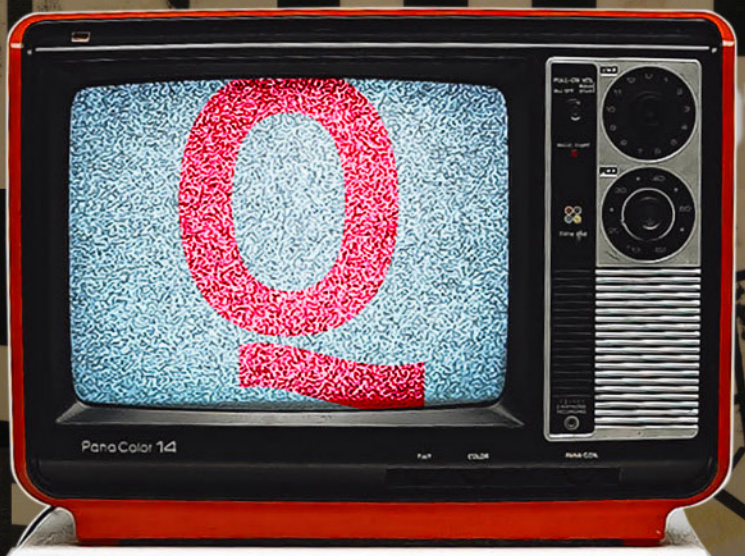
SYNOPTIQUE

An Online Journal of Film and Moving Image Studies



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This full issue has been assembled in 2021 to unify the formatting of the older journal editions.

The cover and individual articles have been reformatted from their original HTML dependent forms. Some reference images have been lost due to the age of the original site.

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Letter From the Editor

Lindsay Peters & Olivier Creurer

Synoptique 13 brings Quebecois cinema into focus, and it is through this distinctive cinematic perspective that our contributors explore the contradictions produced by dominant discourses of identity. The marginal, subjective realities examined in this issue centre on questions of queer identity, the demoralizing, transitory state of childhood, the sterility of landscape, and the oppressive notion of a singularly multicultural community. Many of the articles found here came from an MA seminar on Queer Canadian Cinema; all make extensive use of the work of Michel Foucault, be it through the lens of human sexuality or biopolitical theory. It was our original intention to use this issue as an opportunity to explore Canadian cinema; yet we were more than happy to find ourselves with a wealth of writing on the very place which is, for all of us at Synoptique, a definitive part of our own divided identities.

In this issue we've also introduced what we hope to make a recurring feature, Spotlight on Concordia Film Production. This section will look at the people and events that represent the current state of filmmaking at Concordia. Take a look at Amanda D'Aoust's interview with filmmaker and Concordia professor Mike Rollo for the inaugural installment.

Many, many thanks to each contributor and editor on this issue – and the design you see before you is all thanks to the talent and time of Olivier Creurer. And, of course, there wouldn't be a Synoptique without the continuing guidance and advice of Adam Rosadiuk.
– *Lindsay*

On the Design of *Synoptique 13*:

This issue's banner was created by using various photographs of two charts used to gauge a film camera's accuracy: the resolution chart and the Century Optics chart, both of which were found in the recesses of Concordia's film depot. Without them, we'd end up with a lot of angry filmmakers.
– *Olivier*

EDITOR'S NOTE (2021): The comment on the design of Synoptique 13 refers to the original formatting on the previous version of the Synoptique website, the design is the basis for the current cover design, or it can be found preserved in the legacy version of this edition.

Queering Childhood: *An Examination of Claude Jutra's* ***Dreamspeaker***

Kate Rennebohm

Through a close reading of Claude Jutra's *Dreamspeaker* (1976), Kate Rennebohm offers an exploration of the breakdown of the traditional notion of 'child' as identity. Particularly through forms of silence and spectatorial address, Jutra opens up discursive spaces that can be seen as queer, thus breaking down the traditional connotations of innocence and ignorance commonly associated with childhood.

In his book *The Romance of Transgression in Canada*, Tom Waugh describes a critical concern surrounding the work of Québécois director Claude Jutra, and Jutra's preoccupation with children as subjects of his films:

> ***Jutra's sense of [growth, education, socialization]…is channeled and deepened through the physicality of his pubescent heroes and through his eroticization of their pedagogic interactivity. Jutra the poet of youthful learning cannot be separated from the Jutra whose erotic fulfillment derives from engagement in that process. This is the essence of Jutra's work. Here is the terror it has held for critics and film historians, here are the secret and the courage that his closest collaborators couldn't face (442).***

It is this 'terror' that I would like to explore in an examination of Jutra's 1976 television film *Dreamspeaker*, a film which presents one of the most heartbreaking visions of childhood found in the Canadian film canon. Through a close reading of the film we will see that Jutra breaks down and disrupts traditional categories, particularly the notion of 'child' as an identity, and opens discursive spaces which can, in effect, be seen as queer. It is in these spaces, which largely figure in the film in the forms of silence and spectatorial address, that Jutra is able to introduce sexuality into a film about childhood without trespassing into such negative notions as pedophilia or predation. Through this examination of Jutra's techniques, I will attempt to break through some of the critical silence surrounding Jutra's queer authorial status (Waugh 110).

Dreamspeaker originally aired on the CBC on January 23, 1977, as part of the CBC's For the Record anthology series. The film, set in British Columbia, marked Jutra's second film for the series (the first being ADA, also shown in 1977) and his second production outside of Quebec. The film follows Peter, a troubled eleven year old orphan, as played by Ian Tracey. After Peter burns a building down, he is sent to juvenile detention centre by, presumably, his foster parents. Extremely unhappy, Peter escapes and eventually comes to live with an older Native man and his younger, mute friend. As Peter begins to recover in the company of the two men, the RCMP burst in and return Peter to the institution. The older man dies of natural causes shortly thereafter and both the younger man and Peter kill themselves, violently. *Dreamspeaker* was written by Anne Cameron (aka Cam Hubert) and, as such, shares its authorial voice between both Cameron and Jutra – Cameron's influence is particularly evident in the film's depiction of native beliefs and spiritualism. Delineating exactly whose influence upon the film led to each of the various aspects I will be discussing is more, unfortunately, than

can be addressed here. As such, I will be working from the admittedly general assumption that, as Jutra picked Cameron's script to direct, he felt his own artistic aims and concerns were mirrored in Cameron's writing.

One of the concerns shared between Cameron and Jutra was that of a fascination with the lives of children; Jutra "was always interested in children; he established with them very privileged relationships." (Werner Nold, quoted in Waugh 439) This remark, of course, about an older man enjoying the company of children not biologically his own, already sends up red flags of concern over the impropriety of such a relationship and, implicitly, the safety of said children. Why such a response? In his *History of Sexuality,* Michel Foucault ties this viewpoint to a "a pedagogization of children's sex" (104) which amounted to "A double assertion that practically all children indulge or are prone to indulge in sexual activity; and that…this sexual activity posed physical and moral, individual and collective dangers; children were defined as "preliminary" sexual beings…astride a dangerous dividing line (104).It is this notion of a 'dangerous' childhood sexuality, which may presumably be ignited by exposure to anything resembling adult sexuality, which has led to a rather hysterical separation of the two, and a demonization of any adult who would threaten to cross that boundary. However, it is overly simplistic to dismiss the concern around such horrifying problems as child sexual abuse as mere manifestations of a discourse about children – a discourse which has taken "on a consistency and gained an effectiveness in the order of power" (Foucault 104). As such, it is important to delineate how this discourse around children can and does work to create a certain view of children, and to distinguish its functions from actual concerns of mistreatment of children.

As a starting point for this delineation, one could note that Waugh's assertion that Jutra's filmmaking is marked by a "centrality of intergenerational eros and mentorship," (440) could be seen to place Jutra astride that dangerous dividing line himself. This concept of intergenerational eros hinges, in Jutra's films, on the "elder-bachelor mentor figure;" (106) it is through this figure that "the hero discovers…a hitherto unarticulated alternative model for the masculine self, a redeemer of stigma, and this intergenerational socialization process has a more or less explicit eroticized gloss" (106). In order to address the relationship between this 'eroticized gloss' and questions of child sexuality, we must first chart Jutra's particular presentation of the notion of 'childhood' itself.

As Foucault himself notes, no single discourse on a subject becomes definite: "we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies" (100). According to this, then, the prevalent notion of children as innocent figures to be protected is not an inescapable conclusion, then, but rather part of a "complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (Foucault 101). I would argue that, in the ways in which Jutra presents the character of Peter in *Dreamspeaker*, Jutra resists and refigures the dominant discourse of childhood through a foregrounding of contradiction and opposition within Peter and the world he inhabits.

As I mentioned previously, *Dreamspeaker* has a tragic, heartbreaking quality; while this can largely be attributed to the film's grisly ending, I noted it also in the films' lack of condescension towards Peter as a character. Far from being given the one-dimensional motivations, or psychological explanations, so prevalent in 'troubled child' characters of more conventional films, Peter's character is remarkable in his multi-dimensionality. In fact, at times, Peter, as a character, seems to border on incoherence, according to more conventional representations of character in film. As an audience, we receive almost no information about Peter's background; although there is an implication that he has been in more than one foster home, we never learn the exact details. He behaves in contradictory ways and we are often given no understanding of the motives behind Peter's erratic actions. In her article "*Critical Categories and the (Il)logic of Identity*" Angela Stukator writes that "discourses on identity which posit coherence, unity and wholeness – whether they are cinematic discourses or scholarly discourses on cinematic representations – must be seen as examples of our insatiable desire to fix identity despite the impossibility of this desire" (118). Stukator also writes that the way to move away from these false, 'fixed' identities is to foreground, in a film's characters, "internal difference, contradictions, and tensions which could potentially blur the boundaries of a category" (119). It is through this rubric that I believe we can explore the ways in which Jutra breaks down the 'identity' of childhood, and thus open up ways of looking at and understanding a young person without the notions of innocence and ignorance traditionally tied to that identity.

