution is that will be acceptable to all who study the subject. Carl Leiden and Karl M. Schmitt, The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 3.

[2]Kathy Mezei, "The Literature of Quebec in Revolution" in The Human Element, ed. David Helwig, (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1978), pp. 35, 41.

[3]Malcolm Reid, The Shouting Signpainters: A Literary and Political Account of Quebec Revolutionary Nationalism, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), p. 129.

[4]Reid, pp. 128, 130-1.

[5]Marc Laurendeau, Les Québécois violents, (Sillery, Qué.: Les éditions du boréal express, 1974), p. 37.

[6]Henry Milner and Sheilagh Hodgins Milner, The Decolonization of Quebec, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1977), p. 31.

[7]Pierre Vallières, White Niggers of America, trans. Joan Pinkham, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975), p. 39.

[8]Vallières, p. 21.

[9]Sheila McLeod Arnopoulos and Dominique Clift, The English Fact in Quebec, (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), p. 48.

[10]Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1968), II, 912.

[11]Wade, p. 1109.

[12]Conrad Black, Duplessis, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1977), pp. 137, 685, 694.

[13] Reid, p. 17.

[14] Wade, pp. 110, 1107-20.

[15] Ronald Sutherland, introd., Prochain episode by Hubert Aquin, trans. Penny Williams, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), pp. iv-v.

[16] Aquin, p. 124.

[17] Marc Laurendeau, p. 175.

[18] Robert Collison, "The New Barbarism" in Saturday Night, Jan./Feb., (1980), p. 14.

[19] Marc Laurendeau, p. 175.

[20] Reid, p. 26.

CHAPTER I

REVOLUTION: "THE UNIVERSAL DISEASE" IN RETURN OF THE SPHINX

In Return of the Sphinx, MacLennan discusses the implications of the Québec Quiet Revolution and places it in the context of the revolutions that were erupting throughout the world during the 1960's. MacLennan is not a revolutionary using literature to expound his ideologies; he is a man of reason, and he believes revolution is the consequence of the spiritual deprivation of the twentieth century. According to him, revolution is the inevitable outcome of the collective psychic state of modern civilization, which he sees moving toward annihilation, and Canada's problems are symptomatic of the issues facing humanity.

MacLennan is sympathetic to the arguments presented by the Québec revolutionaries who see Canada as a colony of the United States. In The Sphinx, Alan Ainslie, the central character, is a Federal Member of Parliament and the Minister of Cultural Affairs; he is also one of the characters to voice MacLennan's philosophical theories. Ainslie cites American Imperialism as the decisive factor in his decision to enter Federal politics, and he refers to a discussion he overheard between some American businessmen as the turning point in his career. In their conversation, which Ainslie recounts to his friend Joe Lacombe, Canadians are depicted as a people who will do anything for

money:

> 'These boobs up here will do anything you ask them to. All you have to do is wave a contract in their kissers and they'll sign it without even reading the fine print.' Then I heard one of his pals whisper, 'Quiet, boy - Big Brother may be listening.' Then the first one laughed louder than ever and said louder than before, 'Big Brother's given my outfit his personal guarantee.' . . . 'This is better than South America . . . '[1]

In this passage, "Big Brother" is the Canadian government and the implication is that it sanctions American exploitation. This interpretation is substantiated by the comparison between Canada and South America. Ainslie realizes that Canada's economic submission to the United States could result in the break up of Confederation: " . . . the country's disintegrating and selling itself out . . . " (93). Throughout the novel, American business is depicted as the real seat of power in Canada and Québec. When Herbert Tarnley, a prosperous Canadian businessman, says that the Americans would intervene if Québec were to separate from Canada, his comments reveal Canada's lack of confidence: "This country is too big to be left alone, it has too small a population to talk back and it has too many of its own citizens all too eager to sell" (21).

Since Canada has never lost a war to the United States, nor has had a civil disturbance in which the Americans intervened with military aid or weapons, Canada's colonial status is voluntary. MacLennan saw the possibility of this happening when he wrote The Precipice some sixteen years earlier, and although

he was uncertain of Canada's direction at that time, in this later novel, he is looking at the problem in retrospect: " . . . ever since the war Canadian businessmen have been getting quietly rich by quietly selling out this country's future for capital gains to American interests" (RS 19).

MacLennan sees American economic control influencing Canada's culture. Ainslie's late wife, Constance, was a French Canadian, and their son Daniel who identifies with his Québec roots is a separatist. According to Daniel, English Canadian culture is like that of most countries who are economically dependent on the United States; it is manufactured by the Americans: "That's their famous Way of Life - turn the whole world into consumers of American products. . . . They've taken over the English in this country completely, and now they're after us" (145). Daniel makes it seem as though French Canadians have been able to resist American propaganda, and he goes on to explain that Americans are hiring French Canadians to translate their advertising slogans in an attempt to capture the Québec market: "That's their idea of culture - advertising" (145). In all this, Daniel ignores the impact that American advertising has had already on French Canadian culture. The Americanization of French Canadians comes up in the conversation between Ainslie and Joe Lacombe. Lacombe mentions that young French Canadian girls do not want to have large families like their grandmothers and mothers:

> She says to herself . . . 'With two or three kids any husband I take, him and me can live like les Anglais and les Américains we see on the television and in the west end of Montreal. . . . I want nice clothes and to go to shows and take holidays just like English and American girls' (103-4).

American Imperialism is not the only issue to fuel the Quiet Revolution, and MacLennan presents the idea that Québec revolutionaries see the English as the conquerors of the French Canadian people: "We must speak the conqueror's language if we are to earn our bread" (126,255). Daniel admits learning this concept of the English at school: " . . . for years French Canadian history teachers had rubbed it in", but he sees this thought process as self-defeating: "Endlessly the French Canadians talked of their deprived past and what did that do except weaken their purpose to make the future theirs?" (255). Although Daniel realizes that French Canadians have to stop seeing themselves as victims, if they want to succeed as a cultural group, he is also guilty of indulging in this kind of collective self-pity. When he talks about the Second World War and conscription, events which took place before his birth, Daniel becomes angry over the way in which the English treated the French Canadians:

> . . . hardly any of them {French Canadians} wanted to be used by the English in a war to save England. And what did the English do here? They insulted them and called them zombies. They conscripted them and made them ashamed. (144)

Daniel believes that French Canadians are a colonized

people because they were forced to fight for England during the Second World War. This idea that Québec has a subordinate position in Confederation is also brought up by Aimé Latendresse, the ardent separatist whose influence over Daniel sets up the conflict between Ainslie and his son. Latendresse sees Québec as colonized by both the British and the Americans, and he uses the ceremony for the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway as an example. According to Latendresse's argument, the Queen of England and the President of the United States were invited to the ceremony, but there were no representatives from Québec, even though the Seaway is in the province (248). Latendresse wants to goad English Canadians into an open confrontation, so he suggests that Daniel have a woman do a parody of the Queen of England on his television programme. When Daniel rejects the idea because he believes that French Canadians are too polite to identify with such a vulgar insult, Latendresse mentions conscription and the working conditions of French Canadians: "You never saw your father dragged off to fight for foreigners. You never had to say 'Yes, sir' to an English boss" (249). Here French Canadians are depicted as a subjugated people who must work in English, for the English. Latendresse goes on to compare the situation of French Canadians to that of the American Blacks: "The politeness of a subject people has always been the trump card of a ruling class. Who have been the politest people in the United States? The Negroes" (249). Since the Black race has been the historic

slaves of White Europeans, Latendresse's analogy implies that French Canadians are the slaves of the English in Canada.[2]

Although MacLennan presents the beliefs of the Québecois revolutionaries who see the French Canadian people as colonized by the English, he does not accept them as valid arguments for separation in the present situation of Québec in Confederation, and he uses Ainslie to represent a new breed of Canadian who loves his country and who wants to bury the past in order to build a strong nation. As a Cabinet Minister, Ainslie fights to make peace between the French and English factions in Canada, but he finds that it is difficult to please both sides: "It was too much for the English at the moment and probably it was not enough for the French" (27). Ainslie sympathizes with the plight of French Canadians, and, in this way, he becomes the conscience of English Canada: "The best people in English Canada have a bad conscience about the French and so they should. Ainslie at the moment is listened to by people like them" (22).

In addition to defining this new breed of Canadian, MacLennan depicts Canada's traditional colonial ties to Britain as a part of history: "Meanwhile the house rested a souvenir of the age of coziness when the Good Old Queen was still on her throne and the English of Montreal had believed their position in the city would last forever" (27). Even MacLennan's description of Westmount has changed from the one he presented in his earlier novels. Westmount is the residential area of the Montréal English

Establishment that MacLennan identifies as the "Square Mile" in Two Solitudes,[3] and the "English Garrison" in The Watch That Ends The Night.[4] By referring to Westmount as the "English Garrison", MacLennan implies that the English were colonialists and the French were colonized. A different picture of Westmount is given in The Sphinx. Gabriel Fleury, who is an architect by profession, and so " . . . fairly familiar with the patterns of land-holding in Montreal . . . ", drives past a district that MacLennan now describes as the legendary "Anglo-Saxon fortress", and Gabriel thinks that this claim is " . . . as substantial as Hitler's claim that the Germans are a pure race. All kinds of people lived here besides rich Anglo-Saxons . . . " (14-15). This change in MacLennan's perception does not mean that the Montréal English Establishment escapes criticism for contributing to the idea that French Canadians are a colonized people.[5] Moses Bulstrode, the Federal House Leader, accuses them of alienating French Canadians: "If all they see of their fellow Canadians are those rich English in Montreal how can anyone blame them for feeling the way they do? They see that English Establishment living off the fat of the land . . . " (82-3).

Like some French Canadians, there are English Canadians who are living in the past. Ainslie is accosted by a fellow parliamentarian who is angry because Ainslie spoke to some separatist student demonstrators: "What do you think you're doing - giving your French Canadian friends the idea that the

rest of us are scared to death of them?" (65). This is the attitude of someone who identifies with the role of the conqueror, for he interprets the demonstration as insurrection rather than part of the democratic process. In the House of Commons, the bi-cultural nature of Canada is rejected by a sarcastic M.P. who attacks Ainslie's department: " . . . since it has done nothing practical, we must at least assume that it has been acquainting itself with this new, distinctive culture which has suddenly emerged in our midst from nowhere . . . " (265). According to MacLennan, the French and English are dwelling on past prejudices that should have no bearing on the future of Canada, and though they are living in the past, they are not learning from history. Bulstrode's last speech finishes with him saying: "History is a great teacher and history will . . . {sic} etc., etc., etc." (298). The "etc., etc., etc." is appropriate for it indicates that the words are mouthed without Bulstrode being aware of their implications.

Because MacLennan believes that the lack of vision of Canadians who persist in living in the past is the real threat to Confederation, he sees the French Canadian revolt against their own past as one of the more positive developments of the Quiet Revolution. At the beginning of his television interview with Daniel, Latendresse questions the motives of the old-style Québec nationalist politicians: "We live in the grip of aliens who are a tiny minority here and yet rule us. This they do

indirectly, by buying our politicians. That is why we are now prisoners in our own home" (126). The "aliens" are the Montréal English Establishment and American businessmen, and Latendresse is quite explicit in his condemnation of Québec politicians selling their people to these colonial rulers. In The Sphinx, MacLennan presents the hostility toward those "politicians whose stock-in-trade was French Canadian nationalism" (11) as an indication of the internal revolution, and since this problem is identified also by characters who are not separatists, it is shown to be an integral part of Québec consciousness at the beginning of the revolution.[6] One of the characters who as a member of the R.C.M.P. is not a separatist, but who welcomes this internal revolution is Joe Lacombe:

> You see, Alan, these kids - a lot more of us than the kids, too - they've been really shocked by what those investigations turned up about the graft and payola in la belle province only a few years ago. A lot of them suspect their fathers were taking it and they're right - a lot of their fathers were. They even think some priests were in on it. (108-9)

This passage is taken from the conversation between Ainslie and Joe Lacombe. In addition to the politicians and businessmen, Lacombe implies that some people think the Roman Catholic clergy may have accepted money to keep their French Canadian parishoners in line. This distrust of the Catholic Church is another characteristic of the French Canadian revolt against their own past, and it is a reaction to the control the clergy maintained in Québec: "All this stuff they used to keep

preaching against les Anglais . . . It was their way of looking after us and keeping us together . . . . " Lacombe explains that the Catholic Church never wanted to incite a revolution: "Any time any bright boy tried to do something about it beyond the talking stage, they pulled the rug from under his feet . . . " (102). The Church merely tried to prevent the French from becoming assimilated with the English, a situation which the Church believed would lead to the loss of the Catholic faith: "In the old days, anyone who talked and felt the way I did left his people and went over to the English and disappeared among them" (105).

Lacombe is an important minor character, for he voices the feelings of thousands of French Canadians who do not declare themselves separatists, yet who desire change and are unsure of how to attain it. Ronald Sutherland calls these people the "confused masses". He identifies four kinds of Québec Separatism that he has found in the literature of French and English Canada. There are the terrorists, the politicians, the opportunists, and those who, like Lacombe, want psychological independence. Sutherland feels that the latter group represents the most significant form of separatism.[7] This may be true in the sense that these people are essential to the internal social revolution in Québec, and there is no doubt that Lacombe is happy with the changes:

> Ça change! Ça change! And the feeling's wonderful. Tabernacle, haven't we suffered enough? Supported enough for more than two hundred years? Prayed enough? Gone to Mass often enough? Given to the Church enough? . . . In some dirty way with our own dirtiest politicians because they were the ones the English always like because if they took money they knew they had them, took money under the counter and then did the opposite to what they promised the people who voted for them? (104)

"Ça change! Ça change!" is a direct challenge to Louis Hémon's "Rien ne changera" in Maria Chapdelaine (1914), a novel which depicts French Canadians as tied to the land and never changing.[8] This portrayal of French Canadians was to become popular among the politicians whose stock-in-trade was Québec nationalism. Lacombe voices the Québec declaration of independence from their own church and state, each of which maintained control over the French Canadian people. The desire for self-respect is an explicit part of the Québec revolution. Lacombe realizes that French Canadians can not wait for English Canadians or Americans to give them back their dignity. In any case, dignity cannot be forced on anyone; self-worth has to be recognized from within: "Why can't we succeed as French Canadians and not as imitations of the English and Americans? Why should they be the ones to judge whether we're any good or not? Why can't we judge that ourselves?" (104). The emphasis is MacLennan's, and to him Lacombe's sentiments are applicable, not only to French Canadians, but to the Canadian nation as a whole. He shares Ainslie's belief that a country has to earn its way into civilization (143). The need for self-respect is implicit

in Ainslie's theory, because a country cannot gain the respect of other nations if the country lacks self-confidence: "That funny country I come from, if she can accept her own nature and live with it, is going to become priceless to mankind" (43-4).

The Sphinx develops the similarities between the English and the French, and in this respect it differs markedly from Two Solitudes in which MacLennan concentrates on the isolation of the two groups from one another. Even the idea of separation is seen as having implications beyond Québec. Bulstrode points out that "this hullabaloo about independence in Québec could be catching" (206-7), and he goes on to say that he is more afraid of the Western provinces than he is of Québec because "They've got the oil, they've got the potash and uranium, they've got so much water - and they've got a Pacific port" (207). In other words, since the Western provinces could become economically self-sufficient, they no longer need the rest of Canada, and this makes them more of a threat to Confederation than Québec, which is economically dependent on Canada, and, therefore, less likely to achieve independence.