I have already outlined some of the ways in which Peter is presented as a character with 'internal contradictions.' In his book on Jutra's career, Jim Leach also focuses on the ambiguity and contradictions of Peter's character as presented to the audience. By comparing the film to the novel which Cameron wrote from the screenplay, Leach comes to the conclusion that "the film maintains a high degree of ambiguity, refusing to settle for either the rational or spiritual explanations [concerning Peter's troubled behaviour]" (204). Leach adds that "the film uses [fire] as a striking opening image that associates the boy's troubles with elemental forces and suggests that they can never be fully explained" (204). The workers at the institution are similarly stumped by Peter's attacks – in which Peter tries to strangle himself – and cannot find any explanation or treatment. When the two native men try to help Peter control his attacks, they have more success, but there is no easy solution; the older man states that Peter will likely be plagued by evil spirits for the rest of his life. That the film not only does not offer an explanation for Peter's behaviour but goes so far as to suggest that, perhaps, there is no single explanation, and no way to simply erase Peter's 'internal tensions,' brings the film into conjunction with Stukator's breakdown of the 'logic of identity.' In addition to Peter's attacks, Peter's personality also manifests contradictions:

> ***Two sequences…bring out a "schizophrenic" division in [Peter's] personality between an obsessive desire for order and outbursts of violence: in the dining hall, an older boy taunts him for his care in laying out his cutlery, and Peter pushes his soup bowl in the boy's face and violently attacks him; when the other boys rapidly change in the locker room, he carefully folds his clothes before compulsively swimming up and down the pool (Leach 205-206).***

In Leach's remarks, we can see that the film presents Peter's behaviour as indications of clear 'divisions' in his personality. While it would have been simple enough to have Peter explain to some other character in the film his motivations for these seemingly incompatible behaviours, the film removes this option as well – at least initially: "Peter has earlier… refus[ed] to speak, frustrating the adults at the institution but also denying the spectator verbal explanations for the character's thoughts and behavior" (Leach 207). Throughout the film, Ian Tracey's spectacular performance as Peter often confounds our expectations by denying us emotional explanations for Peter's behaviour as well; his face will be seemingly devoid of emotion for long periods, only to shift dramatically and almost instantaneously to an emotional register without a clear reason. An example of this occurs in the scene in which the older native man confronts Peter, at the dinner table, about his fire-setting: Peter's normally imperturbable face, over the space of a cut, gives way to an expression of such agony, pain, and remorse that the mere speed at which Peter arrived at this emotional state indicates to the audience that we have not had access to Peter's actual emotions prior to this moment, and hence cannot take for granted that we will ever fully know Peter's emotional state. Peter's 'schizophrenic' behaviour and verbal and emotional opacity of motivation present two ways in which the film can be seen to 'blur the category' of childhood through a foregrounding of disunity and incoherence in Peter's character.

The ending of *Dreamspeaker* further refutes any attempt to place Peter in a traditional child-character role. This is accomplished first through the absolute brutality of the final turn of events. As Waugh points out, this violence contradicts expectations about the usual trajectory of a child-character: "the violence in *Dreamspeaker* especially is so incommensurate with the narrative premises of the coming-of-age tradition" (107). That Peter, as the main character of a coming-of-age film, dies presents an occurrence which unusual enough in of itself. That Peter kills himself, and Jutra chooses to show the audience Peter's hanging body, blue face, and broken neck, foregrounds the death to such an extent that it is very difficult to think of Peter in the normal terms of 'childhood.' Brutal, selfinflicted death brought into contact with the discourse of children as innocent individuals to be protected is, as Waugh says, incommensurable. Finally, the last shot of the film further troubles our understanding of Peter: through a visual return to an earlier, happier scene and a voice-over in which the older Native man remarks that death is only part of a larger cycle, the film "infuses posthumous memory and learning onto the final cataclysm, retroactive wisdom and absolution" (Waugh 107). That the film confuses the traditional Western boundary between life and death presents a final avenue by which the audience's view of Peter as a 'normal' child is upset.

Stukator's argument that 'blurring' traditional categories of identity through foregrounding irreducible contradictions within a character presents an avenue through which Jutra is able to problematize the popular discourse concerning children. A parallel avenue to Stukator's treatment of contradictions can also be

found in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's writings on the various discourses around sexuality. In *Epistemology of the Closet,* she takes a deconstructive stance, in order

> ***to demonstrate that categories presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions – heterosexual/homosexual, in this case – actually subsist in a more unsettled and dynamic tacit relation according to which… each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted as at once internal and external to term A (10).***

Sedgwick, then, promotes addressing the binarisms constructed around sexuality in such a way to foreground that the fact they are a discursive construction, and, through this, open up the possibility of discursive spaces not marked by a need to create oppositions and binaries – in effect, a queer space. Sedgwick also discusses the ways in which sexuality, as a discourse, is linked with other questions of, and discourses around, identity:

> **In accord with Foucault's demonstration… that modern Western culture has placed what it call sexuality in a more and more distinctly privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge, it becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations by which we know (3).**

Through these remarks, we can see that Sedgwick's deconstructive stance toward binarisms traditionally associated with sexuality shares a common drive with Stukator's move to blur the categories harnessed to produce traditional notions of identity.

The question then becomes, how does sexuality enter into *Dreamspeaker*'s resistance to the popular discourse of childhood? At first glance, sexuality seems almost absent from the film. There is an exception to this, however, early in the film: during his first night at the institution Peter dreams of a grotesque adult couple engaging in sexual intercourse in front of him. That this dream upsets Peter very much – he wets his bed – would seem to play into the notion of children as individuals to be protected and separated from sexuality. This view, however, is, I believe, a red herring and, in fact, only one part of the film's much larger address of sexuality and its overall tendency toward multiplicity and heterogeneity. In order to discuss the film's presentation of sexuality, however, we must first take into account the rather contradictory voice of silence. In his discussion of sexuality, Foucault notes, "There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things…There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourse" (27) Foucault also remarks that silences can "loosen [power's] holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance." (101) These arguments, then, present a different way in which to address evidence of sexuality as a discourse in *Dreamspeaker*.

One way in which *Dreamspeaker* foregrounds sexuality through silence is by making largely absent that thing which is so closely tied to sexuality: gender. The film is almost entirely devoid of women; as Leach notes, aside from the social worker seen earlier in the film, "the only other women to appear in the film are Peter's "dream mother" (so identified in the final credits) and Queen Elizabeth II [in a portrait]. These two women appear only briefly, but they represent the pressures of sexuality and power that provoke Peter's apparently irrational behaviour" (Leach 205). Leach's remark indicates that the lack of gender representation in the film (as Sedgwick notes, gender is a relational concept and as such, requires two or more terms to be present (31)) links its few appearances to sexuality automatically. Leach's statement also points out a larger silence in the film – the silence concerning Peter's body and his own sexuality. Although Peter is likely on the cusp of puberty, at age 11, there is never the slightest mention of this fact in the film. While Peter is obviously troubled by his body – as shown in the 'compulsive' swimming scene and his physical attacks on himself – there is never any attempt by an adult to address this, which is particularly striking in the case of the institution's doctor. This aspect of the film is interesting in that Peter's attacks could also be read as being, in some ways, the result of his separation from the discourse of sexuality and hence, his own body.

Another absence, or silence, in the film is linked to the unequal presence of the female gender; this is the fact that the two Native men are both bachelors. As described by Waugh, this has the effect of creating a "celibacy anxiety" in which the two men are, in effect, placed in a queer space by virtue of their unexplained choice to remain single (38-41). Interestingly, this aspect is mirrored to some extent in Peter himself – not, of course, by a choice to remain single, but by

the fact that Peter seems to have had relatively little contact with the opposite sex. When he escapes the institution, Peter does not seek out a 'mother-figure' but instead willingly accompanies the two Native men home; while, reductively, this could be attributed to the grotesque mother figure seen earlier, this explanation is inadequate as Peter has obviously been mistreated by adults of both genders. In these ways, the silences around the bachelorhood of the two men and Peter's comfort with men present two more ways in which the film foregrounds questions of sexuality. These two aspects of the film also function in terms of Sedgwick's rubric of breaking down the binarisms of heterosexual/homosexual.

And so, we arrive at the final way in which the film foregrounds sexuality in relation to the child Peter and thus crosses a boundary and problematizes the traditional discourse concerning childhood. This final point is also the most important in terms of addressing the 'terror' that Jutra's eroticization of his young male characters has caused for critics. This final point is that of the film's spectatorial address. Waugh's focuses on one specific scene in the film as the pivotal example of 'intergenerational eros:' this is the "sacramental skinny-dipping scene" (107) or the "ecstatic skinny-dipping scene" (439). In this scene Peter and the younger Native man play gleefully in a stream, naked, as the older man watches and laughs from the bank. Before exploring this scene further I feel it is important to note that I do not believe there is any narrative sexualized aspect to this scene; I do not feel that the film indicates there is any sexual attraction indicated between the three characters here – narratively, the scene is simply an exercise in joyful freedom.

That being said, there is, of course, something else going on this scene; the way that Jutra presents the scene does allow very clearly for a visual enjoyment of Peter and the younger man's bodies. This scene fits with Waugh's discussion of Jutra's films *Le Dément Du Lac Jean Jeunes* (1948) and *Mouvement Perpetual* (1949) when he notes that certain scenes "vibrate…with intense and conflicted undercurrents of homoerotic desire – whether conscious or unconscious, we may never know" (438). And so, the eroticization of the male bodies in this sequence functions on a level between the director and object and audience and object (of course, only if the audience responds to it in such a way), not as an implication of pedophilia or predation upon Peter by the older men in the narrative. This spectatorial aspect of the film also works in tandem with the other points to open up a queer space outside strict distinctions of heterosexual and homosexual.