Bulstrode illustrates the bureaucratic confusion of Canadian federal politicians in their attempt to unite the country. Soon after admitting that the west could retaliate with separatism if the Federal government pushes a Québec backed bill to make the civil service bilingual, Bulstrode tells Ainslie that the country will be held together by sound economic practices:

"What difference does it make what language a man speaks when he's being driven into debt to keep his family alive?" (209). This contradicts his earlier statement that anger could lead to separation for the west. Bulstrode concedes that Québec's problems are emotional when he says: "The way I see it . . . about the French Canadians, they've got the wrong idea about how tough it's been for them. They don't know anything about the rest of the country" (82). Although Bulstrode knows that any revolution taking place in Canada would be based on the emotions, he is caught in the bureaucratic machinery of the government: "I sat here more than thirty years, on the back benches . . . before anyone listened to me" (210), and this is the fundamental reason he denies Ainslie's vision of the Québec revolution. Ainslie tells Bulstrode that the Quiet Revolution is psychological and that it can have a positive effect on Canada as a nation if English Canadians are willing to accept its implications:

> The problem there isn't economic, it's psychological . . . . What's happening in Quebec - whatever it turns out to be to a large extent is going to depend on the rest of us - is something deeper than we've ever seen before in Canada. It's a genuine revolution in a way of life, and I don't have to remind you that all revolutions have neurotic roots. (69)

In addition to its potential as a positive influence on the rest of Canada, Ainslie also realizes that there is a negative side to the Quiet Revolution, and the way in which English Canada responds could become the decisive factor in

whether or not the Quiet Revolution reverts to its "neurotic roots". MacLennan uses the ideologies of Daniel and Latendresse to illustrate the "neurotic roots" he believes are at the core of any revolution.

Daniel identifies with his own generation who are responsible for the social and political unrest that took place in the United States during the sixties: '" . . . in the States they're tearing up government draft cards and pretty soon this old man's government of yours is going to find itself with nobody left to govern" (243). In Daniel's estimation, the crisis facing North American youth comes from a dissatisfaction with the world created by the older generation:

> They keep telling us they've given us everything . . . . But what's the price tag on all this? The price-tag says we're to turn ourselves into carbon copies of their own corrupted, dishonest, useless selves. They offer us a world no decent person can possibly respect. In the States they're conscripting high-school drop-outs to fight against helpless people. Why? Because if they haven't got a war going somewhere, their whole rotten System will collapse and they know it. They're liars . . . . Their advertising is lies, their politics is lies and their lives are the worst lies of all. (146-7)

Daniel's central argument against society can be found in his accusation that the older generation is made up of liars. War is seen as an integral part of the American economy, and Daniel uses it as a prime example of the older generation's corruption. In his explanation of his discontent, he voices the sentiments of youth throughout America. As Reich says in The

Greening of America, the youth in the sixties were rebelling against the kind of "reason that makes impoverishment, dehumanization, and even war appear to be logical and necessary".[9] Although during this period there were many American revolutionaries who believed in non-violence, MacLennan places Daniel's ideologies alongside the more militant faction of the revolutionaries in the sixties.[10] When Daniel thinks about using explosives to blow up a building, he wants to imitate the Hungarian students whose terrorist tactics he considers sophisticated: "If you did it with absolute perfection you could hang it at a twenty-degree angle as the students in Budapest made Stalin's statue hang, the great tyrant seeming to kiss the ground in front of the students" (135).

This violent approach to Québec independence is the side of Daniel's social conscience that has been influenced by Latendresse. At this point in the novel, Daniel has not yet begun to doubt Latendresse, and, in fact, he thinks that Latendresse is a great teacher: "Daniel watched Latendresse moving away and thought how thin he was . . . He thought of Gandhi and tears came to his eyes" (132). It is only after Daniel has spoken to Marielle that he becomes suspicious of Latendresse's motives: "Now what Daniel was feeling for Latendresse was hostility but, though his instinct knew it, his mind still refused to accept it" (226). Daniel is intellectually stimulated by Latendresse's ideas, and, because of this, he is

committed to a revolution without the complete knowledge of Latendresse's intentions beyond the political independence of Québec, and, even then, Daniel is unsure how far Latendresse will go to attain his goal. When Latendresse explains that the technique of revolution is the same despite the ideology, he likens it to a car parked near the top of a hill: "The first pushes are the hardest, but once the car is over the crest of the hill our task is to get it to that point". Daniel's inquiry about the car " . . . after it is pushed over the crest of the hill, where will it go?" (226) indicates that his commitment to the revolution is naive and based on his emotion rather than on ideology.

In the characterization of Daniel, MacLennan creates an individual who typifies the young men who turned to revolution in the twentieth century. Marielle tells Daniel that "Young men never plunge into movements like this without some kind of personal reason" (141). There are a number of explanations for Daniel's personal attraction to revolution, but the recent death of his mother, and his fear of loving a woman are the two that seem to touch the heart of the matter. When Ainslie hears that Daniel might be a part of the Separatist Movement, his first reaction is to blame himself for leaving Daniel " . . . alone too much . . . after his mother died" (111). This interpretation of Daniel's behavior is shared by Gabriel Fleury who explains to Daniel's sister Chantal: "It was your mother's death, of course"

(51). It is Marielle who pinpoints Daniel's fear of women as a reason for his behavior: " . . . are you still a virgin? . . . It has this perhaps to do with it, that you are afraid of loving a woman, and if a man fears that, then it is very natural for him to talk and dream about bombs and war" (153). The two reasons are related in that both involve women and love. In MacLennan's novels, women symbolize everything that makes life worth living.[11] In this case, woman can be representative of life itself, and Daniel's personal reason for becoming a revolutionary can be interpreted on a more general level: young men who are afraid of life find a cause for which to die. Marielle compares Daniel to a young man she once knew: "He was an idealist like you. . . . He had a lovely mind, but he's dead now. So is the cause he died for" (141). In a sense, Marielle is telling Daniel that there will always be causes, and the greater implication is that the young idealist who is afraid of life will find a cause to give him a reason to die, and this is not the same as finding a reason to live: " . . . life is so short and precious and youth is almost all there is" (141). Marielle is correct in her estimation that Daniel's romantic view of revolution is related to his own death wish, for, in the end, his attempt at terrorism coincides with his desire to commit suicide: " . . . and the shaking of the car was like the shaking in his brain, was the prelude to the obliteration that would come when the bomb exploded and he himself would cease to exist in the final flash"

(289-90). Since this incident follows the confrontation with his father, it becomes an act of desperation rather than an act motivated by ideology.

According to MacLennan, the young are easily manipulated because they have not lived long enough to acquire an understanding of human nature. Ainslie warns Daniel that "Movements like this one of yours are so full of sell-outs and betrayals that their enemies just lean back and let them ruin themselves. All history is there to prove it" (243). For MacLennan, history is not a record of political struggles as much as a study of the human psyche.[12] Daniel is an idealist who thinks that everyone fighting for Québec independence is as self-sacrificing and dedicated as he believes himself to be, and the irony is that Daniel's motives are not as pure as he imagines them. In Marielle's account of her experiences during World War II, she mentions that human nature makes pure idealism impossible: "There was always this atmosphere of loyalty within a betrayal and of a betrayal within a loyalty . . . a great deal more of ordinary life is like that than most people dare admit" (156). Ainslie sees Latendresse in historical perspective as a perfect replica of the "pathetic misfits" of an earlier period who either flocked to join the Nazi party, or who turned to communism during the Depression (257). This is reminiscent of MacLennan's comment in The Watch That Ends The Night where he says that in the thirties political ideology was a substitute for religious

beliefs: "This was a time in which you were always meeting people who caught politics just as a person catches religion".[13]

For Latendresse, political commitment takes the place of his lost religious vocation, and this becomes evident when Marielle asks Daniel " . . . is this Latendresse a spoiled priest by any chance?" (145).[14] When Ainslie explains that revolutions always have "neurotic roots", he says, " . . . no people in history has ever tried to break with a strict Catholicism without turning to nationalism or some kind of ism as a surrogate religion" (69).[15] "Catholicism" can be interpreted as any religion with a rigid indoctrination that leaves the individual in a state of anxiety. Erich Fromm attributes this anxiety brought on by religious indoctrination to the doubts concerning salvation and damnation, and he says that people with a strict religious background often try to escape the anxiety through frantic activity. In other words, the individual has to be active in order to feel that he is striving for something.[16] When a person brought up with a strong religious faith, loses his faith, it is only natural for him to find something in which he can release his pent up frustration, while filling the void left by religion. These ideas have a particular significance in relation to Latendresse, because he had wanted to become a priest, and this indicates the extent to which he was once committed to Catholicism.

The circumstances surrounding Latendresse's lost vocation

are somewhat of a mystery; however, MacLennan does imply that Latendresse could no longer find solace in his faith:

> In his years with the old priest on the lower river, and later with the Dominicans, the Sacrament had always given him the feeling of being filled and satisfied. This last comfort was fading out of the lives of the young and soon it would fade out of the world. (189)

In this passage, Latendresse interprets his inability to become a priest as a sign that the answers to the world's problems cannot be found in a religious vocation. For him, Catholicism is an ideology of the past, because he believes it is unable to deal with the direction in which the world is heading: "The youth of the world was over. . . . There was no comfort left for the youth of the world. . . . The System had taken it away" (189). In his interview with Daniel, Latendresse makes frequent references to the "System," and there is every indication that he has replaced Catholicism with a corrupted interpretation of Marx.

Latendresse approaches the revolution with a zeal reminiscent of the early Christian martyrs: "I gain much comfort from something Lenin said once. Revolutionaries are dead men on furlough" (132). Fromm's theory that people with a strict religious background try to escape their anxiety through frantic activity is one way to explain Latendresse's obsession with the revolution, for, as Ainslie suggests, obsession is fanaticism and not dedication. Daniel is too young to see the contradictions in human nature, so he is unable to differentiate between the two

forms of commitment, something Ainslie's experience makes him understand all too well: "This Latendresse is a fanatic and fanatics are all the same. Their way out is the only way out and anyone who disagrees with them is a traitor" (257). His inexperience in dealing with people makes Daniel unaware of the extent to which he is manipulated by Latendresse. When Ainslie tells him that Latendresse " . . . only cares about people as abstract ideas - as collections of abstract ideas" (256), Daniel does not recognize that he also is guilty of forgetting the individual needs and feelings of human beings. Like Latendresse, Daniel has begun to think of people only in terms of the cause: "They were expendable; it was a pity, but they were. . . . You could never do anything with people like them" (137-8).[17] Daniel even allows Latendresse to use him for terrorist activity. Though MacLennan does not directly tell the reader, he does imply that Latendresse made Daniel's bomb. The R.C.M.P. officer who dismantles the explosive says: "Whoever rigged this one learned it out of a book, that's for sure" (290), and this points to Latendresse who spends his free time studying a "technical book on the manufacture of explosive devices" (189). Sutherland places Latendresse within the second category of separatists found in French and English Canadian literature, and this is the political separatist who rejects violence and believes that independence can be attained without bloodshed.[18] Latendresse says this during a television interview, and when he is asked

whether he believes this is possible, he answers with a question, a strategy which shows his political prowess: "In the entire history of the human race, has that ever happened?" (131). Though I disagree with Sutherland's perception of Latendresse as a non-violent political separatist, it must be conceded that he is a clever politician. He recognizes that the public may not be ready for militant action, and his function, at this point, is to sway their opinion: "It will not be wonderful until the time has arrived when we no longer have to persuade but can give orders and people will spring up from all sides to obey them" (131). From this statement, one might even say that Latendresse has the characteristics of a potential dictator.

Unlike most clever politicians, MacLennan's Latendresse does not have a public and private persona, for he is described as presenting a cold image whether he is in front of a camera or quietly talking to someone in seclusion.[19] The major difference between the public and private Latendresse is that he is less cautious in voicing his opinions away from public scrutiny. During the television interview, Daniel asks him if he is hostile toward the English, and he responds: "That is like asking me if I am hostile to human nature. . . . The English only do what others do" (127). In private he does not hide his animosity: "The English are as dumb and slow as oxen. They're so arrogant and self-confident they'd go on eating their dinners even if somebody told them there was a bomb in their cellars" (248-9).

The private Latendresse is a militant radical who constructs bombs in his rooming house, and though Sutherland maintains that he is "no mongoloid misfit about to place a bomb in a mailbox",[20] Latendresse is a terrorist who wants to incite violence: "They're not reacting the way I want them to. . . . We've got to make the English so enraged they'll go crazy and want to fight us" (248).

Latendresse's ideologies have marxist tendencies in that he singles out the class system created by the economic practices of Britain and the United States, both of which are referred to when he denounces the Anglo-Saxon System which provides "Enough for the inferior not to make them desperate. . . . But more - much, more - for the rich masters" (128). There is disdain also for the democratic process, which he believes does not represent economic discrepancies: "What do free elections signify if they never touch the economic root?" (129). Despite these marxist leanings, Latendresse is not a purist, for the economic structure of society takes second place to his vision of a cultural revolution, and this deviates from marxist doctrine.[21] Latendresse's primary concern is for the survival of the French language and community in North America, and, because of this, the revolution is not essentially a struggle between the classes: "Naturally I mean Quebec, our particular patrie, but I also mean more. I mean the French language, the French culture. . . . A little more of this {assimilation} and our language will

disappear in North America" (126). Latendresse not only interprets Québec's revolution in this way, but he sees the entire world as suffering culturally under Anglo-Saxon Imperialism:

> In Asia the Americans are bombing and burning alive helpless people - and for what? They tell us exactly for what - to compel those people to sit docile while the Americans pour money and equipment to destroy the ancient Asian cultures and turn them into the culture of Coca-Cola and the supermarket. (130)

Latendresse condemns the Americans for ruining the Asian cultures, and then he implies that Québec will be part of a world-wide revolution directed against the entire Anglo-Saxon System: "Alone? When the Anglo-Saxons together make up less than nine per cent of the world's population?" (130). It becomes evident from these remarks that Latendresse's ambition is to participate in the destruction of the existing order, and there is every indication that he does not have any constructive plan for what will happen once he has initiated the revolution. In the analogy between the car parked near the crest of a hill and revolutionary techniques (226), Latendresse never does tell Daniel where it will end, and, in fact, he changes the subject. MacLennan does not specifically identify Latendresse's ideology or goals because to do so would make him appear to be simply a political activist and MacLennan sees revolution as more than merely a political issue.[22] During Ainslie's parliamentary speech, he attacks those members of parliament who continue to

see the Québec revolution in terms of the historical grievances between the French and English in Canada: " . . . if we did not persist in seeing the present with the eyes of the past, we would understand that to make politics out of it is not only irresponsible, it is lethally wicked" (266). The "eyes of the past" is a reference to the prejudices that have thrived in Canada. These prejudices hinder the understanding of the Québec situation. Ainslie says that the Canadian state of mind has been insular, for its vision has never extended beyond its own borders; however, with its revolution, Québec is breaking away from this state of isolation and is joining the mainstream of the contemporary world: " . . . this has been a sheltered country. It has been sheltered in its mind. It isn't so any more" (266).