In my analysis of *Dreamspeaker*, I have attempted to put forward a critical rubric for addressing Claude Jutra's queer authorial status. In *Dreamspeaker*, Jutra works toward a presentation of children which falls outside of the traditional protective and condescending discourse around children, as described by Michel Foucault. By looking at Jutra's presentation of children in terms of Angela Stukator's arguments about the 'logic of identity,' I have argued that Jutra effectively 'blurs' the category of childhood. The same breakdown of binarisms and categories also brings Jutra's presentation of Peter into the realm of Sedgwick's discussion of queer spaces. By treating the identity of 'child' as something which does not require condescension and protection from other discourses, Jutra opens a space into which he places sexuality in relation to childhood. Working within this refiguration of the discourse of childhood, Jutra is able to insert a spectatorial view of his young character which may be read as erotic and yet does not threaten or mistreat that character. While others may argue that this sort of an address presents a slippery slope in terms of treatment of children, I would only say this: in the film *Dreamspeaker*, Jutra presents a portrait of a child with the same respect and tenderness ever extended to the treatment of an adult character in a film.

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Edited by Zoe Heyn-Jones

Queering the Québécois and Canadian Child in Jean-Claude Lauzon's Léolo

Alain Chouinard

In his analysis of Jean Claude- Lauzon's Léolo, Alain Chouinard argues that the destabilizing queer sexuality depicted through the marginal spaces of Léolo's imagination works to undercut the pure laine images of childhood in Québec. According to Chouinard, the hybridity of cultural iconography in Lauzon's film, when combined with an explicit and controversial portrayal of child sexuality, ultimately aestheticizes a resistance to French-Canadian nationalism.

Amidst the 1992 Parliament debates on a child pornography law orchestrated by Justice Minister Kim Campbell in Canada, [1] Jean-Claude Lauzon released *Léolo* (1992), a film set in the Montréal of the late 1950s to early 1960s. The partially autobiographical film [2] depicts the turbulent childhood of Léo, a 12 year old child, who gradually discovers his own sexuality and, through his new Italian identity as "Léolo" and an imaginary Italian landscape, seeks to escape the highly restrictive adult world of Québec's Montréal. While *Léolo* was relatively well received at the time, its release, nevertheless, resulted in several negative reactions in Canada that were explicitly and implicitly directed towards its nightmarish depiction of Léolo's childhood within Québec and its images of child sexuality.

This paper will seek to illustrate how *Léolo*'s depiction of child sexuality and the protagonist's hybrid cultural identity shapes a destabilizing queer identity. This identity undermines the centripetal and idealistic manifestations of nationalistic identity that are embedded within Canada's child pornography law and Québecois culture and upon which Canadian and Québécois adults depend for a false sense of superiority. Specifically, Léolo's queer identity rejects the child pornography law's nationalistic discourse of childhood innocence and its erasure of child sexuality. The film conveys this subversion through its representation of Montréal's education system and the parental surveillance of the Léolo's body. Léolo's queer identity is further reinforced through his search for marginal and heterotopic spaces in which he can express his queer sexuality, a narrative trajectory which parallels that of other queer characters in Canadian cinema.

Léolo's unstable 'queer' subjectivity is complemented by his cultural hybridity as well as his deviation from the image of hetero-masculinity embodied by Fernand, both of which invert the unifying images of nationalism and adult hetero-masculinity seen in Québec cinema including Lauzon's first film *Un Zoo La Nuit* (1987). The film's disembodied voice-over then enunciates this unstable form of subjectivity and produces an ambiguous confession of child sexuality that resists its absorption into centripetal categories informed by Québecois and Canadian discourses on childhood, nationalism, and hetero-masculinity.

In *The History of Sexuality* (1976), Michel Foucault argues that, since the eighteenth century, the structures of power in Western societies have contributed to the "pedagogization of children's sex"; consequently, child sexuality became a potential cause of "physical and moral, individual and collective dangers" [3]. Rather than accept the sexual potential of children, they were

labeled "'preliminary' sexual beings." [4] Ultimately, Foucault then argues that, since the nineteenth century, "the sexuality of children has been subordinated and their 'solitary habits' interfered with." [5] Through these historical developments, the subversive queerness of child sexuality has been erased and the discourse of childhood innocence reinforced in the twentieth century. For example, Steven Angelides argues in his article "*Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality*" (2004) that, since "the advent of the discourse of child sexual abuse in the 1970s, […] there has been a tendency to desexualize children and to highlight their innocence in relation to adult sexuality." [6]

During the Canadian context of 1992, this discourse of childhood innocence re-appeared under the guise of Campbell's child pornography law. [7] According to Stan Persky and John Dixon in their book *On Kiddie Porn* (2001), Campbell and other members of the Progressive Conservative party sought to create a form of national unity through this law. [8] The law was eventually passed in 1993 with the help of new Justice Minister Pierre Blais, a Québec MP, who sought to reinforce the unity of the Progressive Conservatives and voters for the upcoming elections in Québec and Canada in general. [9] As Lee Edelman has argued in his book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004), the "Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention." [10]

The political and nationalistic tendency of discourses on child sexuality is, likewise, present in the child pornography law of 1993. Once the law was passed, the Criminal Code would define child pornography as any visual representation "that shows a person who is or is depicted as being under the age of eighteen years and is engaged in or is depicted as engaged in explicit sexual activity." [11] Because they stand in opposition to the adult discourse of childhood innocence, Canadian courts believe that representations of child sexuality are contrary to the "Canadian community standard of tolerance." [12] Through this law, the suppression of child sexuality became inherently linked to a centripetal and positive notion of Canadian nationalism, which characterized any image of child sexuality as 'impure' and in opposition to an imaginary, national standard of morality. Ultimately, according to Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley in their anthology *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (2004), this law has resulted in "a further entrenchment of the perceived division between the sexually queer adult and the sexual – and queer – child." [13]

In this Canadian context, *Léolo*, with its explicit images of child sexuality, conflicts with the discourses of childhood innocence being spread in Canada and Québec by the child pornography law and diverse forms of nationalism. Upon its release in 1992, the BC Classification Board, confronted with the film's images of child sexuality and bestiality, attributed the rating "Restricted and Designated" to *Léolo*; this rating was typically reserved for pornographic films. [14] The reason for this categorization was, in the words of Mary Louise McCausland, the director of the BC Film Board, the result of the manipulation of children in highly sexual contexts. [15] Similarly, when *Léolo* premiered at Montréal's Place des Arts, "controversies swirled around the film's raunchiest, most provocative images." [16] According to Heinz Weinmann, the film was poorly received by the Québec public because its images disturbed the 'proper' image that Québec desires to give itself. [17] While Weinmann exaggerates *Léolo*'s reception, the film did receive negative reactions from certain Québec writers and the public.

In his article "Léo pour Léolo our du Pareil au Même" (1992), André Roy from the Montréal magazine *Spirale* criticizes the film's scenes of masturbation and bestiality as the product of Lauzon's naïve and indulgent perception of perversion [18] and, with his manipulation of the word "perversion," Roy exposes his negative perception of child sexuality. Later in this article, Roy asserts that the film's spectators can only have a negative reaction to its shocking and forceful images and concludes with his unwavering belief that Lauzon's depiction of childhood in Québec is a deceptive portrait devoid of any truth. [19] In an editorial to the Chicoutimi newspaper *Progrès- Dimanche*, an anonymous writer similarly judges the film's scenes of child masturbation among other scenes to be an aberrant and false representation of Québecois culture. [20] Years after its release, such reactions would continue. For instance, in an article from the *Alberta Report* entitled "*The Art of Bestiality*," Sillars Lee would oppose the telecast of the film in 1995 because it "portrays bestiality and a woman masturbating pre-adolescent boys. Nonetheless the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation deemed *Léolo* suitable for a late-night offering on Thursday, October 12." [21] According to two issues of *Le Droit*, deputy Monte Solberg believed that "certain 'sexually explicit' scenes did not contribute absolutely anything to the film" [22] and questions why "tax-paying Canadians have to pay for this kind of trash? […] A large majority of Canadians would never allow, in any circumstance, such

garbage to enter their homes." [23] While these reactions perceive child sexuality as a perverse trait in opposition to a centripetal and positive image of Canadian and Québecois culture, this paper will focus on Québec's rejection of Léolo's subversive imagery of sexuality and content.

In his book *Quebec National Cinema* (2001), Bill Marshall acknowledges that "'perverse' Québec children in the form of […] Léolo can be read as antidotes to the characters of one of the key specialisms of Quebec cinema over the past thirty years, the 'children's film.'" [24] In contrast to the childhood innocence present in these children films, Marshall states that *Léolo*'s depiction of lower-class Québecois environment is "far from the notion of 'pure laine' or indeed any purity" [25] After he addresses the inherent connections between sexual orientation and nationalism, Marshall concludes that:

> *the distinction or boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality is central to constructions of Quebec nationhood, although it may not be the only sexual-identity configuration which upsets the most unified and centripetal versions of it.* [26]

In my opinion, the child sexuality, which is seen in Léolo, is another sexual-identity formation that obstructs a centripetal notion of Québecois or Canadian identity. In conformance with the views of Marshall, this paper will later illustrate that the nationalistic identity of Québec is intrinsically linked to a hetero-masculine image of adulthood, which Léolo also rejects. Ultimately, due to the non-centripetal character of child sexuality, its representation in *Léolo* along with the film's unflattering portrayal of Québec influenced the negative reactions of writers like Roy upon its release.

Faced with the discourse of childhood innocence embedded in these reactions, Angelides suggests that queer theory can offer "an important corrective to the culturally prevailing linear and sequential model of age stratification and sexual development." [27] Through the use of queer theory, the prohibited representations of queer children can be rendered visible in order to undermine these Canadian discourses about childhood. Bruhm and Hurley define the figure of the queer child as:

> ***that which doesn't quite conform to the wished-for way that children are suppose to be in terms of gender and sexual roles. In other circumstances, it is also the child who displays interest in sex generally, in same-sex erotic attachment, or in cross-generational attachments.*** [28]

In short, the queer child is any child who deviates from the adult discourses of childhood innocence and engages in sexuality. In Lauzon's film, Léolo and Buddy Godin fall under this category, even though the adult world in Montréal strives to inhibit their queer sexuality. Regardless, the visual and aural representations of their sexuality reinforce their queer subjectivity and undermine the nationalistic discourses on childhood purity pervading Canada and Québec. Consequently, the representation of sexual children in *Léolo* queers the pure laine image of Québec itself and its cinematic children. In adherence to the views of Angelides, the social erasure of child sexuality, which is perpetuated by the child pornography law and nationalistic discourses in Canada, is also present in the narrative of Lauzon's film and restricts Léolo's desire to explore his own sexuality. For instance, within a brief classroom sequence at Léolo's Montréal school, the voice-over narration by a seemingly adult Léolo speaks of Mary and John, the representatives of English in this class. In this sequence, Léolo asserts that he was the only student to worry because "il manquait des details aux corps de John et Tintin." [29] In addition, he wonders why no individuals spoke of "cette queue qui gonflait entre mes jambes" and questioned why it was absent from "le tableau des organes de John." [30] The lack of genitals on the figures of John and Mary are explained by their role as the classroom's "modèles de la bienséance parfaite." [31] In this sequence, the constructed dichotomy between childhood innocence and adult sexuality is perpetuated through state-funded social institutions in Canada and Québec like the education system.

Due to this institutional erasure of child sexuality, a power relation is formed between teachers, who possess sexual knowledge, and the ignorant children, who, like Léolo, must strive to discover sex by themselves. In the original shooting draft of *Léolo*, the school's implicit discourse of childhood innocence was linked to that of child sexual abuse when the Word Tamer's apparent intimacy with Léolo results in an accusation of pedophilia by a professor. [32] Outside the education system, this nationalistic discourse is also unintentionally perpetuated when Léolo's mother idealizes him as her "bel amour" and, like his father, remains oblivious to his emerging sexuality. Because the knowledge of sex is withheld from children by the French-Canadian world of adults, Léolo remains mostly ignorant of sexuality. Consequently, Léolo explores his genitals with a mirror

within his family's sole bathroom and, during the film's infamous bestiality scene, he declares that he discovered sex: "entre l'ignorance et l'horreur." [33] The obstructions to Léolo's sexual expression, however, are not limited to that enacted by state institutions. Social institutions, likewise, have a complementary role in the perpetuation of the discourse of childhood innocence.

Reinforcing this discourse, the family and religion also control and regulate children's bodies in a manner that carries nationalistic undertones. In relation to this form of surveillance, Foucault states:

> ***the body of the child, under surveillance, surrounded in his cradle, his bed, or his room by an entire watch-crew of parents […] all attentive to the least manifestation of his sex, has constituted […] another "local center" of power-knowledge.*** [34]

Similarly, in Lauzon's film, Léolo's parents watch and regulate his body in order to reduce it to the functional roles of consumption and defecation. Once Léolo's body is forced to defecate, they believe that his body will become pure and cured of disease. This constant regulation and surveillance of children's bodies subjects these children to a regressive form of inexperience and perpetual infantilization that is exemplified by Fernand who, despite his hetero-masculine appearance, remains "un beau petit bébé trop gras." [35] When Léolo's patriarchal father administrates Friday's laxatives during a mock communion accompanied by Thomas Tallis' "*Spem in Alium*" on the sound track, the religious and biological discourses of Léolo's parents become interlinked in a quixotic attempt to keep their children's bodies physically "pure" through defecation.

Like his father, Léolo's mother also plays an instrumental role in the regulation of his body because she compels him to defecate at the age of two and rewards the ritual's completion with love in the present. She further contributes to this regulatory system when she forbids him from playing with his food during the first dinner sequence as it to ensure its utilitarian consumption and its eventual evacuation. Due to Ginette Reno's status as a singing star in Québec, [36] her participation in the nuclear family's scatological ritual lends it a nationalistic character. This ritual's combination of nationalism and clericalism reflects the pure laine clerical nationalism, which, between 1945 and the Quiet Revolution, continually reproduced the cultural myth of a Catholic and francophone Québec within Québécois society. [37]

With the inclusion of this religious discourse, Lauzon's film reveals its intertextual relationship with Réjean Ducharme's *L'Avalée des Avalées* (1966), [38] an inspirational book placed by the Word Tamer in Léolo's household in order to ignite his rebellion against the adult world. Ducharme's book, like Lauzon's *Léolo*, positions its child protagonist, Bérénice, against the repressive and religious laws of the Catholic and Jewish adult world and constructs a dichotomy between adults like Mauritius Einberg, Chamomort, and their children. [39] The intertextual parallel ends there, however, because Léo is drawn in a considerably more sympathetic light than Bérénice whose aggressive individualism is demonized by Ducharme. Nevertheless, Léo shares a form of parental oppression similar to that of Bérénice in Ducharme's novel upon her parents' discovery of her seemingly incestuous feelings for her brother Christian.

In several scenes of Lauzon's *Léolo* localized in the bathroom, the scatological regime of Léolo's family and its surveillance of his body foreground this confrontation between adults and children. During these scenes, Léolo's father waits outside the bathroom door, so he can visually confirm that Léolo has defecated and purified his body. Due to this surveillance, it is almost impossible for Léolo to explore his body's sexual features and discover their potential for nonproductive pleasure, particularly anal pleasure. In his book on Québécois cinema, Marshall argues that, in Lauzon's film, anality "is a source of order, not pleasure." [40] While Marshall is correct in identifying this coercive form of anality in the film, he neglects to mention that it is imposed by a satirical parody of the heterosexual family unit and Québec's clerical nationalism, both of which strive to eliminate anality's potential for pleasure and what Christine Ramsey regards as Léolo's "anal-erotic freedom." [41]

In the view of Georges Bataille, "excretion presents itself as the result of a heterogeneity, and can move in the direction of an ever greater heterogeneity, liberating impulses whose ambivalence is more and more pronounced." [42] Thus, while Bataille aligns excrement with a revolutionary and nonproductive impulse, Lauzon's *Léolo* complicates such a simplistic connection because excrement, in Léolo's family, is instrumental to the authoritarian order of consumption and authority subjected upon him. Defecation has thus been robbed of its revolutionary character. Within an inverse relation to excretion, Bataille has, however, written that appropriation, which is most often embodied by oral consumption, is "characterized by a homogeneity of the author of the appropriation,

and of objects as final result." [43] Implicitly, Bataille links the kind of consumption seen during the dinner sequences in Lauzon's film with the same form of homogeneity perpetuated by the present economic order; through such a lens, it can be seen how, in *Léolo*, the revolutionary potential of excrement is co-opted by the homogeneous realm of economic consumption, religion, and the nuclear family with its distinct discourse of childhood innocence. Because this coercive anality is a product of the heterosexual couple, it distances *Léolo* from *Un Zoo, La Nuit* and the homophobic reaction of its protagonist Marcel to his anal rape. [44] Ultimately, this parental surveillance of children's bodies obstructs Léolo's potential for sexual pleasure, but he is not the only child whose queer sexuality is restrained.

Like Léolo, Buddy Godin's child body is also subject to a Catholic and nationalistic form of surveillance by his religious mother, who similarly perpetuates the discourse of childhood innocence present in Québec. In order to preserve her innocent and idealized image of Godin, she regularly inspects his nails for signs of nicotine consumption and forces him to take a shower every Sunday before Church. Despite her attempts, Godin's innocent appearance transforms him into an object of sexual attraction for his hockey coach because, as Léolo's voice-over declares, "la viande blanche se vend mieux." [45] Godin's sexual ignorance also renders him unable to control his sexual desire and, as a result, it emerges in a bestiality scene with a cat. However, this presence of child sexuality still positions Godin as the film's second queer child and inverts his mother's Catholic discourse of childhood innocence when the cat's violation is followed by a wooden crucifix on the wall. Because Godin's sexuality opposes Christ's image of innocence in this scene, the Rolling Stones' song "*You Can't Always Get What you Want,*" which is played on the sound track, becomes an implicit address to the absent mother about her fundamental inability to sustain Godin's image as an innocent child.

Like Buddy Godin, Léolo becomes a queer figure when he expresses his child sexuality within marginalized spaces similar to those of other queer characters of Canadian cinema. For example, during a later scene in which a fourteen year old Regina masturbates Léolo and another boy under a demolition site, the queerness of his child sexuality emerges and deconstructs the formerly fixed dichotomy between childhood innocence and adult sexuality. If the film had been released after the passing of the child pornography law, this scene of child sexuality could have been interpreted as an instance of its violation. Throughout the film's narrative, Léolo continues to subvert this discourse of childhood innocence as he begins to explore his queer sexuality within a bathroom setting.

In his writings on Canadian queer cinema, Thomas Waugh has identified the cinematic use of the toilet as a space in which queer figures can confront "the mainstream political and economic regulation of sexuality with a transgressive politics of sexuality as pleasure and excess, waste and contestation." [46] While Waugh specifically addresses public toilets, this concept can be expanded to Léolo's manipulation of the bathroom as a similar nonproductive space of sexual rebellion. In the bathroom, he can express his queer sexuality and masturbate with a piece of liver to the images of nude women found in a pornographic magazine. During the auditions for the role of Léo, the 'queer' child sexuality featured in this sequence would test the social mores of one child's mother, [47] an example of the scene's transgressive qualities. In defiance of his body's functionality, Léolo continues to masturbate in this space and he is more and more attracted "par le plaisir." [48] Thus, Léolo subverts his family's scatological regime in the very private space that it seeks to control.

During an overhead shot of Léolo masturbating in the bathroom, Thomas Tallis' "*Spem in Alium*" is re-played in order to signify his direct subversion of the religious and nationalistic discourse of childhood purity that is perpetuated within his family's scatological rituals. Léolo's queer opposition to this religious discourse re-emerges when Fernand eats his sperm-infested liver during dinner and a crucifix falls in response to Léolo's implicit sexual transgression. Aside from being a queer space for child sexuality, Léolo discovers images of sexuality within the bathroom that have been hidden from him by the education system and his parents. In this space, he discovers his own genitals in a mirror, the nude bodies of women in his pornographic magazine, and the queer and nonproductive inter-generational sex between Bianca and Léolo's grandfather. During the POV shots of this intergenerational relationship, Léolo masturbates to the image of a half-naked Bianca in another marginal space connected to the bathroom. Even though the bathroom allows him to indulge in his queer sexuality, Weinmann stresses the self-enclosed character of Léolo's sexuality during acts like masturbation. [49] For instance, through the use of POV shots, Lauzon establishes Léolo's distance from Bianca and the impossibility of physical contact considering the sexual norms of Western society that restrict cross-generational sex and its queerness.