The Sphinx is more than a fictional account of the Quiet Revolution; MacLennan uses the Canadian issues to illustrate the problems facing the entire human race: "If it could come to a country as innocent as this one was, you can be sure it's everywhere" (300). Ainslie's realization that there is no political reasoning behind the destructive element prevalent in modern society becomes crucial to the understanding of this novel:

> All over the world these little neglected peoples were thinking of their own pasts as jails and were kicking at the doors without stopping to think they could easily kick down the door of the old jail only to kick themselves into a newer one ten times

> harder to get out of. And why limit it to the little peoples? The big powers were doing pretty much the same at home and abroad . . . (106)

Latendresse becomes an instrument of destruction in that he is more concerned with the act of violence than with the reconstruction of society. In his estimation, the riot that had recently taken place was " . . . one of those spontaneous acts that mark a change in history . . . " because it " . . . was produced by the strongest instinct in the world - the instinct of self-preservation" (125). According to him, the event was more important than the outcome of the riot: "It was the most important single event in the life of our people in years" (125). By having Latendresse interpret violence as an affirmation of life (the instinct of self-preservation), MacLennan makes him represent a particular mentality that has come to characterize revolutionaries throughout the modern world.[23]

This eruption of violence is the "universal disease" that Ainslie discusses in his House of Commons address near the end of the novel (266). In the opening pages, it is the "mysterious emotion" that Gabriel Fleury feels " . . . sweeping the world and causing crowds to break the windows of American embassies in country after country" (13). According to Alec Lucas, MacLennan is talking about the resurgence of the barbaric forces in the psyche of mankind.[24] Gabriel remarks that Canada, and Montréal in particular, " . . . come close to being the psychic center of the world" (300). In other words, the collective psychic state

of Montréalers presents a microcosm of the collective psychic state governing the human race at this particular time in the cycle of civilization. The social upheaval and violence in Montréal is an indication that modern civilization is moving toward annihilation.[25]

Ainslie says in his House of Commons speech, which is the focal point of MacLennan's philosophical interpretation of modern society:

> I believe that the real cause of the world crisis - for that is what it is - no more respects frontiers than an influenza epidemic respects them. I believe the crisis came when humanity lost its faith in man's ability to improve his own nature. (267)

In his estimation, the collective psychic state of mankind is generated in the same way as a virus that needs living cells in order to grow, and it is as contagious as a viral disease because it has no cultural or political boundaries. The resurgence of the barbaric in man is the result of humanity's loss of faith in itself, an idea which is related to mankind's shift from a belief in God to his trust in a science that produced the Bomb, and this seems to be a reasonable assessment of MacLennan's philosophical position insofar as Ainslie attributes the world crisis to the spiritual deprivation of twentieth century thought:[26] "When people no longer can believe in personal immortality, when society at large has abandoned philosophy, many men grow desperate without knowing why. They crack up - and don't even know they have" (267). These arguments seem to be

based on Nietzsche's philosophy. Mankind lost its sense of "personal immortality" with the popularization of Nietzsche's concept that "God is dead". Nietzsche maintained that the human race was existing on inherited and decaying values, which would lead to frustration when it could no longer find a meaning and purpose in life. This would turn into self-hatred, and Nietzsche predicted that the human race would invent tools for annihilation.[27] In The Sphinx MacLennan sees Nietzsche's prophecy as coming to pass: "I suppose it's natural that many of you young people take so much pleasure out of the Bomb" (151). Although some individuals may adopt a philosophical approach to life, with the "death of God", there is no universal philosophy guiding mankind. Where once " . . . nearly everyone knew what his duty was, what his faith was, what his morality at least ought to be" (266), there is now nothing by which a human being can judge his actions. Because of this moral confusion, some individuals will do anything to get attention, which is the recognition that they exist: "To be hanged for some senseless crime, to disrupt the processes of society by a meaningless riot . . . he at least gains a column in a newspaper or a paragraph in a legal book" (267). MacLennan sees the young as the tragic victims of this "universal disease", because it robs them of a hope for the future, and this makes them vulnerable to people like Latendresse who can then manipulate the natural idealism of youth.

There are other turning points in history when the human race has been as desperate, and MacLennan uses the revolutions associated with the cycles of civilization to illustrate that the consciousness of the human race is undergoing another major change. According to Latendresse, the sexual permissiveness of the sixties in Québec marks the end of an era: " . . . in the fin de siècle, in the trance of desperate pleasure before the cataclysm wipes away the old order, there is always a sexual explosion . . . " As examples Latendresse mentions France, Russia, and Cuba before their respective revolutions (134); however, these events were minor steps in the evolution of mankind and can be viewed as the forerunners of the major social upheaval that Latendresse predicts will take place.[28] Part of Latendresse's pride in the Québec revolution stems from his idea that Québec will also be a forerunner and perhaps even a catalyst for the annihilation of the existing order. Latendresse draws a parallel between the Roman Empire and the English-speaking nations who have controlled the world for the past two centuries: "What movement that ever changed the face of the world was ever begun in the majority? Yes, they are successful now. So were the Romans once" (127-8). This implies that the world-wide revolution against the imperialism of the English-speaking peoples is as important a change in the cycle of civilization as the Christian revolt against the Roman Empire. Ainslie sees the same significance in this "change in the human climate" (72),

for he makes an analogy between the recognition signals of the younger generation and the early Christians:

> All the four students he had interviewed had worn Ban-the-Bomb buttons. Were they recognition signals, like the fish the early Christians used to scratch in the sand of cross-roads and market places when people were beginning to despair of the earlier empire? (86)

The image of the sphinx represents this vision of a change in the cycle of civilization. In Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming", the awakening of the sphinx signals the Apocalypse, the second coming of Christ. MacLennan never takes the sphinx imagery to that extent, for he makes a reference to the Greek myths when he says: "The sphinx has returned to the world before, after all" (303). He uses the sphinx to illustrate the disintegration of modern civilization, and because of this, the sphinx can be interpreted as the symbol of humanity's irrational nature.[26] As a man of reason he comments on the demise of "animal rationis": "One more step would have freed us all, but the sphinx returned" (302). This suggests that mankind might have exceeded its already great intellectual achievements if the "universal disease" symbolized in the sphinx had not made its appearance.

MacLennan believes that mankind will survive the cataclysm of universal revolution, and this is evident in his last novel Voices In Time (1980), which, in short, takes place after the nuclear holocaust and is a retrospective look at the destruction of our civilization. Although as a man of reason MacLennan is

disheartened by the re-emergence of the barbaric in mankind, he remains an optimist because he still believes in humanity. In Voices In Time, John Wellfleet, the narrator, contemplates the hope of the generation born after the holocaust, and though their idealism seems naive, it has all the positive attributes of what it means to be human:

> They feel sure that a time will come when human beings will be let alone to follow their own bents, to be joyful and adventurous, to entertain gracious thoughts and be responsible for their own actions and the work of their hands. They are discovering entirely on their own the excitement of moral philosophy. They are marvellously, beautifully ignorant of what men are capable of when they grow disappointed, sour, tired, or merely indifferent. . . . . They are amateurs. They are sure that in time a bright new city will arise on the ruins of Metro. All I can say to them is God bless you, I hope you're right. All I can say to myself is that they have nothing to lose by trying; for we, without trying, lost everything.[30]

Notes

[1] Hugh MacLennan, Return of the Sphinx, (1967; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), p. 93. All further references will be taken from this edition and will be cited in the text of the thesis.

[2] Latendresse's contention that French Canadians are the slaves of the English in Canada is similar to the ideas of Pierre Vallières in White Niggers of America. (my introduction, p. 3-4)

[3] Hugh MacLennan, Two Solitudes, (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1945), p. 113.

[4] Hugh MacLennan, The Watch That Ends The Night, (1958; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1975), pp. 60-1.

[5] Peter Buitenhuis says in regard to Two Solitudes that " . . . the Montreal English-Canadians don't appear to much advantage in the novel. It is clear that MacLennan is putting a lot of blame for the situation {French/English conflict} onto their stiff backs and snobbish coldness". Peter Buitenhuis, Hugh MacLennan, (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company Limited, 1974), p. 39.

[6] During this period, Québec nationalist politicians were often compared to Negro Kings, even by those who were not ardent separatists. (my introduction, p. 5)

[7] Ronald Sutherland, Second Image: Comparative Studies in Quebec/Canadian Literature, (Don Mills, Ont.: Newpress, 1971), pp. 112, 128.

[8] Sutherland, p. 128.

[9] Charles A. Reich, The Greening of America, (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1972), pp. 2-3.

[10] In the sixties, many Americans were adherents of the peaceful demonstration, which they believed would bring about social change without violence. Reich presents this idea that the social revolution was meant to be peaceful when he says: "There is a revolution coming. . . . It will not require violence to succeed, and it cannot be successfully resisted by violence". Reich, p. 2.

[11] Patricia Morley, The Immoral Moralists: Hugh MacLennan and Leonard Cohen, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972), p. 112.

[12] Elspeth Cameron mentions MacLennan's indebtedness to G. Rattray Taylor's Sex in History, a study which presents history in terms of the changes in the human psyche. According to her, this work had an influence on MacLennan's ideas in Return of the Sphinx. Elspeth Cameron, "MacLennan's Sphinx: Critical Reception & Oedipal Origins", Journal of Canadian Fiction, 30, Special Edition, "Quebec Fiction: The English Fact", (1981), p. 146-8.

[13] The Watch That Ends The Night, p. 223.

[14] Sutherland says that Latendresse is a prêtre manqué, an "imperfect priest". A prêtre manqué need not be an ordained clergyman; he is often a man who missed his vocation because he could not conform to the established ecclesiastical pattern. Sutherland, pp. 72-3, 127.

[15] In his most recent novel, MacLennan continues to preach this message: "After the 1914 war, religion died out among millions of young Germans. This left a void in their lives and many turned to nationalism as a substitute for the religion they had lost. In the 1960s, religion also died out among the young all over the world and nationalisms of every kind are taking its place". Hugh MacLennan, Voices In Time, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980), p. 115.

[16] Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, (New York: Avon Books, 1969), pp. 10-11.

[17] Paul Wilkinson says that "Political terror, if it is waged consciously and deliberately, is implicitly prepared to sacrifice all moral and humanitarian considérations for the sake of some political end". Paul Wilkinson, Political Terrorism, (London: The Macmillan Press, 1974), p. 17.

[18] Sutherland, pp. 110, 127.

[19] Morley sees Latendresse as "a man of deathly cold" and says he is used to define MacLennan's view of revolutionaries: "grey, glacial coldness completely void of human feeling". Morley, p. 118.

[20] Sutherland goes on to say that " . . . Latendresse is not above manipulating others to do what he might not do himself" and then justifies this by saying "Latendresse . . . is only evil inasmuch as the great majority of the world's leaders, revered and unrevered, have been evil, that is to say, having dedicated himself to an end, he is willing to grant that a certain number of individuals must be sacrificed to achieve that end . . . " Sutherland misinterprets the character because he believes that Latendresse makes " . . . a lot of sense when he speaks of the disadvantages and humiliations long endured by French Canadians . . . " Part of Latendresse's depth as a fictional character is that he can present different sides of one human being. Early in the novel, MacLennan states that the human personality is made up of many contradictions. It is a reference to Ainslie's idealism in his youth; however, it does set the tone of the novel: " . . . he did not consciously recognize . . . many of the contradictions which together make a human personality" (RS 76). Sutherland, pp. 127-8.

[21] According to Marx and his followers, the economy is the real basis of a society, and everything else, such as religion, laws, ethics and social institutions, are determined by economic demands. R.N. Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1966), p. 62.

[22] In an interview with Donald Cameron, MacLennan attributes the world's problems to a stage in the evolution of the human psyche: "I happen to believe in a God that's implicit in evolution, and when you find such a fantastic break in the human psyche as happened in the 1960s, well - If a nation or a group of people threatens all species, something happens. Now you have an American army that won't fight, and this is not accidental. This is part of the chain of life, as I see it. It's away above politics". Donald Cameron, Conversations with Canadian Novelists - 1, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973), p. 132.

[23] Latendresse's interpretation of violence is similar to that of Frantz Fanon's in The Wretched of the Earth. Robert Collison says that Fanon's romantic assumptions concerning violence have had a profound effect on the last twenty years of terrorist activity in the Third World and in the West. Robert Collison, "The New Barbarism", Saturday Night, Jan./Feb., (1980), p. 15.

[24] Alec Lucas, Hugh MacLennan (Montréal: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1970), p. 50.

[25] Lucas has a similar interpretation: "Return of the Sphinx, a long plunge down into doubt from the height MacLennan reached in The Watch That Ends The Night, reads as if he believes his world, also, to be engaged in social and cultural suicide. Lucas, p. 48.

[26] Elspeth Cameron presents an analogous argument for The Sphinx when she says that "MacLennan blamed what increasely seemed to him to be a breakdown of the entire western world caused by the speed of acceleration of technological and scientific advances". Elspeth Cameron, p. 145.

[27] Although I am indebted to D.J. Dooley's study of Nietzsche's legacy in Canadian Literature, he does not directly discuss Nietzsche's influence on MacLennan's philosophy in Return of the Sphinx. D.J. Dooley, Moral Vision in the Canadian Novel, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1979), p. 149.

[28] MacLennan says in reference to the revolutions started by Moses and St. Paul: "Compared to these psychic and moral revolutions, the French and Russian affairs were mere political spectaculars accelerating the triumph of a life of materialism founded on reason and know-how". Hugh MacLennan, "Reflections on Two Decades" in The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century, ed. George Woodcock, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975), p. 121.

[29] Lucas, p. 48.

[30] Voices in Time, p. 122.

CHAPTER II

COHEN'S VISION OF ANNIHILATION IN BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers is a highly complex and imaginative work that has been interpreted from a variety of perspectives. For the purposes of this thesis, I propose to analyze the theme of revolution in the novel and to show how Cohen's existential interpretation of violence is important to the understanding of it. In Beautiful Losers, as in Return of the Sphinx, revolution is shown to be the consequence of the spiritual decay of modern civilization, and, in this context, the Québec Quiet Revolution is seen as a symptom of the problems facing humanity; however, while MacLennan, as a man of reason, interprets the violence erupting in society as the re-emergence of the barbaric forces in the human psyche, Cohen presents violence as the only means of confronting the spiritual decay of Western civilization, which, in his estimation, is founded on violence. Cohen is a romantic whose attacks on rationality and logic question the idea of mankind as "animal rationis",[1] and he presents his doubts concerning man's image of himself as a rational being because he believes that humanity's problems are a result of man's denial of his spirit and of his blind faith in his ability to reason. Although Cohen's philosophical interpretation of violence differs from the one presented by MacLennan, the characteristics of the Quiet Revolution in

Beautiful Losers are similar to those discussed in Return of the Sphinx.

Cohen, like MacLennan, sees the Quiet Revolution as a reaction to the control that the Roman Catholic clergy exerted over the French Canadian people. Throughout the novel, the historic accounts of the Church in Québec are presented in terms of what the Jesuits taught the native Indians, and it may be assumed that the French Canadian people would have been subjected to a similar moral education. Cohen suggests that prior to the white conquest the Indians lived within the great divine pattern of life, and sexuality was celebrated as an act of communion with nature. Catherine Tekakwitha was the first Indian maiden to take the vow of virginity, and it was with her realization that the body was finite, and therefore undesirable, that she rejected her peoples' belief in nature:[2] "Confronted with this assault of human machinery, she must have developed elaborate and bright notions of heaven - and a hatred for finite shit"[3]. The "human machinery" is the "Indians eating and fucking" (54), and Catherine's distaste for this way of life is a direct result of her religious instruction, for the "picture of pure Mistress Mary", who is the Blessed Virgin, is said to have rattled in her head "louder than all the dancer's instruments" (54). Catherine's move away from nature was commended by the clergy who described her as living like "a well-raised French girl!" Cohen's position on this sexual repression is quite explicit, for

he follows this statement with "O Sinister Church!" (57). To him, the Church is "sinister" because of its denial of physical pleasure and its disdain for the body, both of which lead Catherine and the other Christian Indians to seek mortification of the flesh: "There was a great fervor in the mission. Nobody likes his skin too much. . . . They liked to draw blood from their bodies. . . . Some wore iron harnesses with spikes on the inside. . . . Here is a naked woman rolling in the 40-below snow" (244). The descriptions of self-mutilation continue for some pages. Cohen's attack is on this Christian heritage that denies man's place in nature, and he welcomes the sexual revolution in Québec as a positive step toward the liberation of humanity: "They walk differently now, the young men and women in Montreal. . . . Their clothes are different - no smelly pockets bulging with Kleenex bundles of illegal come" (234). The sexual repression that results in "illegal come" and acts of perversity is directly related to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church in Québec: " . . . I accuse the R.C.C. of Q. of making me commit queer horrible acts with F., another victim of the system . . . I accuse the Church of female circumcision in French Canada" (59-60).

The connection between the sexual revolution and the Québec Separatist Movement becomes even more apparent during the demonstration that is staged to protest an upcoming visit by Queen Elizabeth. In this scene, the nameless protagonist, who

will henceforth be referred to as I., has a sexual encounter with a woman in the crowd:[4] " . . . and I knew that all of us, not just the girl and me, all of us were going to come together" (154). The sexuality implicit in "come together" also reveals the spiritual and psychological unity of the crowd at the rally. For Cohen, the Québec revolution is at once sexual, spiritual, psychological and political. It is by overcoming their sexual inhibitions that the Québecois can gain their national pride: "Do not be deceived: a nation's pride is a tangible thing: it is measured by how many hard-ons live beyond the solitary dream, by decibels of the female rocket moan" (235).

According to Linda Hutcheon, each main character in Beautiful Losers represents an aspect of the Canadian consciousness. For her, the nameless protagonist is the archetypal English Canadian. His mentor, F., is a French Canadian, a Federal Member of Parliament, and a Québec separatist. I.'s wife, Edith, is a twentieth century North American Indian whose tribe is facing extinction. Catherine Tekakwitha, the first Indian Christian saint, is the representative of Canada's past, which as Hutcheon points out is "coloured by the blood of her defeated peoples".[5] Since in this novel the fate of the individual is associated with the fate of the nation, Cohen makes a statement on the role of the Québec revolution in the larger Canadian context by making F., the French Canadian revolutionary, the spiritual teacher of I.

As an historian, I., who is the narrator of Book One "The History of Them All", spends his life putting the chaos of the past into a rational sequence of events: "It was spring. It was 1675. Somewhere Spinoza was making sunglasses. In England, Hugh Chamberlen was pulling babies out with a secret instrument, obstetrical forceps . . . . There were Jesuits in Korea" (106). F. points out the uselessness of I.'s endeavours in a quest for truth: "Think of the world without Bach. . . . To discover the truth in anything that is alien, first dispense with the indispensable in your own vision" (107). In F.'s estimation, historians see the past according to major events and figures, and, therefore, they impose an order where there was none. To experience the past, a person must relinquish the capacity to reason that comes with being able to look at life in retrospect: "Do you know how to see the akropolis like the Indians did who never even had one? Fuck a saint . . . " (14-15). F.'s advice to "Fuck a saint" is meant to force I. into recognizing the futility of relying on logic. Dennis Lee compares F.'s technique to that of the Zen Masters who use the "koan", which is a paradoxical phrase, to frustrate the novice into forsaking his belief in the intellect.[6] In Beautiful Losers, F.'s "cheap koans" (147) are all part of Cohen's assault on "animal rationis". When F. tells I. to "connect nothing" (70), he wants I. to abandon reason.[7]

On the allegorical level, English Canada is depicted as

living in the past with a false sense of security that arises from its faith in reason. F. informs I. that he is becoming deformed by his preoccupation with the intellect: "Oh my darling, what a hunchback History and the Past have made of your body . . . " (169). According to Cohen, the Québec revolution should wake English Canada from its self-delusory state, and I.'s repeated anger throughout Book One whenever he comes too close to understanding F.'s teachings represents the reluctance of Canada to look at itself: " . . . I've lost my erection. Is it because I've stumbled on the truth about Canada? I don't want to stumble on the truth about Canada" (43). Since a nation's pride is measured by its sexual potency, the lost erection indicates Canada's sterile national identity, and the revolution in Québec becomes more than a political threat:

> I don't want any of your filthy politics, F. You're a thorn in the side of Parliament. You've smuggled dynamite into Québec disguised as firecrackers. You've turned Canada into a vast analyst's couch from which we dream and re-dream nightmares of identity, and all your solutions are as dull as psychiatry. (169)

In this passage, I. begins with the political revolution and ends with the spiritual and psychological dilemma facing Canada as a nation. He implies that the "nightmares of identity" might never have arisen without the Québec separatists who have turned "Canada into a vast analyst's couch" by their rejection of the Canadian nation. Through I. and F., Cohen shows that part of the hostility between the English and French is based on mutual envy. I. wants to be like F.: "I'm tired of facts, I'm tired of

speculations, I want to be consumed by unreason" (58). On the other hand, F. is jealous and frightened of I.'s rationality: "Your baffled cries as I tormented you, you were the good animal I wanted to be, or failing that, the good animal I wanted to exist. It was I who feared the rational mind, therefore I tried to make you a little mad" (190). As polarities of one another, the English and French complement each other's natures, and Cohen shows that the destinies of the two founding peoples of Canada are too intertwined for the Québec revolution not to have repercussions in the rest of Canada. The idea that neither the French nor the English can escape the need for the other appears in the second part, "A Long Letter from F.", in which he tells I.: "We lay in each other's arms, each of us the other's teacher. . . . I was your adventure and you were my adventure, I was your journey and you were my journey . . . This letter rises out of our love like the sparks between dueling swords . . . " (194).

The split in the consciousness of I. and F. carries into their theory of revolution and their perceptions of what makes a revolutionary. Chapter Ten is devoted to I.'s ideals: I always wanted to be loved by the Communist Party and the Mother Church" (24). I. believes a revolutionary must have an ideology to which he can dedicate himself, and he wants to cover everything from Catholicism to Communism. If anything, I.'s discourse on revolution reveals a sentimentality that is highly romantic:

"I wanted to weep for the innocent people my bomb would have to maim. I wanted to thank my peasant father who fed us on the run" (24). In his imagination, he creates a sensitive revolutionary crying for the "innocent people" who have to be sacrificed for the greater good. His melodramatic picture of a family on the run illustrates a revolutionary who has been involved in the revolution since childhood and is now following in his father's footsteps. At this point in the novel, I. is a would-be revolutionary,[8] and he seems to have based his concept on the glorified images of the revolutionary found in newspapers, television, and Hollywood movies rather than on his experiences or his beliefs. This becomes evident when I. imagines himself as a South American guerilla at a cocktail party: "I wanted to attend cocktail parties wearing a machine gun" (25), and as a renegade priest singing folksongs: "I wanted to be a junkie priest who makes records for Folkways" (26).

F.'s concept of the revolutionary is far more complex than the fantasies presented by I. There is no overt mention of revolution; F. begins by saying: "What is most original in a man's nature is often that which is most desperate. Thus new systems are forced on the world by men who simply cannot bear the pain of living with what is" (69). F.'s explanation of creativity contains the seeds of his theory of revolution. According to his concept of creativity, revolutionaries demand change not because they have a particular ideology: "Creators

care nothing for their systems except that they be unique" (69), but because, like the poet, they are "not bound to the world as given" (70), and they are capable of shaping it according to their will. For F., the true revolutionary is akin to the poet, and there is an implicit analogy made to the philosopher, for his ideas concerning the revolutionary are similar to Nietzsche's concept of the philosopher.[9] Hitler and Jesus become his examples of "desperate men" who could not bear the world they inherited, and he maintains that Hitler would never have been content with Nazi Germany if he had not been responsible for its creation, and that Jesus, like all great creators, " . . . probably designed his system so that it would fail in the hands of other men . . . " (70). I. remarks that "These are F.'s ideas . . . I don't think he believed them", because it was part of F.'s method to make him hysterical: "Hysteria is my classroom, F. said once" (70). F. keeps I. in a state of hysteria by suggesting that Hitler and Jesus had the same motivations, and he makes this analogy between Hitler and Jesus because confusion prevents I. from being able to reason, and in this way the analogy becomes another "cheap koan" (147) like "Fuck a saint" (15). I.'s assumption that F. does not believe what he had said about ideology being only a secondary motive for the true revolutionary does not negate F.'s theory, for later F. admits that he is this kind of revolutionary: "I want two hundred million to know that everything can be different, any old

different" (235-6).

From an ideological standpoint, F. is an anarchist because he challenges the principles of his society, however sacred or profane ("Fuck a saint"), and the hysteria by which he manipulates I. becomes anarchy as it is experienced by the individual. There is a subtle distinction between anarchy, which is the chaos that may result from the destruction of established norms, and anarchism, which is liberal individualism taken to its extreme.[10] F.'s teachings bridge the gap between theory and realization.

As a Québec revolutionary, F. seeks to achieve his goals by terrorist methods, but Québec independence remains the first stage of a much greater revolution: "It is not merely because I am French that I long for an independent Québec. . . . I want to hammer a beautiful colored bruise on the whole American monolith" (235). F. has visions of destroying American imperialism (monolith), which is the system that governs, not only Québec and Canada, but most of the world.

Cohen, like MacLennan in Return of the Sphinx, is sympathetic to the Québec revolutionaries who see Canada as an economic colony of the United States. When I. tells of Edith's rape as a young girl, he mentions that it took place in " . . . a stone quarry or an abandoned mine . . . owned indirectly by U.S. interests" (75). "Indirectly" implies the same idea as "Big Brother" (RS 93) in Return of the Sphinx. In other words, the

Americans are buying Canada without the average Canadian even being aware of the extent to which their industries are monopolized by the United States. During the course of this story, I. digresses into a condemnation of Madison Avenue advertising and its attempt to attract the Canadian teen-age market:

> No wonder the forests of Québec are mutilated and sold to America, . . . Look at all the thirteen-year-old legs on the floor spread in front of the tv screen. Is it only to sell them cereals and cosmetics? Madison Avenue is thronged with hummingbirds who want to drink from those little barely haired crevices. (73-4)

Madison Avenue is responsible for the seduction of the young girls who represent the naiveté of the Canadian people in their acceptance of American propaganda. In this way, Cohen equates Edith's rape with the cultural and economic rape of Canada.[11] The Canadian Government consents to this rape without the knowledge of the Canadian people. Beautiful Losers is filled with images of this cultural rape: from the American comic books and the Top 40 songs on the Hit Parade to Hollywood which turns its actors into saints. Even I.'s childhood memories are tainted because they are unAmerican: "I wept . . . for the American boyhood I never had, for my invisible New England parents, for a long green lawn and an iron deer, for college romance with Zelda"[12] (78). This feeling of deprivation is evidence of a colonial attitude toward America, a state of mind that regards the experience of a foreign country as better than anything

Canada has to offer its citizens.[13]

In addition to admitting that the United States has control of Canada's economy and culture, Cohen presents the beliefs of the Québec revolutionaries who consider French Canadians to be a colonized people. French Canadians identify the English as their conquerors: "In 1760 History decreed that the Frenchman should lose to the Englishman!" (150), and they interpret their relationship to the rest of Canada in the light of the British conquest: "Give us back our History! The English have stolen our History! (150). English Canadians who continue to perpetuate the historic ties with England contribute to the arguments of the Québec revolutionaries. Cohen makes this apparent by making the separatist rally a protest against a scheduled visit by Queen Elizabeth, who is the symbol of Britain's colonial rule in Canada. F. decides to make a statement by blowing up a statue of Queen Victoria: ". . . it is only a symbol, but the State deals in symbols" (171). To destroy Queen Victoria's statue is not only an insult but a symbolic gesture ending British Imperialism.

The Québec revolutionaries interpret history as the struggle for supremacy among the peoples of the world, and because of this interpretation, the passage of time cannot eradicate the humiliation of a defeat. When the crowd at the rally proclaims: "The English have stolen our History!", the speaker informs them that "History decrees that there are Losers and Winners. History cares nothing for cases, History cares only

whose Turn it is" (151). In essence, history belongs to those who demand their rights and take control; these are the "Winners". The "Losers" are those who submit and allow others to win, and the speaker uses Kant to illustrate this point: "Kant said: If someone makes himself into an earthworm, can he complain if he is stepped on?" (153). The Québec revolutionaries demand vengeance for their suppression: "Today is the Turn of the English to have dirty houses and French bombs in their mailboxes!" (152). "Dirty houses" is a reference to the inferior status of the French Canadian people who are seen as the servants of the English. It is the revolutionaries' belief that terrorism (bombs in mailboxes) will restore the dignity of the French Canadian people. F. equates the Québec revolution with the struggle of the Black race throughout the world: " . . . it is a beautiful crowd . . . Because they think they are Negroes, and that is the best feeling a man can have in this century" (150). The identification with the black race takes the Québec revolution out of the Canadian context, for as Vallières says: " . . . the niggers of America are one with the niggers of the entire world".[14]

At the separatist demonstration, the oppression of the Indian race is identified with the origin of Canada: "History decreed that in the battle for the continent the Indian should lose to the Frenchman" (150). According to Cohen, this battle was more than a physical struggle for territory, it was also a spiritual war. In his estimation, the history of the white man's

civilization in Canada really began when Catherine Tekakwitha denied the primeval Indian belief in nature to embrace Roman Catholicism, because this was the first time that consciousness and nature were separated in the New World.[15] Cohen claims that at her death: "The face of Catherine Tekakwitha had turned white! . . . And in a moment she became so beautiful and so white . . . {sic}" (265-6). Her beauty and her white complexion symbolize her conversion to the White race and the triumph of her people's conquerors. This interpretation of her transformation is racist because white is associated with beauty, and the priests believe her change of colour is a sign from God to be used for the edification of the Indians:[16] "C'était un argument nouveau de crédibilité, dont Dieu favorisait les sauvages pour leur faire goûter la foi" (266). F. suggests these racist implications when he says: "Let the mundane Church serve the White Race with a change of color" (267). Since F. identifies with the Black race, it is significant that he should turn black after his death in the same way that Catherine joined the White race by turning white at her death: "F. died in a padded cell . . . . His face turned black . . . ." (4).

Cohen uses Canada as the archetypal White civilization made up of victims. F. explains the situation from the French Canadian perspective: "The English did to us what we did to the Indians, and the Americans did to the English what the English did to us. I demand revenge for everyone" (236). Canada becomes

the epitome of imperialism, the system which represents everything that has gone wrong with humanity. Modern civilization has denied the laws of the universe by defiling nature, and because the revolution in Québec reflects the spiritual repression of mankind, it becomes more than a sociological and political movement.

> The tune was a couple of thousand years old and we danced to it with our eyes closed. The tune was called History and we loved it, Nazis, Jews, everybody. We loved it because we made it up, because, like Thucydides, we knew that whatever happened to us was the most important thing that ever happened in the world. (205).

F. implies that World War II was part of the continuum of Western history, which originated with the Ancient Greeks, the founders of modern civilization. History gives Western civilization a sense of self-importance, and, because of this, Western civilization has sacrificed the individual and is a civilization built on suffering: "I saw pain everywhere . . . . You were smeared with blood and tortured scabs" (220). After examining society, F. finds little redeeming value in what has taken place, and violence is his answer to the logic that has glorified history:[17]

> Caution was a luxury. There was no time for me to examine my motives. Self-purification would have been an alibi. Beholding such a spectacle of misery, I was free to try anything. . . . I have no explanation for my own vile ambitions. Confronted with your pus, I could not stop to examine my direction, whether or not I was aimed at a star. As I limped down the street every window broadcast a command: Change! Purify! Experiment! Cauterize! Reverse! Burn! Preserve! Teach! (220-1)

F.'s remedy for the injustices of the world is a spiritual and social anarchy that would destroy history, because this is the system by which the established order is defined. There is no pretence that anarchy is the right solution, for F. is aware that he may not be "aimed at a star", but the urgency for action supersedes the notions of good and evil. In the situation created by society, F. is free to "try anything" because nothing could be worse than living in a world in which humanity is sacrificed to sustain the glories of history. Violence becomes the only means of ending the established order, and F.'s apocalyptic vision calls for an annihilation in which nature, as well as humanity, is revenged:

> I saw cities burning, I saw movies falling into blackness. I saw the maize on fire. I saw the trees taking back the long-house roofs. I saw the shy deer murdering to get their dresses back. I saw the Indians punished. I saw chaos eat the gold roof of Parliament. I saw water dissolve the hoofs of drinking animals. I saw bonfires covered with urine, and the gas stations swallowed up entire, highway after highway falling into the wild swamps. (236-7)

Dennis Lee interprets Cohen's perception of the history that brought about the modern world as man trying to create Grace and trying to control salvation with nothing but technique and the will to power, and the result is Hitler and damnation. According to Lee, there is no salvation in Beautiful Losers because Cohen lost control of his direction: "As he was writing the second movement, however, a strange thing seems to have happened: the demolition job became too thorough".[18] This is

not necessarily true, for throughout the novel, Cohen presents violence as an existential act of redemption. Cohen's theory of annihilation is similar to the ideas proposed by Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon. Sartre maintains that "no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them".[19] This concept can be applied to every violent act in Beautiful Losers, from Edith's suicide to the Québec revolution and the annihilation of history.