Although his voyeuristic position in these scenes and his masturbation in response to pornographic images transforms women like Bianca into pieces of sexualized 'meat,' this unfortunate consequence is enabled by the taboos of society against cross-generational relationships and it is evident that Léolo seeks a more personal form of attachment to Bianca as opposed to this more distanced interaction. Failing to achieve the illusive sense of hetero-masculine possession afforded by voyeurism, Léolo himself stresses this latter distance when he declares that: "À cette époque, nos quelques années de difference semblaient une frontière infranchissable." [50] Moreover, Léolo's sexual inexperience also renders him afraid to love Bianca in a more physical manner and this fear is perceptible in dialogue such as "Je n'avais pas le courage de mon amour pour Bianca" or "Parce que j'ai peur d'aimer." [51]

Frustrated by this distance and his grandfather's ability to cross the frontier of age with Bianca, Léolo attempts to kill him in the bathtub. Léolo's violence against his grandfather is also motivated by his intrusive inclusion of money within his sexual relationship with Bianca and its opposition to his queer space's nonproductive character. When Godin is pressured with money into violating a cat, Léolo discloses his personal belief that money, through its social familiarity, is merely a means to lessen Godin's fear of a nonproductive queer experience. During an imaginary sequence within the film's original script, Léolo similarly tells Bianca that she would have had sex with older men, even if she received no money and compels her to prostitute herself in order to test her fidelity. [52] Through his misguided murder attempt, Léolo seeks to expulse the economic relations of the adult world, so he can preserve the bathroom's role as a location in which his queer and nonproductive child sexuality can be expressed, but never truly fulfilled.

In order to bridge his distance from Bianca perceived in this 'queer' space, Léolo again mimics the trajectory of queer characters in Canadian cinema and escapes the dystopic and urban environment of Mile End towards a seeming heterotopia, an imaginary space in Sicily. In this non-urban and natural landscape, Léolo believes that his queer sexuality can be expressed with Bianca out in the open. According to Foucault, heterotopias are countersites where "the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted." [53]

Influenced by Foucault's terminology, Waugh believes that non-urban spaces like Léolo's Sicily "have indeed functioned in a crucial way as heterotopias for our audiovisual corpus of Canadian queer cultures." [54] However, Léolo's imaginary escape towards Italy does not constitute a true heterotopia because it is Romantic and not real. In this Italian space, Léolo can not achieve a physical and 'real' form of sexual intimacy with Bianca and his seemingly innocent and de-sexualized expressions of love for Bianca are the product of his sexual inexperience, fear, and his parent's idealized love. For instance, Léolo's address to Bianca "mon bel amour" in this space is nearly identical to the idealized address that his mother directs towards him. Thus, the erasure of child sexuality in the adult world partially obstructs the depth of Léolo's sexual expression in his imaginary space.

However, on another level, Léolo's constructed space of Italy does act as an altered form of heterotopia. It provides a refuge from the hetero-masculine world of Léolo's home in which Fernand's macho posturing is approved by his father and mother during the film's numerous dinner sequences. Furthermore, in the film's original ending, Léolo is on the verge of kissing Bianca in this imaginary space until his dream then fades to black and he is shown in a comatose state within the psychiatric hospital. [55] This planned sequence is even more striking because it is accompanied by Léolo's family singing a hopeful song about love. [56] Thus, when Léolo writes about this imaginary Italian space, it provides a negative space in which he can express his inter-generational sexual desire for Bianca in an open environment and feel closer to her.

Similarly, in Ducharme's novel, Bérénice invents her own language and original worlds with her friend Constance in order to escape the sense of confinement that she experiences. In contrast to the illusive proximity desired by Léolo, inter-generational sex is stigmatized and reductively associated with the discourse of child sexual abuse within Québec and Canada during the early 1990s. Despite the real limitations to Léolo's intergenerational love, the marginal spaces of his imagination still allow him to express his queer sexuality and invert the more centripetal and pure laine representations of childhood depicted in Québécois cinema. His emerging queer sexuality constructs a destabilizing form of subjectivity that resists its assimilation within the positive nationalistic framework of Québec and Canada in general.

As Léolo's destabilizing queer sexuality already undermine the pure laine images of childhood in Québec, the cultural hybridity of images and sounds in Lauzon's film further contributes to this unstable subject

position and resists French-Canadian nationalism. During the film's first scenes, Léo gives himself the name "Léolo Lozone" and creates an imaginary space of Italy in order to distance himself from both his nightmarish perception of Québec's Montréal and his French-Canadian family. However, despite this attempt, his self-given name is still partially derived from his French-Canadian name "Léo Lozeau" and the film's voice-over by a seemingly adult Léolo remains in the French language. In addition, Léolo is still, on an intertextual level, connected to the protagonist Bérénice in Ducharme's now popular Québécois novel, *L'Avalée des Avalées*. [57] However, this latter novel, like Lauzon's film, does not, in its narrative, entirely promulgate a truly coherent, nationalistic, and positive conception of Québécois society.

Like Bérénice's individualistic belief that her subjectivity shapes her world, Léolo believes that, because he can reconstruct his identity within his dreams, he is not a French-Canadian. Léolo's unstable subject position of cultural hybridity is, nevertheless, formed when his aforementioned associations to French-Canadian culture and its language are combined with Italian culture as well as iconic images from the United States like the cowboy hat worn by the six year old Léo. More importantly, this hybrid identity is developed by the film's multicultural and transnational score, which is evoked by Léolo's autobiographical writings. According to Jim Leach, the film's multicultural songs create an unstable "postmodern text." [58] They include songs ranging from Tom Waits' "*Temptation*" and the Rolling Stones "*You Can't Always get what you want*" to the Gyuto Monks music from the album *Freedom Chants from the Roof of the World* and "*Alleluia*," the Byzantian Chant of Soeur Marie Keyrouz. The resulting cultural hybridity complements the unstable character of Léolo's queer subjectivity and its rejection of an idealistic self-image informed by French-Canadian nationalism. According to Homi K. Bhabha, this form of cultural hybridity creates a Third space of enunciation that problematizes signification and the essentialism of a singular nationalistic category. [59] Consequently, Léolo's hybrid identity further deconstructs the nationalistic discourse, which often accompanies the adult discourse of childhood innocence in Canada and Québec.

As the cultural hybridity evoked by Léolo's autobiographical tale and its explicit portrait of child sexuality shape the character's queer subjectivity and his rejection of nationalistic certainties, the instability of this subject position is simultaneously enhanced by his deviations from a specific French-Canadian manifestation of hetero-masculinity. According to Marshall, a distinct trend in Québécois cinema has perpetuated and continues to perpetuate a nationalistic and hetero-masculine representation of its male protagonists. [60] This tendency is present in Lauzon's own *Un Zoo, La Nuit* when Marcel, a former gangster, asserts his nationalistic hetero-masculinity through his homophobic violence against a gay Anglophone named George and his aggressive sexual relations with his ex-girlfriend Julie. Lee Parpart has implicitly argued that *Un Zoo, La Nuit* reflects the French-Canadian male's search for both his lost phallic masculinity and nationalistic prowess after the referendum defeat in Québec. [61] In the film, Léolo attempts to mimic an American form of hetero-masculinity when he wears his cowboy hat, but can not embody it due to his inherently sensitive character. For instance, he cries after his mother kills the flies that he had offered to his sister, Rita, as a present.

However, in his desire to achieve this image of masculinity, he begins to identify with the hetero-masculine and French-Canadian image of Fernand. Léolo's identification with this image abruptly ends when the heavily muscled Fernand is defeated by an English-Canadian bully and, in this moment, Lauzon "foregrounds the masculine phallic ideal as […] a grand performance." [62] After the loss of this masculine illusion, Léolo attempts to kill his grandfather, but fails to murder him and this moment of masculine action is depicted as fleeting and futile. Excluding this momentary action, Léolo remains a predominantly passive character who does not act upon his attraction to Bianca or actively resist the constraints of his family in any imposing or forced manner. In fact, as he admires it, he also evinces a certain degree of repulsion towards the infantile hetero-masculinity of his brother and present during the bestiality.

Despite the latter scene's aforementioned queer undertones, the disconcerted glances of Maxime Collin within it display Léolo's sense of alienation within the hetero-masculine environment of street punks who, with their matching black leather jackets, embody a form of masculine conformity and pressure Buddy Godin to violate the cat or "pussy," so that he can prove his masculine prowess. Complementing Léolo's deviation from a rigid portrait of hetero-masculinity, a form of homosocial intimacy develops between him and Fernand and Léolo as they sleep together; however, in contrast to the father-son relationship in *Un Zoo, La Nuit*, this sense of intimacy is not explicitly undermined by a nationalistic and violent expression of homophobia. Ultimately, Léolo does not embody

an active, hetero-masculine position in the film and, through his imaginary, Romantic, and heterotopic vision of Italy, he escapes the nightmarish hetero-masculine and French-Canadian space inhabited by his father, grandfather, and Fernand. Léolo thus distances himself from a nationalistic image of adult hetero-masculinity and inhabits an unstable subject position produced by his queer sexuality, cultural hybridity, and his generally sensitive and passive character.

Throughout the film's narrative, Léolo's unstable subjectivity and sexual identity is conveyed by a disembodied adult voice-over as if by means of confession. Marie-Chantal Killen links this voice-over to Michel Chion's concept of an acousmatic voice and she argues that, in accordance with the term's definition, the adult narrator's voice has no visual source. [63] While this is an accurate description of the narration as it appears to the spectator, this view still ignores the possibility that the adult voice-over emanates from Léolo's writings as a child. At the film's beginning, the adult voice-over identifies himself with Léolo as a six year old child. Within several scenes in *Léolo*, the Word Tamer often repeats the words of this adult voice-over as he recites the fragments of Léolo's writings. Furthermore, when Léolo's child voice overlaps with that of the adult narrator as Léolo lies comatose in a psychiatric ward, this formerly "acousmatic" narrator is connected to Léolo's child self and his writings.