Cohen makes Edith the mirror-image of Catherine, for she embraces the nature and instinctual life renounced by the Iriquois Virgin.[20] As the embodiment of nature, Edith informs F. that she is the incarnation of the goddess Isis (231).[21] To a goddess revered as the "Great Mother", death is the promise of rebirth, for immortal Isis cannot die.[22] According to James Frazer's The Golden Bough, in periods of decadence when traditional faiths were shaken, the ancients turned to Isis for the "promise of immortality".[23] Edith's violent death (she is crushed in an elevator shaft) is meant to be a redemptive act, because it is a protest against the imposed order, which manifests itself in the technological world. Her sacrifice heals the wounds inflicted on nature by mankind.

Cohen's existential interpretation of violence has a religious connotation in his use of symbolism. During the separatist demonstration, the speaker and the crowd go into a chant about the "Blood" of the French Canadian people: "Blood!

Give us back our Blood! . . . From the earliest dawn of our race, this Blood, this shadowy stream of life, has been our nourishment and our destiny. . . . and Blood is the source of the spirit of the race" (154). Although the reference to "Blood" in this scene represents the identity of the French Canadian people, it reappears as the symbol of salvation in F.'s explanation of terrorism: " . . . for the blood of Martyrs is the seed of the Church. The Revolution in Quebec needs the lubrication of a little blood. . . . It will be my blood" (169-70). After he has bombed the statue of Queen Victoria, F., describes it as "a boulder in the pure stream" of the French Canadian's "blood and destiny" (233). In the course of planting the bomb, F. loses his thumb, and the consequence is that: "A seed of pure blood was planted in that hole, from it there shall spring a mighty harvest" (233). The harvest is the violence that will follow his action, for F. notes that there is a "change of climate" in that French Canadians who " . . . only knew how to cheer a rubber puck past a goalie's pads . . . " were now expressing their resentment toward colonization: "MERDE A LA REINE D'ANGLETERRE" (233). In Return of the Sphinx, Ainslie also comments on the "change in the human climate . . ." (RS 72), and, in this way, F.'s observation is similar to the "mysterious emotion" (RS 13) and universal disease" (RS 266) in Return of the Sphinx; however, while MacLennan sees humanity's turn to violence as the result of the barbaric forces in the psyche of mankind, Cohen interprets

the act of violence as a form of redemption. In primitive religions, as well as in Christianity, blood has been the perfect symbol of sacrifice and the most precious offering that could be made to the gods.[24] Cohen presents the idea that the shedding of blood will destroy the old order and this will give rise to a new species of man.

> The New Jew is the founder of Magic Canada, Magic French Québec, and Magic America. . . . He confirms tradition through amnesia, tempting the whole world with rebirth. He dissolves history and ritual by accepting unconditionally the complete heritage. He travels without passport because powers consider him harmless. His penetration into jails enforces his supranationality, and flatters his legalistic disposition. Sometimes he is Jewish but always he is American, and now and then, Québecois. (203)

Since the Jews are the "chosen people" and they, like the Black race, represent the downtrodden of the earth, then those who initiate the annihilation of the old order will symbolically belong to the Jewish race. The violence of the New Jew tempts "the whole world with rebirth" while accepting the "complete heritage" of mankind. Scobie suggests that in this novel Cohen is attempting to break down the systems that have been invented by the human race in order to return to Magic, which is the stem of all religious systems, for Magic is the foundation of all religions and it cannot be classified or reduced to dogma.[25] In romanticism, the creative imagination is the mental process by which man imitates God, the creator.[26] For Cohen, Magic becomes the epitome of the creative imagination, and this idea that Magic is the realization of the creative process is apparent in

that he equates Magic with God: "God is alive. Magic is afoot. God is alive. Magic is afoot. God is afoot. Magic is alive. Alive is afoot" (197). In F.'s prayer, God and Magic are interchangeable. Scobie feels that the key words in this prayer are "alive" and "afoot", both of which indicate that God and Magic are always on the move, and this interpretation implies that modern civilization, which is the old order, is static in comparison with the world of the New Jew who is the "founder of Magic Canada, Magic French Québec, and Magic America".[27] The New Jew brings about the annihilation of the existing order by his creative imagination, and because of this, revolution becomes a creative act, for it is the means by which the creative imagination finds its release in a world that is based on the suppression and suffering of humanity. Cohen's romantic view of violence is similar to Sartre's comment that: " . . . violence is neither sound and fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man recreating himself".[28] According to Cohen, the New Jew is the man who will be recreated in the annihilation of the existing order.

This romantic interpretation of violence and revolution is carried to the end of the novel, and it can even be applied to the sexual revolution found in the sado-masochistic extremes that F. makes Edith and I. endure in order to redeem sexuality. This works in the same way that Sartre says: " . . . violence, like

Achilles' lance, can heal the wounds that it has inflicted".[29] For Cohen, the sexual revolution is a tool for the destruction of the old order and he expresses this idea when F. says: " . . . New Jews, the two of us, queer, militant, invisible, part of a possible new tribe bound by gossip and rumors of divine evidence" (203). It is also a sign that annihilation has begun: "Good fucks, like a shipload of joyous swimming rats, have migrated from marble English banks to revolutionary cafés" (234). Because Catherine established the imperialist order by denying her sexuality, and this led to the self-mutilation of the converted Indians: " . . . the whole wintry village looks like a Nazi medical experiment" (248), only sado-masochism can redeem sexuality, for as it has been observed before, only violence can destroy violence.[30] Sandra Djwa points out that Cohen accepts evil as a part of human existence, and the confrontation with evil becomes a descent into hell, an experience that modern romantics believe will lead to illumination.[31] The sado-masochism that F., I., and Edith undergo parallels the self-mutilation of the Indians, because both these extreme acts of behavior represent the descent into hell. After the waiter, who resembles Hitler, tortures Edith and F.: " . . . we hardly cared to resist his sordid exciting commands, even when he made us kiss the whip", and he has them bath in soap derived "from human flesh", Edith embraces him, and since Edith is Isis, this is an act of forgiveness (229-30). As the denial of sexuality led to

Catherine's descent into hell, it is only by making the descent into hell that sexuality can be redeemed.

At the end of the novel, I. comes down from the treehouse where he wrote Book One, and he is missing his thumb: "He's got no thumb!" (302). Since the missing thumb is F.'s trademark, the implication is that I. has embodied F.'s teachings and has become IF, a name which can be related to Cohen's definition of a saint as someone who achieves "a remote human possibility".[32]

> A saint is someone who has achieved a remote human possibility. It is impossible to say what that possibility is. I think it has something to do with the energy of love. Contact with this energy results in the exercise of a kind of balance in the chaos of existence. A saint does not dissolve the chaos; if he did the world would have changed long ago. (121)

Cohen sees the world as a place of chaos that is made up of victims, and he believes that if the victims fight back the balance might be restored. It does not matter whether the victims are successful in overthrowing their oppressors, for the chaos cannot be dissolved, and, in this way, violence becomes "the exercise of a kind of balance in the chaos of existence". As the "remote human possibility", IF becomes the catalyst for the revolution because his presence sparks the action. Although the revolution begins as a political riot, it ends as a form of spiritual release, and this makes the violence truly redemptive.

> Just as the staff and clientele of the Main Shooting and Game Alley were to succumb to a sordid political riot, something very remarkable happened to the old man. Twenty men were swarming toward him, half to expel the disgusting intruder, half to restrain the

> expulsionists . . . In a split second the traffic had stopped on the Main, and a crowd was threatening the steamy plate windows. For the first time in their lives, twenty men experienced the delicious certainty that they were at the very center of action, no matter which side. (302)

In this passage, the act becomes more important than the outcome or the motives, for at the end these men do not care what ideologies are involved: "Every man who was a terrorist in his heart whispered, At Last" (303). This implies that the would-be terrorists, as well as the "trained revolutionaries" (303), responded to the event. These are the second chancers, the downtrodden of humanity.

> All the second chancers rushed in, the divorced, the converted, the overeducated, they all rushed in for their second chance, karate masters, adult stamp collectors, Humanists, give us, give us our second chance! It was the Revolution! (303-4)

The "second chance" is the promise of redemption made to the believers in Christ. Linda Hutcheon points out that the scene at the end of the novel is a literal parody of the apocalyptic vision of St. John.[33] IF's transfiguration and ascension deliberately caricature Christ, for Cohen makes a reference to the miracle of the loaves and fishes: " . . . as though they were truly the row of giant fishes to feed a hungry multitude" (305). Hutcheon suggests that when IF becomes a movie of Ray Charles, the portrayal of a blind negro singer in sunglasses is an ironic reversal of the images found in Revelation.[34]

There is no doubt that Beautiful Losers is an apocalyptic

novel. Barbour maintains that Cohen creates a mystical apocalypse in the creation of a new world of the mind, and that in science fiction, as well as in apocalyptic literature, the destruction of one world necessitates the construction of another.[35] Cohen's problem seems to be that he is trying to present a new kind of apocalypse, but, like F., he is caught in the old language: "I've gone too deep into the old language. It may trap me there" (206).[36] I. asks why F. was not direct in his teaching: "Why did you make everything so baffling? Why couldn't you comfort me like St. Augustine, who sang: "Behold the ignorant arise and snatch heaven beneath our eyes?" (158). F. could not be more explicit in explaining his vision of annihilation without associating the revolution with the old religious beliefs. Cohen, like MacLennan in Return of the Sphinx, is not speaking about the Biblical apocalypse. The use of "blood", the New Jew, and the parody of Revelation are as far as Cohen could go in the old language before his revolution would become the traditional apocalyptic vision of St. John. Cohen "dissolves history and ritual by accepting unconditionally the complete heritage" (203), and he does this by using traditional symbols and mythologies, both of which he places in the technological world, and, in this way, he offers a new mythology of the apocalypse based on a revolution that is at once sexual, political, psychological, social and spiritual.

Beautiful Losers is not meant to depict the realization of

Cohen's vision of the annihilation. The Québec Revolution, which is the first stage of man's insurrection against the existing order, finishes in Montréal on a spring night with the New Jew labouring over a "broken Strength Test" (306). The test of strength is broken and this indicates the failure of the revolution. Annihilation of the existing order has not taken place because Cohen says that "The end of the book has been rented to the Jesuits" (306). Since the Jesuits are the fathers of the imperialist rule in North America, and they are using the space to demand the official beatification of Catherine Tekakwitha, there has not been any change in the structure of Western civilization. The final message concerns the poor men who fled the revolution, and Cohen states that he will continue his crusade for annihilation: "Poor men, poor men, such as we, they've gone and fled. I will plead from electrical tower. I will plead from turret of plane" (307). Those who attempt to bring down the established order are the "beautiful losers" because they try and fail and try again in their efforts to keep " . . . a kind of balance in the chaos of existence" (121).

Beautiful Losers is not a prophetic novel; it is Cohen's manifesto declaring his belief that violence and annihilation are necessary for mankind to cease being the victims of Western civilization. Cohen wants to inspire a revolution based on this ideology: "Welcome to you who read me today. Welcome to you who put my heart down. Welcome to you, darling and friend, who

miss me forever in your trip to the end" (307). Annihilation is the "end" of the existing order, and Cohen welcomes everyone, even those who want to discredit his work ("who put my heart down"), because he has brought the issues to their attention and they might have a better solution to the problems facing humanity. The theme of revolution, which incorporates the ideas of annihilation and violence, appears in his volume of poetry The Energy of Slaves (1972), which was published after Beautiful Losers. There are fewer religious symbols in this volume than in his novel, and though I would not say that Cohen has found a new language, he is not totally trapped in the old. Barbour believes that The Energy of Slaves lacks the saving grace of the wit and humour found in Beautiful Losers;[37] nevertheless, The Energy of Slaves remains a powerful testament to Cohen's belief that violence is a form of redemption, and that the victims of imperialism will one day rise up against their oppressors.

> One of these days
> You will be the object
> of the contempt of slaves
> Then you will not talk so easily
> about our freedom and our love
> Then you will refrain
> from offering us your solutions
> You have many things on your mind
> We think only of revenge.[38]

Notes

[1]Douglas Barbour, "Down with History" in Leonard Cohen: The Artist and His Critics, ed. Michael Gnarowski, (Montréal: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976), p. 136.

[2]Dennis Lee, Savage Fields: An Essay in Literature and Cosmology, (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Limited, 1977), pp. 63-5.

[3]Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers, (1966; rpt. New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1970), p. 55. All further references will be taken from this edition and will be cited in the text of this thesis.

[4]I borrowed this idea to call the nameless protagonist "I" from Barbour who mentions that when "I", the narrator of Book One, is joined with "F", the narrator of Book Two, it forms "IF", which becomes the conjunctive name presenting all possibilities, and, in this way it is related to the definition of the saint as someone who achieves the "remote human possibility". Barbour, "Down with History", p. 148 n. 2.

[5]Linda Hutcheon, "Beautiful Losers: All the Polarities" in The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century, ed. George Woodcock, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975), p. 301, et passim.

[6]Lee believes "Fuck a saint" is F.'s most important "koan". "It was, precisely, a mindfuck, meant to boggle the narrator into illumination". Savage Fields, p. 69.

[7]Barbour, p. 136.

[8]Sutherland describes the would-be revolutionary as someone who cannot make a positive identification of the enemy and so fails in his attempt at terrorism. Ronald Sutherland, Second Image: Comparative Studies in Quebec/Canada Literature, (Don Mills, Ont.: Newpress, 1971), p. 126.

[9]Nietzsche says "What seems to dawn upon philosphers least of all: that they must no longer allow themselves to be presented with concepts already conceived, nor must they merely purify and polish up those concepts; but they must first make them, create them themselves, and then present them and get people to accept

them". Friedrich Nietzsche, "Criticism of Philosophy" in The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation of All Values taken from the English translations ed. Oscar Levy, (London: n.p., 1909-1913), extracts rpt. in Reality, Man and Existence: Essential Works of Existentialism, ed. H.J. Blackham, (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1971), p. 97.

[10]R.N. Carew Hunt, The Theory and Practice of Communism, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1966), pp. 141-2, & 161.

[11]Patricia Morley, The Immoral Moralists: Hugh MacLennan and Leonard Cohen, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972), p. 94.

[12]Hutcheon, p. 303.

[13]According to Moss: "The colonial mentality comes of being born in exile, of accepting foreign experience as more valid, more relevant, than one's own. John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), p. 13.

[14]Pierre Vallières, White Niggers of America, trans. Joan Pinkham, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1975), p. 53.

[15]Lee, Savage Fields, pp. 63-7, et passim.

[16]Hutcheon comes to a similar conclusion. pp. 299, 302.

[17]Morley, p. 91.

[18]Lee, p. 93.

[19]Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to The Wretched of the Earth, by Frantz Fanon, trans. Constance Farrington, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1979), p. 21.

[20]In Savage Fields, Lee traces Edith's association with the goddess Isis as the proof of her role as the "perfect incarnation of the Holy Planet". pp. 70-3.

[21]In Beautiful Losers, Edith makes the declaration of her true identity as Isis in Greek. Pacey gives the translation of the Greek text as: "I am Isis born, of all things, both what is and what shall be, and no mortal has ever lifted my robe".

Desmond Pacey, "The Phenomenon of Leonard Cohen" in Leonard Cohen: The Artist and His Critics, ed. Michael Gnarowski, (Montréal: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976), p. 88.

[22]Lee, p. 70.

[23]James Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion, I (1922; rpt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943), p. 383.

[24]J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, 2nd ed. trans. Jack Sage, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 29-30.

[25]Stephen Scobie, Leonard Cohen, (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1978), p. 105, et passim.

[26]M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 275.

[27]Scobie, p. 105.

[28]Preface to The Wretched of the Earth. p. 21.

[29]Preface to The Wretched of the Earth. p. 30.

[30]See p. 61 of this thesis, and n. 19 of this chapter.

[31]Sandra Djwa, "Leonard Cohen, Black Romantic" in Leonard Cohen: The Artist and His Critics, ed. Michael Gnarowski, (Montréal: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976), pp. 96-7.

[32]n. 4 of this chapter.

[33]Hutcheon, p. 300.

[34]Hutcheon particularly feels that passages 1:7,14 and 22:14 of Revelation are applicable to the end of the novel.

[35]Barbour, p. 146.

[36]Barbour points out that "F.'s Invocation To History In the Middle Style" and some of the poems in the Danish Vibrator episode seem to be the best that F. can do to break away from the Old Style. p. 138.

[37]Barbour, p. 147.

[38]Leonard Cohen, The Energy of Slaves, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), p. 58.

CHAPTER III

PLACE D'ARMES: THE REVOLUTION OF SENSIBILITY

Place d'Armes is Scott Symons's manifesto declaring war on the New Canadian Establishment, which, in his estimation, is systematically destroying Canada's cultural heritage. Although he believes that the Canadian Government is responsible for the creation of the New Canadian Establishment, his revolution is aimed at the renewal of sensibility in Canada and is neither political nor social. The novel is written in a journal format and depicts the experiences of Hugh Anderson, a Torontonian who ventures to Montréal to find his identity. The Québec Quiet Revolution becomes the point of departure for Anderson's quest, because he identifies with the French Canadian struggle to establish their identity in a country governed by English Canadian pragmatism. Symons, like Cohen, is a romantic who believes English Canadians are far too concerned with reason and logic. In order to escape his English Canadian background and to awaken his sensibility, Symons adopts an existential interpretation of life.[1] In this novel, the Quiet Revolution and his identification with the French Canadian nation are the sources of inspiration that initiate his war on the New Canadian Establishment; however, the call for a revolution of sensibility gives the novel a universal significance, because he believes that modern man's preoccupation with efficiency and

productivity has made him lose touch with what it means to be human.

Symons views Canada's imitation of the United States as the major threat to Canadian culture: " . . . I can see the Macdonald-Cartier 'Highway' (damn the official term 'Freeway' - it sounds like some boxtop prize . . . or, closer to the truth, a come-on to the Yank tourists)".[2] For him, Canadian compacency in the face of American imperialism is a symptom of a much greater problem, so while MacLennan, in Return of the Sphinx, emphasizes the economic factors in Canada's relationship with the United States, Symons, in Place d'Armes, concentrates on exposing the effect that the United States has had on the psychological and spiritual growth of Canadians. When Anderson, the central character who voices Symons's philosophy throughout the novel, considers the Canadian attachment to the cottage pine homes of the past, he calls it the Canadian version of the Abe Lincoln myth: "The thought that Canada, at this late date would be subjected to a pirated and aborted American puritan legend depressed him" (6). Canadians are responsible for the Americanization of their country, because they believe the propaganda of the Canadian Government which is controlled by American business: "'Canadian built - for quality,' and you had the complete picture. The only difference between the Canadian and American stationwagon being that the Canadian had less chrome and cost more" (6). Because of its ability to sell its ideas

through propaganda, he sees the Federal Government as the real culprit, and he blames it and its Royal Commissions for turning Canadians into "second-hand Americans" (93) in their attempts to modernize Canada's image: " . . . & the Military College (dare one still call it 'Royal' - because that too will go soon enough - we'll rechristen it the Federal Military College . . . surreptitiously! - and then by Order-in-Council)" (10-11).

This trend toward modernization is the result of the New Canadian Establishment, which Anderson accuses of putting the whole nation into Royal Commissions: " . . . my own people have put our cultures into national committee. They have deliberately killed any danger of a positive personal response" (47). According to him, Canadian culture has been placed in the hands of Government Committees which he believes are responsible for emasculating their members: "It means you become a member of our eunuchoidal Canada Corps at Ottawa . . . and that you too will impose on our nation a gutless culture in your own self-defaced image" (160). The New Canadian Establishment not only governs the country but has started to infiltrate the hearts and minds of the average Canadians. As he looks over the shoulder of a fellow train passenger on the trip to Montréal, he comments on the book his neighbour is reading: "Started reading: only the chapter head was visible . . . 'how to handle a conference'. Hugh {Anderson} sank in consternation: 'God, the army is everywhere.'" (16).

At the beginning of the novel, Anderson realizes that "He was victim of the very thing he mocked!" (3), and that he too could end up a product of the New Canadian Establishment, and this is the reason that he starts his personal revolution: "What I am doing is rehabilitating my sensibility, and reconstructing a mind that was founded on bad faith. I'm busting out of my box - Cube's revolt!" (162). The Cube is the typical English Canadian: "earnest, composed substantial" and is different from the American Square who, according to Anderson, is merely two-dimensional " . . . like the façade of Mount Vernon, or the White House . . . faces resultant from an instant clapboard culture (preflab)" (60). Although his definition of English Canadians as "unbending" (62) and "constipated" (65) has negative connotations, it gives him some hope for salvation, because he realizes that even unpleasant characteristics are still part of an identity, and this at least gives him something to work with: "They may be full of shit . . . but that is, in the final analysis, a kind of guarantee of salvation; a guarantee that there is some body there to save" (65). These Canadian Cubes are the missing link between "the English Gent and the Amurrican Guy" (62), and this makes them redeemable: "They may simply be Squares full of shit . . . but it is Holy Shit then, and thus the Canadian remains a Square-plus-Something which is better than the Amurrican square-root-of-fuck-all" (65). Because he wants to save English Canadians from the New Canadian Establishment,

Anderson's personal revolution is meant to be an example for all English Canadians. In Symons's Place d'Armes, as in MacLennan's Return of the Sphinx and Cohen's Beautiful Losers, the fate of the individual is associated with the destiny of the nation.

As an example of the New Canadian Establishment's fabricated culture, Anderson uses the new Canadian flag: "that 'maple leaf' . . . it is a Crushed Cube. . . . A flag for Cubes castrated" (79) {second elision mine}. To him, this new flag is a heresy, for it betrays the heritage of the entire country, and, at best, represents the "Honest Ontario Yeoman" of the 1850's: "The new heresy. And then, sociologically, what is it? Easy reply - the flag for the Honest Ontario Yeoman; the Methodist Grit Farmer Squatter - circa 1850!" (79). His attack is on the cultural manipulation and intervention found in the New Canadian Establishment's flag. Since he identifies "the unmanning" (79) as the nature of their heresy, he believes that the New Canadian Establishment is "castrating" the country, and the flag becomes the symbol for his war on this New Canadian Establishment:

> But at least it {the flag} locates, situates, defines, the Canadian Heresy. At least, at last, it allows grounds for attack, for satire, for hate. . . . Defines the New Canadian Establishment. And am I going to have a go at the bastards! Am I ever . . . before they get me, get us all, for ever! (80)

Throughout the novel, the Canadian national identity is presented in terms of male sexual potency, and this is equated with Canada's historic ties to Britain. Anderson explains the present situation created by the New Canadian Establishment to

his friend Bill, who shares his belief that the English Canadian culture becomes sterile without the British Crown: "you can't tell Castratos that the Crown is a question of testicles" (93). Symons is proud of his Loyalist ancestry, which he regards as the legacy of Europe, and he considers the culture of the New Canadian Establishment to be a betrayal of the Crown: "Yes - our potence is somehow tied to the Crown in Canada. And it is being eroded like everything else in our specific English-Canadian culture" (92).[3] He believes that Canada's British legacy is an important part of its heritage; however, like MacLennan in Return of the Sphinx, he realizes that this British heritage is no longer a powerful influence in Canada. According to him, this diminishing of the Crown's importance in Canada is destroying the country, and his belief that Canada cannot exist without its British heritage is diametrically opposed to MacLennan's belief that Canada will become a stronger and more united country when it has outgrown its identification with the British Empire.

When a friend who is going to Ottawa to be the personal assistant to the Minister of Finance admits that he has never achieved a satisfactory relationship with a woman, Anderson interprets this as a sign that he is correct in his estimation that the New Canadian Establishment is perpetuating a national sterility: "And as he said it I realized that I had penetrated to the very heart of the Canadian quandary . . . the endemic gelded quality of our current nationalism" (161). Those in

control of defining the Canadian identity are afflicted with a disease that turns horses, a symbol of male freedom and sexuality, into geldings. He goes on to say: "No wonder the nation flounders. There isn't a convincing hard-on in Ottawa . . . {my elision} (161). This is similar to Cohen's statement in Beautiful Losers: "Do not be deceived: a nation's pride is a tangible thing: it is measured by how many hard-ons live beyond the solitary dream, by the decibels of the female rocket moan" (BL 235). Symons, unlike Cohen who recognizes the importance of the female voice in his vision of a strong nation, blames women for the castration process that is destroying Canada. For the most part, women are presented as negative influences on men whether they are Madonna or Hecate figures, both of which, I might add, represent the traditional male interpretations of women's role in society. George's wife is " . . . the instant matrix. . . . She is the Madonna of these rocks", yet George becomes " . . . another man who married everybody's Mommy. . . . Another dildo. Another man eaten alive lest he dare live" {my elisions throughout} (70). Later, Streicher's wife who fits the idea of Hecate, the Terrible Mother devouring men,[4] is depicted as snapping her jaw shut, and Anderson remarks "another mere male eaten off the spit" (150). Liberated women are presented as "lesbiens-manqués" and "English Canadian Authors' Association types", and they also want to devour him: "They eye me furtive as though they want to eat me, spank me, fuck me, jail me, in

that order" (197). He wants to start his " . . . own suffragette movement - for men" because he believes "Women accomplished theirs in the last hundred years" but in the process " . . . they've undone us" {my elisions} (70). The only recourse for man is to " . . . remake our man . . . we'll have to unlock the Object" {first elision mine} (70). Since Anderson, like the narrator of Book One in Beautiful Losers, is the archetypal English Canadian, his sexual emancipation represents the awakening of Canada's identity. A "suffragette movement" for men becomes part of the "English Canadian Quiet Revolution" that Anderson believes is necessary for the survival of the country, and this is his response to the revolution in Québec (16).

In his search for a Canadian identity, Anderson turns to homosexuality, which becomes his symbolic confrontation with life. He maintains that "No English Canadian, no Anglicanadian, can face up to his own cock. We flee from it" (160). It is in the French Canadian male that he finds his liberation: "fuck the French and Catholic out of him . . . and into me (oh, pray to God I can!)" (225). Symons, like Cohen, is a modern romantic who believes a season in Hell will lead to illumination.[5] Anderson's homosexual encounters become his descent into Hell, for after he has had sexual relations with two teen-age male prostitutes, he feels defiled and the experience becomes part of his spiritual struggle for enlightment: "Have I simply accepted Hell - simply (good Protestant) reassured myself of it . . . my holy

life-insurance? And is this apparent defilement now the prerequisite of Heaven?" (41). As a Canadian Cube in revolt, he goes to Québec to find the life that is denied him in English Canada: " . . . French Canada resurrects me . . . adds the requisite dimension to my Anglo-Cubicularity" (188). He explains his dilemma to his friend Luc: "I had to choose - slow death in conformity - or sudden, vehement, brutal life . . . " (46), and it is only in Québec that he could find the "brutal life" necessary for enlightenment:

> I love it here . . . in the Vieux Quartier . . .
> I am at home. . . . It fulfills something in me . . .
> completely . . . demands a plentitude of response
> from me . . . forces me to flower (I could never say
> that in English you know . . . people would laugh!) (45)

There is no doubt that Anderson sees the French and English in Canada as vital complements of each other: "My mind boggled - of course, a union of English Canadian Cubed-Roots and French Canadian Carnality . . . there is a solution to the American Dream!" (144). Despite this affirmation of how each culture contributes to the Canadian identity, it is their differences that bring Anderson to Québec. Symons considers Place d'Armes to be the answer to MacLennan's Two Solitudes: "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). By having Anderson embrace the French Canadian culture, Symons symbolically bridges the gap that he believes MacLennan portrayed in the relationships of the French and

English in Two Solitudes (1945):[6]

> 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).

Anderson considers English Canadians to be jealous of the French Canadian love of life: " . . . the English Canadian can never pardon you your delight in life . . . let alone enhance your delight of his own free will . . . because he himself is self-castrate. He hates your joy. And fears it - it judges and damns him!" (47). The fear of life stifling English Canada is the consequence of its Protestant background. Throughout the novel, Anderson depicts the most negative characteristics of English Canadians in terms of Protestantism, such as the Maple Leaf flag representing the "Methodist Grit Farmer Squatter" (79). According to him, English Canadians are afraid of life because as Protestants they worship Hell instead of Heaven:[7]

> . . . it is the Protestant Hell - we have inverted Heaven and Hell . . . we have worshipped Hell as Heaven . . . our guarantee of Heaven. And now, because of that, we have to live it out . . . have to pay our way with flesh out of the Hell we smugly established as our guarantee of purity. (212)

The Protestant preoccupation with Hell leads to a disdain for the body, a conviction that Anderson refers to when he says: " . . . my particular Protestant Penitence for the Body Despised and Rejected. Canadian Jansenism. Boys bathing in private at college, and wearing a bathing suit" {my elision} (256).

Patricia Morley describes Puritans as essentially afraid of their emotions, rejecting beauty and joy and maintaining an approach to life that is practical and unimaginative.[8] These are the characteristics of Protestantism that make Anderson turn to the French Canadian Catholic Church for spiritual support in his revolution of sensibility. He believes that this Puritan Ethic is detrimental to the growth of culture in English Canada, for he even blames Protestantism for the English Canadian obsession with reason and logic in his comparison between the thought processes of Protestants and Catholics: "But then it {Catholicism} uses words in a different way from my own Protestant society . . . the Catholic Church uses words to engage an emotional response. We use words to isolate 'facts'" (73). Symons does not find the Catholic Church guilty of preaching the sexual repression that Cohen claims in Beautiful Losers made Catherine Tekakwitha seek mortification of the flesh; however, Symons does recognize the anti-clerical sentiment of the Québec revolutionaries, but even in this he maintains that the Catholic Church has equipped these young French Canadians with the mentality necessary to start a revolution:

> The Catholics are still object-centred. The written word hasn't killed their sensibility - little do they know the plight of Protestants. Little do the young French Canadian anti-clerical revolutionaries yet know that it is their Church that has left them with the fingertips requisite for revolution . . . (128)

To Anderson's dismay, he discovers that the Québec revolution is inadvertently bringing French Canadians closer to English Canadian pragmatism:

> And I am startled now to note with them something that I have unconsciously noted these past days - the new "fonctionnairisme" of the French Canadian . . . the new preoccupation with being a Civil Serviceable. . . . Ironic - that the French Canadians seek that English Canadian nemesis, just at the moment that we English Canadians, conversely, are in search . . . of a renewed sensibility. {second and third elisions are mine} (189)

Though he claims to be startled by this realization, he has known from the beginning of the Quiet Revolution that Québec's revolt against its own past is as essential to its survival as English Canada's need to rediscover its heritage: "French Canada has to kill its past, is strangling in its past . . . it must. But English Canada has suppressed its past, and its job now is to restore that past. Our problems are the inverse . . ." (77) As he travels around Old Montréal, Anderson sees "the people that the Quiet Revolution left behind", and he realizes that the historic predicament of the Québecois has created misfits who are incapable of living in the modern world: "Not one of them looks 'right' - each one is a maimed man : . . almost leprous . . . It is pathetic. I revel in my dismay - no wonder French Canada needed a revolution" {my elisions} (264). These are the descendents of the "habitants", who were the rural French Canadian peasants in the nineteenth century. He is surprised to find people who still fit that description living in modern

Québec: "the tone of the place {a restaurant} is set by an old reproduction of a picture by Massicotte - showing the habitants 'sugaring off': Maria Chapdelaine's Québec. And not dead by a long shot . . . as the habitant-proletariat drinking here now prove" (74). Hémon's image of the French Canadian people as "habitant farmers" who are tied to the land and who will never change came to epitomize Québec nationalism. The Quiet Revolution is a revolt against this image of the French Canadian people.[9] According to Anderson, the "habitant" image is preserved by the English community who project their version of the "habitant" life for the tourists: "There was all this paraphernalia of cute Canadienism . . . exactly the sort of souvenir that the French-Canadian Revolution sought assiduously to destroy" (166).