According to Bruhms and Hurley, typical frame narratives about childhood usually return to the future adult and negate the narrated desires of the child. [64] Lauzon's *Léolo*, however, subverts this tradition because no adult body is linked to this voice-over and the voice is shown to emerge from the writings of Léolo as a child. Thus, with an adult voice, Léolo falls under one of Kathryn Bond Stockton's category of the queer child: a child who is "eerily mature and infantilized." [65] Produced by a child, this mature voice, which enunciates Léolo's queer sexuality, deconstructs the constructed dichotomy between childhood innocence and adult maturity. The film's seemingly oppositional dichotomy between the adult world and children like Léolo is, likewise, undermined by the existence of the Word Tamer. He is the only adult in the film, besides Léolo's mother, who calls him by his self-given Italian name and acknowledges the hidden maturity and complexity of his writings about child sexuality. Within his shooting draft, Lauzon would dedicate the film to his former mentor André Petrowski, [66] a NFB employee, another adult Word Tamer who recognized Lauzon's maturity during his time as a young criminal. [67]

If viewed in this manner, Lauzon's autobiographical film acts as a double confession in opposition to the restrictive discourses against child sexuality. Léolo's fragmented writings and Lauzon's non-linear film become confessions of child sexuality that conflict with the adult discourse of childhood innocence embedded in the diegesis, Canada's child pornography law in Canada, and Québécois nationalism. Through the non-linear and fragmented character of the film's narration, the unstable subjectivity expressed within this confession problematizes the process of signification. In contrast to the renowned views of Foucault on the subject of confession, this subjectivity obstructs the traditional absorption of a sexual confession within a detrimental "power relationship." [68]

While Léolo succumbs to madness in a psychiatric hospital, his writings are salvaged from the ravages of the adult world by the Word Tamer. The Word Tamer acknowledges the unstable and poetic complexity of Léolo's confession of his child sexuality, but he does not frame or assimilate it within the homogenous and adult realm of Canadian and Québécois society. Instead, he preserves this confession within his marginal, Italian underground archive of cultural detritus, which was shot within "Fellini's statue warehouse at Cinecittà." [69]

The queer and unstable subject position, which these confessional writings contain, can thus continue to undermine the dominant discourses about childhood, nationalism, and hetero-masculinity in Québec. According to Ramsey, Léolo's poetic writings about his imaginary Italy provide:

> ***a place where negativity, contradiction, ambiguity, excess, transgression, and abjection are dramatised as the theatre of the divided subject, and where the authority of the larger cultural system is also thrown into question.*** [70]

The film's final image of Léolo running in Italy with his writings in hand then reflects the survival of his unstable identity in the imagination of sympathetic adults like the Word Tamer, Andrew Petrowski, and, often, the viewers themselves.

Jean-Claude Lauzon's LÉOLO ultimately queers the dominant discourses of childhood innocence, nationalism, and hetero-masculinity in Québec. The film's numerous images of child sexuality with Léolo and Godin invert the adult discourse of childhood innocence reinforced by the education system in

Québec and the parental surveillance of Léolo's body. Through his expression of queer sexuality within a bathroom and an imaginary heterotopia, Léolo follows a trajectory similar to that of other queer protagonists in Canadian cinema. Furthermore, Léolo's multicultural attachments and his deviation from hetero-masculinity complement the formation of his unstable identity initiated by his queer sexuality.

When the film's mature voice-over of Léolo's emerging sexuality is connected to a child's body, this seeming paradox deconstructs the rigid dichotomy between childhood innocence and adult sexuality perpetuated by the child pornography law in Canada and the pure laine nationalism of Québec and its cinema. The fragmented narration of this unstable subjectivity thus hinders the absorption of the film's confessions of child sexuality into the contemporary discourses on childhood, nationhood, and masculinity in Canada and Québec. All of these seemingly detached elements contribute to the unstable subjective space of Léolo's mind as a child that shatters the core centripetal ideas and concepts perpetuated by the adult world in Canadian and Québécois society.

FOOTNOTES

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Queering the Heterosexual Male in Canadian Cinema: An Analysis of Jean-Claude Lauzon's Léolo

Matthew Ogonoski

Canadian cinema is a queer cinema, both represented by and representing queerness in its own unique way. As a highly influential characteristic of the Canadian narrative, queerness has become a thematic staple of the creative process for those artists aspiring to construct and contribute to a national mythos. Of particular interest is the quality of this phenomenon's effect on cinematic representations of the Canadian heterosexual male. This paper will investigate the desire of the Canadian filmmaker to queer heterosexual males by specifically examining Jean- Claude Lauzon's second and final feature-length film, *Léolo*. Essentially, it is the rejection of hetero-masculine influence which permits the protagonist, Leo Lozeau/Léolo, to transgress hetero-normative societal pressures and embrace his queerly positioned identity, illustrating some of the ways in which countless examples of Canadian film have fundamentally queered the heterosexual male.

In his 1977 article "*Coward, Bully, or Clown: the Dream Life of a Younger Brother*," Robert Fothergill analyses the marginality of hetero-normative males in Canadian cinema. The article has lead to much speculation on the topic and proves to be a starting point from which many theorists and writers have since disembarked. According to Fothergill, the Canadian hetero-normative male is deficient. He states that these filmic representations exhibit, "the radical inadequacy of the male protagonist – his moral failure, especially, and most visibly, in his relationships with women. […] like a recurring dream which takes its shape from the dreamer's guilty consciousness of his own essential impotence" (Fothergill, 235-6). Fothergill analogizes this disposition to the subjugation of a figurative younger brother. In this example, the Canadian male identity aspires to reproduce representations of American heterosexual masculinity. Existing in the shadow of its American counterpart, the Canadian cinematic male is forced to formulate an alternate disposition as a strategy of subjective purgation. These strategic dispositions are purveyed in the title of Fothergill's article; the Canadian male is designated either a coward, bully, or clown. All three denominations display associational behaviour, resulting from the inability to reproduce the status position of the older brother. As a defence mechanism, the marginalization imposed by the older brother provokes a Canadian heterosexual male to act in negative and unconstructive ways in all relationships.

Throughout the development of the film's narrative, Léolo occupies a space of fluctuating indeterminacy within this system. His existential confusion results as the display of behaviours attributed to each of Fothergill's denotations: it is his shifting between positions that represents his fluid identity. Léolo occupies this indeterminate space between categories for the majority of this film. The hetero-normative representations around him, and their imposing behaviours that influence and confuse him simultaneously. When attributes of any one category are displayed by Léolo, they are simply temporary reactions to stresses imposed by the hetero-normative pressures.

Though failure-of-character is not as abundantly identified in the canon of Québécois cinema, Fothergill believes that there are numerous examples available (Fothergill, 241). In his opinion, there are only two

possible avenues to which the younger brother is destined, either aspiring and ultimately failing to be like the older brother or locating another space which to inhabit. The latter is what Fothergill refers to as energetic resistance. However, of this possibility, "there is little satisfaction in achieving what the other disdained to aim for" (Fothergill, 244). For Fothergill, the primary distinctive feature of Québécois protagonists is their display of energetic resistance, most often to the avail of martyrdom.

Undoubtedly, English-Canadian and Québécois cinema are distinct from one another in many ways. However, there are similarities shared which apply to the representation of a general Canadian hetero-male identity. In *Léolo* a dismantling of borders presented by a collage of cultural hybridity supports this concept. Music alone is a strong marker of this boundary blurring. From Tom Waits, to The Rolling Stones, to the chanting of Tibetan Monks, the pastiche is hard to ignore. On the level of narrative, the Lozeau family lives in the poor, mixed-Anglophone neighbourhood of the nineteen-fifties Mile-End, Montreal, where Léolo can be seen targeting passers-by, cloaked in his American-cowboy costume, and dreaming of an Italian heritage. This mixing of iconic idiosyncrasies establishes the Canadian condition of multiculturalism. And to reinforce *Léolo*'s transgressive national appeal, Lauzon himself complained that *Léolo* was more positively received by English Canada than Québéc: "English Canadian […] critics write dithyrambic reviews, saying that it is a masterpiece. And yet, in the Quebec press, reviews are lukewarm" (Loiselle, 80).

In *Scott Mackenzie's Screening Québéc* the issue of national identity within Canada's entirety is discussed. MacKenzie engages with the officially recognized duality of the nation but further posits that Canada is much more diverse then this, with not only every separate province desiring to be a separate nation but also the indigenous peoples as well (MacKenzie, 20). This leads to "each group defin[ing] itself as the absence of the other, although the other is always needed to validate the definition of self" (MacKenzie, 21). Mackenzie summarizes,

> ***Regardless of one's national status with Canada, the one notion that unites Canadians and Québécois alike is the fear that they are no different from those who surround them. So, while nationalists continue to produce countless images that demarcate their difference, within these images lie the very anxieties which they are attempting to assuage; the lack of an empirically motivated, essentialised difference that the image can embody. (MacKenzie, 24)***

It appears an elision between Québécois and English-Canadian filmic representations is not only possible, but quite apt as a condition of the nation's grander disposition.

At the time of Fothergill's article, he believed there were no strong, constructive examples of the Canadian heteromale in cinema. He states that the main "problem, in trying to psychoanalyse the younger brother's dreamlife[aspirations], is that one is caught between advocating the dramatization of a more aggressively 'masculine' individualism, and seeking to make a virtue of impotence" (Fothergill, 248). Of course, Fothergill naively assumes this energetic resistance will always result in failure. These negative conclusions serve as a platform from which many contemporary writers diverge.