Symons, like MacLennan, recognizes that Québec's past has been plagued by French Canadian politicians who have sold their people's rights and culture to the English. When Anderson visits a museum, he notes that all the articles have been donated by English Westmount, but that there is only French Canadiana on exhibit: "It's André Laurendeau's Théorie du Roi Nègre again . . . The English Canadian garrison collecting the works of the indigène" {my elision} (118). By using Laurendeau's "Theory of the Negro King", he implies that French Canadian politicians were responsible for helping English Canadians obtain the articles on exhibit in the museum. Although MacLennan alludes to this idea

of the "negro king" in Return of the Sphinx, he is never as explicit as Symons, who not only suggests that Maurice Duplessis, one of the premiers of Québec, was a "negro king", but he implicates the Roman Catholic Church in the graft and corruption of Québec's past:

> Well-kempt peasants. Créditistes. They . . . had sustained Duplessis' dictatorial power for nearly two decades. . . . The Bank had helped Duplessis too. In fact, symbolically enough, the marriage of English-speaking money and the French Catholic Church under Duplessis really meant the birth of the new skyscraping Banque Canadienne Nationale afronting the old Bank of Montreal. {my elisions} (125).

In Place d'Armes, as in Return of the Sphinx and Beautiful Losers, the Québec revolution is associated with the struggle of the black race throughout the world. There is a scene in Old Montréal where a group of English Canadians invade a restaurant and Anderson says the French Canadians watch them: "Like mongrels watching thoroughbreds . . . . This entire restaurant turned over as scenario . . . with live bit players - real nègres, us - the French Canadians . . . the real inhabitants . . . " {first elision mine} (122). At this point, Anderson identifies completely with the French Canadians, and so he too becomes a "real nigger".

Anderson sees French Canadians as a colonized people, for he refers to the English Canadians in the restaurant as the representatives of "The White Canadian Raj" (123). Despite his pride in his British heritage: "And the Royal We is an entire

culture . . . the culture of the private school, the monarchist, the 'intégriste Anglo-Canadien'" {my elision} (90), he feels guilty over the English domination of Canada: "oh - the guilt I felt as an English Canadian then . . . As I watched the French agonize under our history. . . . And knew that . . . my maimed people had maimed this maimed people . . . " {first elision Symons's} (77). He disapproves of the English suppression of French Canadians, because it robs the French of their dignity and forces them to emulate the English in order to succeed. When asked who is buying her antiques, Madame la Propriétaire answers: "It's the same . . . the Westmounters. Few French Canadians . . . and when they do it's the French Canadian who is seeking entry to the Westmount world. The French Canadian still wants to eradicate his past. . . . " (66). Westmount is the traditional home of the Montréal English Establishment, and it is ironic that only French Canadians who are trying to break into this elite English circle are buying antiques, for these antiques would be the remnants of the past that the French Canadian wants to forget.

Despite his understanding of the problems of the French Canadian people, Anderson becomes disillusioned with the Québec revolution: "And in any case the new Quiet Revolution was as Romantic as the rest - it drew heavily on a Romantic Vision of life . . . although that was beginning to run dry" (259). For him, revolution has to be primarily a spiritual movement. The

Quiet Revolution that began with the "Romantic Vision", which defines mankind in terms of his emotions and spirit, had become more concerned with social and political reform: "(And the French-Canadian Revolution is really become merely the French-Canadian need to add Cubic Competence {English Canadian pragmatism} to French-Canadian inspiration)" (144). Anderson believes that the emotional and spiritual life of a country depends on its heritage. As Canada's heritage, that is, its historic identity, is being destroyed by both the New Canadian Establishment and the French Canadian Revolution, he realizes that there is no true revolution going on in either French or English Canada, and that he has truly become an exile in his own land. In this way, Symons differentiates between the Quiet Revolution, which is a romantic movement, and the French Canadian Revolution, which is an exercise in pragmatism.

> So the Canadian Cultural Renaissance - French and English - means truly the death of my Nation. Nor can I join in the New Nation. . . . Their "competence" is the inverse of my entire culture of instinctive civilization. The rage for "competence" is a civil service "culture." (144)

There are two would-be revolutionaries that Symons uses as examples of why both English and French Canada have failed to incite a true revolution. In a letter to his friend, Eric Newman, the author of a book entitled: The Traitor, Anderson explains that Eric's hero is an unsuccessful revolutionary because he " . . . betrayed the betrayal of his country" {my elision} (86). This suggests that Eric stopped half-way, but a

true revolutionary must be committed totally despite the consequences: " . . . he never accepted the implications of his desertion. . . . the hero deserted but never disastered, and came out on the other side. He was a deserter without a disaster. A revolutionary without balls!" {my elisions} (86). The "disaster" would be a life and death situation, and the hero of Eric's novel never put his life on the line because he lacks conviction. Eric's French Canadian counterpart is René Lalonde, who is also a writer with illusions of being a revolutionary, and, like Eric, he is guilty of evading the confrontation with death: "René feared for his life . . . his presence" (247). According to Anderson, this inability to face death and live, results in death: " . . . I militant now. . . . eliciting from René his gradual avowal of a 'long-term death . . . ,' of a slow agony" (249). Anderson knows that the choices open to him will result in some kind of suicide, and it is this realization that gives him the strength to become a revolutionary: "I must choose between 'personal suicide' - self-slaughter - and mere 'social suicide', suicide out of the civil service" (67). As a true revolutionary, he is prepared to face death:

> Either way it is suicide. If I stay constipated and can't write me out, then I'll blast my way out, bodily. And if I can write it - - and am not exhausted by the very living of it - - then it is equally suicide: social, political, economic. (87)

Anderson finds another true revolutionary in the Québec writer Pierre Godin, and through his encounter with him, Anderson

discovers the difference between the suicide of a coward and the suicide of a revolutionary: "I did not suicide then because it would be negative suicide - flight, and fear. Whereas now, this assurance-vie is a positive suicidality - it is affirmation, for joy: truly Citizen's Charter!" (215). Camus maintains that the suicide is a coward who abandons life, while the condemned man, at the moment of death, is truly alive because it is a face-to-face struggle.[10] As revolutionaries, Anderson and Godin have more in common with the condemned man than with the suicide: "the fact that I am at any moment prepared now to kill . . . and to kill myself, to suicide - citizen's suicide! This gives me absolute control - permits absolute presence" (215). The ideas of a "citizen's suicide" and a "Citizen's Charter" raise their confrontation with death to a higher level, because "citizen" suggests that they are willing to die for the benefit of humanity. This definition of the revolutionary as a suicide appears in Sartre's Preface to The Wretched of the Earth: " . . . this new man begins his life as a man at the end of it; he considers himself as a potential corpse".[11] In Return of the Sphinx, MacLennan presents a similar idea when Latendresse remarks that something Lenin once said gives him comfort: "Revolutionaries are dead men on furlough" (RS 132).

Symons, like Cohen, accepts the existential assumption that violence is an act of redemption. Anderson points out that Godin's novel, La Foire aux Puces, is the complement to the novel

that he is writing, because Godin's French Canadian character pursues an English Canadian with the intention of killing him in order to regain his own life, and for Anderson this means that Godin understands that violence is man recreating himself: "Pierre's {Godin's} free flight from the irrelevance of day-to-day, into homicide, into the reacquired right to kill - rather than to be dead alive, rather than to die living" (213).[12] Anderson identifies with the English Canadian character: "And most weird, yet most understandable, his enemy, his target and victim, and vanquisher - alias John Troyer - it is me . . . my kind of English Canadian, that Pierre so patently loves as much as hates" (213). This revelation that he is the person that Godin wants to kill startles him, because he has come to offer himself to Godin: "Oh - weird weird - because I am here to proffer myself to the French Canadian. In belated expiation and release" (213). For him, violence even leads to salvation for the victim, because it is a form of atonement.[13] Although Symons presents violence as an act of redemption, he never takes violence beyond the level of discourse:

> "and holding my own life in my hands, I hold the life of whomsoever I talk in my hands . . . I hold the eternal capacity to kill - the right to kill, which alone permits the right to love. People sense that now when I meet them . . . it may be the last sense that they have - this sense that their life is in question." (215)

The idea that Anderson holds life in his hands can be interpreted as psychological terrorism, for it shows that he is

living on the brink of life and death, and that he is capable of murder, and the average person that he might encounter would find his state of mind rather threatening. Despite this psychological terrorism, there are no violent acts actually performed in Place d'Armes. The closest he comes to a physical assault is when he is having sexual intercourse with André: "fuck - fuck this little bugger . . . fuck back the money he stole . . . fuck this Canadien . . . " {last elision mine} (225). Throughout the novel, Symons never mentions any Québec terrorist activity, and, in this way, he differs from MacLennan and Cohen, both of whom recognize the significance of violence to the Québec revolutionaries in the 1960's. Since he avoids any reference to militant action, Symons's advice to the revolutionary to live as a "suicide" is not a call to guerilla warfare. For him, the revolution is aimed at the renewal of sensibility.

According to Symons, the "suicide" lives with a new heightened sense of his environment: "I am recreating a new kind of responsibility - based on a new kind of relationship with the world around me (in me now)" (115-6). Place d'Armes is a square in Old Montréal, and Symons makes it the hero of the novel because it has the power to awaken Anderson's sensibility: " . . . and the action is all in the sensibility . . . it is an adventure in the senses, intelligibly - thinking at the end of my fingertips" (46). To think at the end of one's fingertips is to rediscover the nature of objects. Throughout the novel,

Anderson experiences the disparity between the essence of an object and its existence. Essence can be defined as the three dimensional form by which an object is recognizable, while its existence is simply that it is there and that it exists beyond its essence or its function.[14] When Anderson visits the candle-shop in Old Montréal, he first identifies the essence of the candles: "I weave amongst them - the knubbly red-and-gold tapers (3' long - not an inch in diameter)" (75). He is not moved by the shapes into which the candles have been molded: " . . . Not the 'statuettes' - they're just labels - saying 'horse, buddha, totem' . . . " {last elision mine}; however, he does experience the existence of the candles as he handles them: "What is being done to me! God - that's it . . . something <u>is</u> being <u>done</u> to me - that <u>is</u> precisely it. I am being done. By these candles . . . am being taken in hand. They are moulding me, moving me" (75). This metaphysical perception of reality is carried into the streets where buildings take on a "Real Presence" (120):

> Suddenly there was immense mass to the façades. And there were the two realities superimposed . . . the first reality, the one he had been used to, of outlines and three dimensional perspective. An incredibly safe reality he now realized - in contrast with the second one . . . which was, if not bestial, at least was decidedly animal . . . those building had moved forward like wild beasts to the kill encircling him - and the Square was La Place d'Armes again! (112-3)

This interpretation of reality is similar to the experiences recorded in Sartre's <u>Nausea</u>. Sartre's character Roquentin says that the statue of Gustave Impétraz has a life to

it: "He does not live, but neither is he inanimate. A mute power emanates from him: like a wind driving me backwards: Impétraz would like to chase me out of the Cour des Hypothèques".[15] All the changes that Roquentin undergoes are related to the presence in objects, and Symons echoes this philosophical interpretation of reality throughout Place d'Armes.[16]

Anderson is frightened when he first encounters the existence of objects: "And the Place d'Armes . . . I ran from it . . . just as I was about to see it again, with ferocious clarity - see it as it has always been, latent in me . . . Why did I run - just as I was about to repossess it?" (41); however, he overcomes this fear, which is transformed into euphoria, when he realizes that the "presence" he has been confronting is that of God: "No man can see God and live!" (267). This is different from Sartre's Roquentin who becomes ill when he embodies existence: "I was there, motionless and icy, plunged in a horrible ecstasy. But something fresh had just appeared in the very heart of this esctasy; I understood the Nausea, I possessed it".[17] As an existentialist, Sartre is an atheist who would never equate "presence" with a God.[18] On the other hand, Symons believes in God as the mystical "presence" in objects and beings, so, although he calls his experience "an open-ended existential adventure" (88), in the final analysis, only his approach is existential not his experience.[19] Anderson comes closer to the

description of a mystic, because he is conscious of God and of his own soul to the extent that it overwhelms all other concerns.[20]

For Anderson, this awakening of his sensibility is his revolt against his English Canadian background: "Everything tells me I've been brought up a deaf-dumb-paralytic . . . cannot see, hear, touch, move. Brought up with an implacable and public-spirited dedication to still-life. Nature morte!" (67). The revolution that Symons initiates in Place d'Armes is meant to create a new kind of world from which a new kind of man will emerge:

> I am possessed instead by a vision of the possibilities, the creative possibilities of this new world I enter. If I can ever master it. A world absolutely accessible to the human spirit and body and mind. . . . But that there is a New World, and that it requires a new kind of Man, and new laws and morality and religion and politics and institutions, that is self-evident. {my elision} (104)

In Place d'Armes, Symons's new Man is similar to Cohen's new Jew in Beautiful Losers, and like Cohen, Symons bases his image on the concept of sainthood.[21] According to Cohen: "A saint is someone who achieves a remote human possibility. It is impossible to say what that possibility is. I think it has something to do with the energy of love" (BL 121). When Symons contemplates his new Man, he comes to the conclusion that he must have the quality of the saint: "A new kind of man. The man who thinks at the end of his fingertips. . . . thinking at the end

of his fingertips: Word made Flesh - of course . . . the kind of Man I want, must have . . . the Saint" {first elision mine} (203). This does not mean that Symons wants to be a saint, but rather it suggests that he wants to perceive reality in the same way as the saint: "Not to be a saint - but to bind to himself that reality of which the harvest was the saint" (229). In the novel, Anderson identifies the French Canadian revolutionary, Godin, as a saint (214-5), and he maintains that it is the confrontation with death that gives them both the right to love: "This gives me absolute control - permits absolute présence. No-one can prevent me from giving what I need to give . . . no-one can prevent me from loving" (215). The capacity to love is the end result of the revolution of sensibility, but it is also the origins of his revolt: "Of course the easy way to label me will be a pederast. . . . But it will evade the central issue . . . which is the capacity to love (much more important even than the capacity to make love!)" {first elision mine} (141).