In his article "*Queerly Canadian: Perversion Chic*" Jason Morgan scrutinizes Fothergill's assertions: "because the heroic ideal, as a manifestation of patriarchal ideology, necessarily excludes the 'feminine,' Canadian 'heroes' tend to be weak, plagued with self-doubt and crippled by their own excesses and, consequently, are prone to reckless self-destruction and sexual deviance" (Morgan, 214). And Lee Parpart, from her article "*Cowards, Bullies, and Cadavers: Feminist Re-Mappings of the Passive Male Body in English-Canadian and Québécois Cinema*" furthers this, pointing out that this manifestation of patriarchal ideology is based on the assumption that there is some sort of essential and functional centre from which to govern the deviation of the margins (*Cowards, Bullies…*, 268). As mentioned above, Léolo occupies the marginal space between the static conditions of the younger brother. Because it is impossible for the younger brother to attain the position of the older, the only functional positions available are those of the coward, bully, or clown. These positions are only deviant in relation to the older brother, but they serve as markers of stability in the subjugated position of the younger. An examination of the heteronormative, older brother representations surrounding Léolo will determine the sorts of functionality and normativity presented to him, and how he must react.

First of all, Léolo's grandfather, Albert, appears to be the alphamale of the family: his influence governing the Lozeau children is explicitly disclosed in the film. Léolo

states, "my grandfather had convinced my father a shit a day kept the doctor away." This excerpt of voice-over narration is heard while Léolo hides from his father, who is trying to perform a forced enema on him. In addition to this, Léolo vilifies Albert as the primary source of the family's torment. Though distinguished as genetic in origin "as though my grandfather's legacy had exploded in the family, and that little extra cell had lodged itself in everybody's brain," this still positions Albert as dominating male figure – if not literally, then, in its own way, pathologically. He of course occupies the position of bully, not only attempting to murder Léolo but also generally connoting a negative presence. This is especially pertinent to Léolo when witnessing his grandfather's pedophiliac behaviour with Bianca. Léolo rejects the metaphorical example of this older brother and unsuccessfully attempts to murder Albert.

The next male in line of descent, Léolo's father, also occupies the space of bully. He is warden to the regulation of the family's bodily functions, imposed by Albert. In his article "*Queering the Québécois and Canadian Child in Jean-Claude Lauzon's Léolo*" Alain Chouinard points out, in this imposition of surveillance, the parental figures in *Léolo* destroy any potential for sexual exploration by essentializing the role of the body to one that is purely functional. However, Léolo's father is also presented as clown. The ways in which Léolo describes him are always exaggerated to a comedic extent, with his "forehead stretched beyond his chin into a neck that clung desperately to bulging shoulders." Lauzon presents this character as a simple buffoon. He constantly eats, while displaying a mime-like silence, which emphasizes his grandiose actions; his chewing of food appearing to be something which commits absolute concentration. And in contrast with Albert, of sullen face that would not allow a smile to surface, Léolo's father only presents a facial expression somewhere between puzzlement and joy. This clownishness affects his relationship with Léolo's mother. Where Léolo's father is completely subordinate to Albert, Léolo's mother challenges Albert's behaviour, managing domestic responsibilities: she organizes, feeds, and generally looks after all. But the constant infantilism and unquestioning adherence to Albert's governance constructs Léolo's father as a further obstacle in the push and pull of parental guidance. And of course, by definition, Léolo's mother cannot fulfil the position of a strong, hetero-male roll-model. Léolo's father is the perfect example of subjugation, not only in his presumably dangerous working conditions as a ill-paid manual labourer but also in his lack of contempt for his general disposition; he is neither apathetic as Albert nor hopeful as his son Fernand. Though Léolo does not attempt to kill his father, his disdain is apparent: "I want to stick a firecracker as big as the universe up his ass. Just because I'm waiting for the bus."

Fernand is most relevant in comparison to Léolo, not only because of his literal older brother position, but also, for most of the film, he is at an age nearing the solidification of the heteromasculine identity. Essentially, Fernand becomes the machismoridden example of the American cinematic male; he aspires to be a sort of Schwarzenegger or Stallone. He also enjoys the approval of his family that Fothergill attributes to the older brother, praised as "strong" for eating the liver Léolo refuses to eat (because he has previously defiled it in secret) and receiving approving glances from his father while intimidating Léolo with his sheer bulk. Strength is a recurring theme throughout the film, and of course stereotypically embodies hetero-masculinity.

For a significant section of the film, Léolo identifies and embraces this masculine identity: "cursed be those who will not bow as we walk by. […] So tall will I be on my brother's shoulders." Most important however is the eventual destruction of Fernand's identity and its effects on Léolo. Mirroring a scene from earlier in the film, Fernand flexes his muscles as an act of intimidation, aimed at a bully who had previously caused him physical harm. In constructing this repetition of an earlier exchange, Lauzon brings attention to a typical cinematic revenge narrative pattern. However, expectations are disappointed when and the bully is once again victorious. This time, the outcome puts Fernand in an existential crisis. In the earlier instance, the violence enacted inspires Fernand to reimagine his identity. Fernand, in a similar event of the little brother syndrome, becomes a bully himself through years of physical training and discipline. But this second instance of physical exchange definitively destroys Fernand's identity. He becomes the weak boy he once was, lying in a foetal position, nursing a broken nose, and sobbing uncontrollably. Léolo realizes that Fernand's attempts to be the older brother have also failed.

Symbolically, Fernand regresses to a state of infantilism. As this second bully scene ends, the transition between space is marked by a dissolve from Léolo leaning over, trying to coddle Fernand, to a black and white photograph of the younger Fernand lifting his set of home-made weights. The photograph evokes the complete identity of Fernand before his passage into the world of overt masculinity and also suggests that this is still the Fernand that exists in the lump of muscles

now sobbing in a heap. As Léolo states in the next shot, "that day I understood fear lived in our deepest being." This transition is important for two reasons in defining who Léolo is after this point. First of all this scene makes Léolo understand that the projection of identity is riddled with deception. And secondly, if the dissolve does represent Léolo's mental identification of Fernand, the whole of the transition suggests that Fernand is neither the hulking behemoth he recently was nor able to revert to the boy he once identified as. This is suggested by the dissolving image of Léolo and Fernand as the photograph fades-in and the immediate fade-to-black of the photograph, representing the permanent disappearance of that identity, further supported by the extra-narratological relationship between this formal stylistic in combination with voice-over. The present Fernand becomes a recluse from this point on. [1] He neither leaves the bedroom for the remainder of the film nor is he seen clothed in anything but his underwear. He evokes the image of an invalid with no one to dress him, and, later in the film, helplessly screams for his "ma" as Léolo lies paralysed on the floor. His exchange with the bully has redefined his position from bully to coward. Léolo, now devoid of any hetero-normative icon for which to aspire, is now more confused than ever.

This metaphorical death precipitates Léolo's descent for the remainder of the narrative. After seeing the strong, hetero-normative identity of Fernand murdered before his eyes, he decides to destroy all images of this sort. It is only after Fernand is beaten that Léolo engages in violent discourse with both his father and grandfather. As a rebellious response to these broken-down structures, Léolo engages with queer sexuality to a heightened degree; he successively watches the rape of a cat, and then mutually masturbates publicly with friend's of both sexes. All of these aspects reflect the reckless self-destruction and sexual deviance earlier mentioned by Morgan. This montage of sexual confusion, void of traditional functionality, is punctuated by the Rolling Stones *You Can't Always Get What You Want* in a crescendo which presumably ends with Léolo's ejaculation. He departs from aspirations of hetero-normativity and shifts desperately for a new definition of identity.

There is one more role-model that Léolo may look to: the Word Tamer. The Tamer, aware of his marginal existence, is by no means the example of a hetero-normative male. Parpart explains that critics "often viewed the absence of empowered male film heroes as signalling a crisis in Canadian masculinity, the same conditions have been re-read in the 1990s as symptoms of a Canadian talent for tolerance and heterogeneity" (*Cowards, Bullies*…, 255). The Tamer, of course, embodies this heterogeneity. Léolo becomes caught up in the romanticism of the Tamer's actions. To turn people's words into ashes on a pyre of symbolic reincarnation and to search through the waste of others in order to find those shining examples of humanity would be just too strange and removed from the boundaries of what the other male characters are capable or willing to do. Though the companionship of the Tamer and Léolo raises questions of intergenerational eros, it appears that the Tamer is more concerned with Léolo's writing than the boy himself; the majority of the film presents him not with Léolo but with his writing. Ultimately, the Word Tamer, though existing in the margins, is the real inspiration for Léolo to form his own identity at the end of the film. Just before Léolo collapses into catatonia, the voice-over narrative reveals that Bianca has not appeared to him in a long while, though he "spent entire nights reading and writing dozens of pages" in hopes of seeing her. His reading and writing, influenced by the Tamer, becomes the means by which he will transcend the hetero-normative pressures surrounding him.

Léolo finally formulates an identity of utter romanticism. He escapes the insistent nightmare-reality of hetero-normativity into a dream-world in which sexuality does not and cannot exist. Léolo essentially becomes asexual, accepting a position in his dream-world Italy, never occupied with Bianca at the same moment – or any other person for that matter. In this film sex is a characteristic of a nightmare reality and only exists from the margins in non-functional forms. Bestiality, masturbation, and pedophilia make up Léolo's sexual knowledge. His aspirations for Bianca suggest a sort of hetero-normative desire, but Léolo ultimately rejects this because of fear: "because I was afraid to love, I no longer dream." But what does this fear entail? It is the surrounding tumult that repels him from the hetero-normative, and forces him to give up Bianca. Léolo may desire her, but not at the cost of the nightmare-reality subjugation. Instead, his love for her will forever remain unsullied.