Symons, like Cohen, wants to witness the destruction of the existing order, but, while Cohen defines the existing order in terms of the imperialism of western civilization, Symons sees the existing order as epitomized in the New Canadian Establishment, which represents the American business mentality in its dedication to the corporate life of the country: "All the others were gelded in giving birth to the New World of us. Amurrican

nemesis . . . nemesis that my people were born to resolve, and have now, all witting, accepted as their Identity" (243). The New Canadian Establishment has become the new religion in Canada: "The new élite. The New Canadian Priesthood. Secular Order! The enemy within. The new ultramontanism - with Ottawa as Rome" (16). Symons sees this as a heresy: "God, here is this law student, already firmly entrenched in the English Canada Heresy - ex officio humanism! It's a form of agnosticism" (15). The New Canadian Establishment dictates the spiritual life of Canadians and in the process it has destroyed Canada's destiny, which is to resolve the American preoccupation with material wealth and efficiency. According to him, Canadians should be the leaders in the revolution of sensibility, for it is their destiny by right of their British and French heritage: " . . . we used to be part of the First Adam . . . the continuous civilization of the Western World. That was our role in the New World. The Americans left us that legacy when they became the Second Adam after 1776 . . . " {first and last elisions mine} (14).

The revolution of sensibility gives the novel a universal significance. Humanity has lost its contact with life through its quest for efficiency and productivity. At one point in the novel, Symons summarizes the entire problem facing mankind as the loss of the land: "Had he known it was a question . . . of the lost Land and the Lost Man . . . and, more, had known that the loss was somehow universal - that Man and the Land had been

lost for all . . . and that somehow they must be restituted" {first and second elisions mine} (233). The restitution will be complete in the New Man who will emerge in the revolution of sensibility, for he will have the grace to embrace nature in the name of the First Adam: "It is the first day . . . The First Day. Genesis!" {my elision} (269).

Place d'Armes records Symons's transformation into the New Man, and it is in the act of writing that he finds life: "To write - to recreate the world from one's own gut. Not to comment upon it, not to footnote it, but to procreate it" (268). This, in itself, is an existential act in that the novel becomes the realization of his revolution.[22] Throughout his novel, he is recreating himself. He uses the novel-within-the-novel framework (Hugh Anderson writing about Andrew Harrison who decides to write a novel about Hugh Anderson) to achieve this sense of "re-creation". As a romantic, Symons, like Cohen, believes in the creative imagination, and the entire novel is his war on "reality" (23). The shift in narrative perspective destroys the traditional point of reference for the reader and this mimics the world he creates: "It's like looking at mirrors in mirrors . . . or rather crystal balls in crystal balls. That's my job now . . . to reinstate the world I've nearly lost" (68). The novel becomes the "Combat Journal" (23) of his exploits in the revolution of sensibility. In recreating himself, he recreates the Canadian identity, but the revolution does not end with his

own renewal of sensibility, and he continues his crusade to destroy the New Canadian Establishment in his next novel, in which the Crushed Cubes of Place d'Armes become the Blandmen of Civic Square.[23] Symons, like Cohen, challenges society to follow his example:

> But the laugh is on them - or does it dawn on them yet? That they attain power impotent to rule over a people gone underground in disgust; rebellion from revulsion (we are too faithful to ourselves to disgust us further with mere revolution. "Rebellion" is revulsion against mismanaged faith. "Revolution" destroys all faith in its own name). Blandebeestie may rule but never reign, which last is all they really want to do.[24]

Notes

[1]This novel is reminiscent of Jean-Paul Sartre's Nausea, in which Antoine Roquentin, a French writer, uses a diary to record his feelings and sensations about the world and people around him. Jean-Paul Sartre, Nausea, trans. Lloyd Alexander (1938; rpt. New York: A New Directions Paperbook, 1964).

[2]Scott Symons, Place d'Armes, (1967; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1978), p. 11. All further references will be taken from this edition and will be cited in the text of the thesis. All elisions appearing in quotations from the novel are in the original unless otherwise indicated.

[3]Charles Taylor records an encounter that took place between the Queen Mother and Symons during the summer of 1962. When the Queen Mother asked Symons where his people originated, Symons replied: "Two centuries ago, Ma'am, from the Thirteen Colonies, as Loyalists to your Crown. . . . We are still loyal to your Crown, Ma'am. We are your Majesty's Royal Americans". Charles Taylor, Six Journeys: a Canadian Pattern. (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1977), p. 191.

[4]Cirlot describes Hecate as the Terrible Mother who devours men. She is the evil side of the feminine principle and is responsible for "madness, obsession and lunacy". J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 143.

[5]Although I am indebted to Djwa for this information concerning modern romantics, she does not mention Symons in her article. Sandra Djwa, "Leonard Cohen, Black Romantic" in Leonard Cohen: The Artist and His Critics, ed. Michael Gnarowski, (Montréal: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1976), pp. 96-7.

[6]Elspeth Cameron, "Journey To The Interior: The Journal Form in Place d'Armes", Studies in Canadian Literature, (Summer 1977), p. 272.

[7]Taylor defines Symons's attack on English Canada as a hatred for Calvinism: "While the Enemy would appear in different forms, it would always enact the same vetoes; a stern Calvinist suppression of beauty and feeling". Six Journeys, p. 208.

[8]Patricia Morley, The Immoral Moralists: Hugh MacLennan and Leonard Cohen, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1972), p. 5.

[9]In Return of the Sphinx, Joe Lacombe challenges the ideology presented in Maria Chapdelaine. (This thesis p. 20)

[10]Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus, trans. Justin O'Brien, (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), pp. 40-1.

[11]Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon, trans. Constance Farrington, (1961; rpt. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1979), p. 23.

[12]Sartre explains the process of violence that results in man recreating himself in terms of the revolutions against imperialism in the Third World: " . . . to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remains a dead man, and a free man . . . " Preface to The Wretched of the Earth, p. 22.

[13]Sartre says that " . . . violence, like Achilles' lance can heal the wounds that it has inflicted". Preface to The Wretched of the Earth, p. 30.

[14]Hayden Carruth, Introduction to Nausea by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Lloyd Alexander, (1938; rpt. New York: A New Directions Paperbook, 1964), p. xi.

[15]Nausea, pp. 28-9.

[16]The philosophy of sensibility can be traced to Longinus and his essay "On the Sublime", the theories of which became popular in the eighteenth century. In Place d'Armes, Symons borrows the language of existentialism to convey his concept of sensibility, for he says that the novel is "an existential adventure in La Place d'Armes" (234).

[17]Nausea, p. 131.

[18]Sartre says: "To exist is simply to be there; those who exist let themselves be encountered . . . I believe there are people who have understood this. Only they tried to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, causal being". Nausea, p. 131.

[19]In an interview with Gibson, Symons admits that he has been influenced by the mystic writers, such as Julian of Norwich and St. John of the Cross. Graeme Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists, (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1973), p. 306.

[20]I am indebted for this definition of a mystic to Evelyn Underhill, The Essentials of Mysticism, (New York: E.P. Dutton & CO., Inc., 1960), p. 2.

[21]Symons compares his situation to Cohen's and decides that it would be easier to write about revolution if he were a Jew, because the Jew is " . . . a member of that fraternity of exiles . . . " {my elisions} (140).

[22]Sartre's Roquentin comes to a similar conclusion at the end of Nausea. p. 178.

[23]Taylor says that the Blandmen in Civic Square are all those English Canadians who, according to Symons, are terrified of passion. Six Journeys, p. 215.

[24]Scott Symons, Civic Square, (Montréal: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1969), p. 84.

CONCLUSION: THE SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

In Return of the Sphinx, Beautiful Losers, and Place d'Armes, revolution is seen as something beyond the realm of politics. MacLennan, Cohen, and Symons discuss the political and social issues that led to the Quiet Revolution; however, they interpret these issues as symptoms of the spiritual anxiety facing humanity. Because they see the Quiet Revolution in its universal context, it becomes their archetype for revolution in the twentieth century, for they believe that revolution is a response to the spiritual deprivation of modern civilization, which has neglected the spiritual needs of mankind. Since they define the problems of the twentieth century in terms of spiritual anxiety, they see religion and politics as the two most important systems governing mankind, because both these systems appeal to the emotions on some level, and are an outlet for the release of spiritual energy. According to MacLennan and Symons, the interaction of politics and religion becomes dangerous to the survival of the human race when politics becomes a form of religion. MacLennan suggests that politics is a surrogate religion for people who have lost their faith because many of them turn to nationalism to fill the void left by their religious beliefs (RS 69). Symons accuses the New Canadian Establishment of taking the place of religion in Canada (PdA 16), and since the New Canadian Establishment represents the American

business mentality, his accusation that it is destroying the spiritual life of Canadians has wider implications. For Cohen, religion becomes detrimental to the welfare of humanity when it becomes a weapon for some political purpose. He equates the Christianization of the Indians with the Nazi persecution of the Jews (BL 248), and throughout the novel, he implies that the Jesuits were the fathers of imperialism in the New World.

According to MacLennan, the world is an imperfect place, and even though humanity has tried to invent systems by which to maintain a sense of order, without a faith in God, this imperfect world becomes a place of chaos where people can find causes for which to die, yet they cannot find reasons to live. Because he believes political revolutions are the products of the misguided emotions of people who are trying to find a meaning for their lives, he makes no distinction between political and spiritual revolution. In his estimation, the real problem in the world is not the collapse of political institutions but the disintegration of spiritual beliefs, and to prove his point he contends that there is no political justification for the violence prevalent in modern society. For him, the meaning of life, which is spiritual fulfillment, cannot be found in political revolution. He believes each individual has to come to terms with the meaning of life on his own, and it is the ones who have never realized their own individuality who "crack up": "Some of them will do anything - no matter how hopeless, criminal or idiotic - merely

to have people mention their names and recognize that they exist" (RS 267). In a world devoid of a universal concept of God, he maintains that spiritual fulfillment can be resolved only on an individual basis, hence, he has no general solution for the spiritual problems of the human race; he does, however, offer advice to the individual on how to live in a world that he believes has gone mad. In Ainslie's last attempt to reason with Daniel before their final confrontation, he tells him he must live like a civilized man:

> The only way a civilized man can survive and function is to live like Robin Hood. That's what you've been trying to do yourself - live like a civilized man and make a new world that's civilized and not raw material for computers and exploiters. But you haven't learned how to fight yet. It's guerrila warfare, don't you see? (RS 275).

MacLennan believes that mankind will be saved by the efforts of individuals rather than by revolutions, which only add to the already existing problems. His faith that only individual effort will save mankind is apparent in his using Robin Hood as a model. Robin Hood fought a corrupt system of government in the Middle Ages, and although he disagreed with the practices of the government, he did not incite a revolution to overthrow it, instead he did his best as an individual to improve the lives of those who became the victims of the system. His ability to contribute to the betterment of society, even though the entire system was against him, indicates that Robin Hood was a civilized man. In Ainslie's advice to Daniel to live like a

civilized man, MacLennan presents his concept of what it means to be human. Because man became civilized through using his intellect, he implies that man's ability to reason differentiates him from the animals. For him, man's inventions, such as the computer and the Bomb, are the products of the creative faculties, and he suggests that unless man's inventions are controlled by reason society becomes "raw material" for political exploiters and opportunists.

In sharp contrast to MacLennan's rejection of revolution as an answer to the spiritual problems that are besetting mankind is the solution presented by Cohen and Symons, both of whom see revolution as the only means to stop the spiritual decay of humanity. To Cohen, the world is in a state of chaos, but love helps to keep a sense of order in this chaos: "Contact with this energy {love} results in the exercise of a kind of balance in the chaos of existence" (BL 121). As he sees it, the world in which he lives is built on the suffering and oppression of humanity, and so he maintains that the old order has to be annihilated before humanity will be free to start anew. According to him, the old order is founded on violence, and, therefore, it will never be overthrown without violence. Since violence is an act of redemption, it is a necessary prelude to spiritual regeneration, and since love creates a balance in the chaos of existence, he advocates violence out of his love for humanity: "All I heard was pain, all I saw was mutilation" (BL 221). Although he

attacks the established order, which is essentially political, his revolution is not based on a political ideology, for he wants to liberate the soul of man through spiritual, political, sexual, and psychological confrontations of the systems that the human race has created. Such confrontations will prevent political revolution, which is the ultimate weapon for the suppression of mankind, because it is merely an extension of the political ideologies found in the old order. The political world controls religious beliefs, it uses social conventions, including sexual behavior, for its own purposes, and it is responsible for the psychological conditioning, which makes man accept his role as a victim. Cohen sees revolution as a creative act in that it is a means by which the creative imagination can find a release in a world of suffering. As F. says: "Thus new systems are forced on the world by men who simply cannot bear the pain of living with what is" (BL 69).

Cohen, like MacLennan, recognizes that God has been denied a place in modern civilization: "Though mountains danced before them they said that God was dead. Though his shrouds were hoisted the naked God did live" (BL 199). Although humanity has chosen to ignore God, God has not given up on man: "God never sickened. . . . God never died. God was ruler though his funeral lengthened. . . . Though they boasted solitude God was at their side" (BL 197-8). With his revolution, Cohen wants to bring God back into the consciousness of mankind. He equates God with the

creative imagination: "The New Jew is the founder of Magic Canada, Magic French Québec, and Magic America" (BL 203). Because Magic is the expression of the creative imagination, he associates Magic with God: "God is alive. Magic is afoot" (BL 197). Cohen's wish to release the creative imagination differs from MacLennan's wish to keep it under the control of reason, because Cohen defines what it means to be human according to the creative imagination, which, in his estimation, can produce either a Hitler or a Jesus, both of whom were human. For him, being human means having the capacity for good and evil, both of which exist beyond reason and logic.

Symons, like Cohen, suspects reason and logic, but he does so because he believes that without love and passion the world becomes sterile, and he maintains that mankind's preoccupation with reason and logic is destroying the love and passion of humanity. For him, there is a distinction between political and spiritual revolution, and he uses the Quiet Revolution and what he calls the French Canadian Revolution to explain this distinction. He says that the French Canadian Revolution is a political movement, and in his definition of it, he suggests that political revolutions are exercises in pragmatism and are just as responsible for killing humanity's sensibility as is the American business mentality, because political revolutions are more concerned with improving the economic and social conditions of mankind than with enhancing humanity's sensitivity and its

awareness of life. The Quiet Revolution is essentially a romantic movement, and its romantic characteristics make it comparable to his revolution of sensibility, which is meant to awaken humanity to the metaphysical reality implicit in existence and to free mankind from its fear of passion: "I cry 'too little for the sensibility,' when all our intellectuals moan 'too little for their minds'" (PdA 11).

Sexual emancipation is identified as an essential part of spiritual renewal because man is made up of body, mind, and soul:

> I am possessed instead by a vision of the possibilities, the creative possibilities of this new world I enter. . . . A world absolutely accessible to the human spirit and body and mind. . . . Provided we have the courage to move from one dimension into another. {my elisions} (PdA 104)

Anyone who concentrates on only one aspect of man - body, mind, or soul - traps himself in one dimension, and the denial of other dimensions that make up man results in a world of non-existence, a state which Symons defines in terms of the New Canadian Establishment: "Everything tells me I've been brought up a deaf-dumb-paralytic . . . cannot see, hear, touch, move. Brought up with an implacable and public-spirited dedication to still-life. Nature-morte!" (PdA 67). The world that Symons wants to "recreate" (PdA 268) is based on the creative faculties of man, and his definition of what it means to be human is similar to Cohen's in that Symons's concept of being human is also associated with the creative imagination. For Symons, there can be no love or passion without the creative imagination.

In Return of the Sphinx, Beautiful Losers, and Place d'Armes, MacLennan, Cohen, and Symons express their love of life and their love for humanity. MacLennan shows his love by his rejection of political revolution and by his concern for the spiritual welfare of the individual in society. Cohen's love is an essential part of his demand for revolution, because he believes that violence will ultimately alleviate the suffering of humanity. For Symons, his revolution of sensibility is an act of love because it confirms his belief in mankind. According to Camus there is only one truly serious philosophical question: Is life worth living? In writing these novels, MacLennan, Cohen, and Symons declare their belief that life is not only worth living, but that it is also worth fighting for in order to improve life for all of humanity.

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