Shifting to another space, Léolo retains his version of love for Bianca: one stifled in sexlessness. The transgression into his subconscious permits a new and separate existence, defined by its own boundaries. That this conclusion is a positive progression is supported by Lauzon's own comments: "the ending is a 'liberation' that affirms 'the power of the imagination,' insisting that what is important is not the boy's body but his

writings that provide the film's voice-over narration" (qtd. in Leach,12). Léolo revokes the hetero-normative space as a false reality, influenced by the attempted, suggested, and witnessed murders of his hetero-masculine surroundings, and slips into the marginal space of his dream-world. As Ramsay points out, "[t]he negative element of a system (Leo's catatonia) is an enabling condition of the system, […] it provides a place where negativity, contradiction, ambiguity, excess, transgression, and abjection are dramatized as the theatre of the divided subject, and where the authority of the larger cultural system is also thrown into question" (Ramsay, 24-5). What this all suggests is that the Canadian hetero-normative space is a fiction, but one that still has a spectral influence on identity politics.

It is the desire of the cinematic Canadian heterosexual male to be queered that enables Léolo to establish an identity. In *Nostalgic Nationalisms and the Spectacle of the Male Body in Canadian and Quebecois Cinema,* Parpart states,

> ***The nostalgia for a pre-colonial past which structures certain nationalisms around a sense of masculine loss and humiliation has at times coincided with strategies for keeping the male body veiled or dramatizing both its vulnerability to destruction and its hopedfor invulnerabilty to threats from the outside. Meanwhile, a different experience of neo-colonialism can lead to a more oppositional approach. (Nostalgic Nationalisms, v)***

Parpart does not suggest destroying this influencing and imposing effect but instead tries to reveal that this phenomenon is not as predestined and determinant as thinkers like Fothergill would believe. Its impact can be renegotiated through what she refers to as the performative space of the margins (*Cowards, Bullies*…, 255).

Léolo transcends, his new identity existing in the performative space which he has always occupied as Léolo, not Léo Lozeau. In the dream-world Italy he can continue to search for Bianca. Léolo's love exists for Bianca in his romantic ideal of her, in a dream-world Italy which they never occupy at the same moment. Because he was not strong enough to exist in the nightmare-reality, he departs from the hetero-normative space of his family. In the desire to find an identity from which to satisfy the indeterminate and imposing force of hetero-masculinenormativity, Léolo queers himself into another reality, free of this subjugation. Affirming the success of this identity transcendance, his mother cries out after her son, "Léolo!"

FOOTNOTES

1 I use the phrase "present Fernand" here because there exists one more scene in the narrative where Fernand is seen outside of his bedroom, but it is a scene from the past with the younger version of Fernand.

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Le Confessionnal dans Le Confessionnal de Robert Lepage

Maxime Robin

Robin analyses the relation between time and space in *Le Confessionnal* (Robert Lepage, 1994). The author also offers a study of the depiction of Quebec City in Lepage's film and suggests some contrasts and similarities with *I Confess* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1953). While Hitchcock captures images of the city with a lot of detachment, Lepage offers a highly personal view of the public spaces.

Ce n'est pas tout à fait au coeur de la ville de Québec que se situe *La Caserne*, espace de travail de la compagnie *Ex Machina* et repère de Robert Lepage. À la base de la côte de la Montagne, coincé entre le Cap Diamant et le fleuve Saint-Laurent, l'édifice expose fièrement sous des airs de trompe l'oeil, sa fausse façade façon XIXème. Déjà, dans cette mince description des bureaux du cinéaste, on retrouve un des paradoxes fondamentaux de son oeuvre : l'espace-temps.

Une des principales exigences de Robert Lepage lorsqu'un projet lui est proposé est de pouvoir le développer dans sa ville, Québec. À travers les fenêtres de la rue Dalhousie, on peut voir un spectacle, un film, une expérimentation prendre forme jusqu'à ce qu'elle atteigne une maturité suffisante et que ses créateurs jugent le temps opportun pour organiser son entrée dans le monde. L'expression *entrée dans le monde* est à prendre ici au sens littéral : c'est un tour du monde qu'on réserve généralement à ces oeuvres et on comprend vite, chez Lepage, que la création devient *multi-nationale*.

Dans *Le Confessionnal* (Robert Lepage, 1994), le premier film de Robert Lepage, le réalisateur place sa ville natale au centre de son propos et propose une exploration spatio-temporelle de Québec. Revisitant l'oeuvre d'Hitchcock en général et *I Confess* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1953) en particulier, Lepage bâtit une représentation de sa ville qui ne commence pas à zéro, mais s'inscrit plutôt en relation avec ce qu'avait filmé en 1952 le maître du suspense. Le dialogue établi entre les deux cinéastes est toutefois surprenant et la représentation spatiale de Québec par Lepage soulève plusieurs questions quant à l'aspect personnel de son film. Cet essai cherchera dans les lieux les plus flagrants du *Confessionnal*, ainsi que dans les dédales de la vieille ville, à différencier le touristique de l'indigène, le public du privé, le statique du mobile, pour générer un regard nouveau sur la vieille capitale.

Dans son article intitulé *Sense of time and space*, Martin Lefebvre parvient à identifier la relation étrange qui unit l'espace et le temps dans le Québec de *I Confess*:

> ***There can be no question that in choosing Québec City to shoot a French play written in 1902, Hitchcock was aiming at a particular chronotope: that of a backward society not fully in tune – or in time, should I say – with the rest of the industrial world, still clinging to old world values. Had Hitchcock wanted to shoot the film elsewhere, say in an equally urban environment in Europe for example, he most certainly would have had to make this a period or costume film. Duplessis-era Quebec city was the perfect site for "I Confess"*** [1].

Bien sûr, la valeur historique de la ville de Québec a depuis longtemps fait sa renommée mondiale. Le quartier de Place-Royale, situé à quelques dizaines de mètres de *la Caserne*, est depuis les années 60 considéré comme patrimoine mondial, et est ainsi protégé par *L'unesco*. L'aspect vieillot de la ville attire chaque année plusieurs milliers de touristes. Parmi les plus illustres, on peut compter Spielberg, qui a voulu faire de la Place Royale un village français des années '60. Pour sa part, Hitchcock est parvenu à sublimer le grandiose du décor en tournant un film alors contemporain, ajoutant à *I Confess* un certain côté tape-à-l'oeil et lui donnant une variation quelque peu voyeuriste. Dans ce film, le public américain n'est pourtant pas voyeur du corps d'une Janet Leigh en effeuilleuse tracassée, mais plutôt de la population urbaine de Québec, et même dans une certaine mesure, de la population urbaine *du* Québec.

Ce voyeurisme partage beaucoup de caractéristiques avec l'activité du tourisme. Quelques jours dans une ville, quelques heures dans chacun de ses principaux attraits, permet de déguster la cuisine locale, de faire l'éloge de l'hospitalité et, surtout de prendre des photos. Hitchcock, zélé, en a pris 24 par secondes pour réaliser un film présentant essentiellement un regard extérieur sur la ville de Québec – une expérience plus sensorielle qu'affective. Selon Marc Lajoie, «Hitchcock's depiction of the city emphasizes its exoticness for a non-Quebecois audience rather than its familiarity for Quebecois film-goers [2] ».

On pourrait s'attendre à ce que la représentation de Québec par Lepage, dans *Le Confessionnal*, s'oppose diamétralement au travail touristique d'Hitchcock, mais on se tromperait. Lepage, non content de revisiter les lieux mythiques de *I Confess* (l'Église, le Château Frontenac, les rues du Vieux-Québec), y ajoute une sélection des principaux attraits touristiques de la ville de Québec : les ponts, l'aquarium, le Concorde (restaurant pivotant), la Citadelle et le Capitole. Tous ces endroits ont en commun d'avoir une résonnance dépassant les limites de la ville : ils sont connus et, surtout, reconnus. Ces lieux mondialement réputés prennent un visage intime et surprenant devant la caméra du cinéaste. En se basant sur la familiarité que le public entretient hypothétiquement avec ces endroits, Lepage s'applique à leur donner une dimension personnelle, un regard inverti. Le Château Frontenac, contrairement aux dires d'André, devient un hôtel de passe alors que l'église devient un haut lieu de saintsattouchements pour Rachel. Au restaurant pivotant sur un axe horizontal, Lepage superpose l'ascenseur et son axe vertical. La Citadelle partage la réputation du Bois de Boulogne, l'aquarium se transforme en champs de poursuite criminelle et les ponts, également établis sur un axe horizontal, résonnent par l'imminence du danger de leur axe vertical.

Aleksandar Dundjerovic paraphrase le Ministre Canadien des Affaires Internationales, Lloyd Axworthy, qui décrit Lepage comme «having an internationally recognisable name and reputation, and being the most prominent canadian 'cultural export' [3] ». Lepage est sans doute l'artiste global le plus accompli. Non seulement déploie-t-il une oeuvre à saveur internationale (la Chine, le Japon, les Etats-Unis, l'Angleterre), mais il tâche aussi de rendre le local accessible aux masses par une représentation personnelle d'espaces reconnus internationalement.

Mais l'aspect indigène du portrait des lieux que produit Lepage a quelque chose de pervers. De manière presque systématique, il s'amuse avec les attentes du spectateur et les espaces publics sont exposés dans leur dimension privée. Le Château Frontenac en est sans doute l'exemple le plus frappant. Mythique dans l'iconographie de la ville de Québec (peut-être en bonne partie à cause d'Hitchcock), il devient quotidien, presque banal en tant que lieu de travail des protagonistes, et carrément privé en tant que théâtre de la relation ambiguë qu'entretiennent le héros prostitué et son diplomate employeur. Truffé de paliers et d'escaliers (ils étaient si chers à Hitchcock), le Château Frontenac de Lepage détermine une bonne partie des relations centrales du film par sa géographie. La poursuite entre les deux frères se déroule dans les escaliers du Château et prostitué est reconnue par son client régulier devant la porte principale de l'Hôtel. Dans sa chambre, le frère du héros joue son rôle public, celui de garçon d'étage sans identité opérant pour une compagnie transcanadienne (*Canadien-Pacifique*) – remplacée aujourd'hui par une multinationale (*Fairmount*). Ce rôle sera doucement détruit et remplacé par un autre plus privé grâce au frère du héros cherchant à savoir la vérité sur le passé de sa famille.

Une situation similaire peut être observée dans la scène se déroulant au Capitole. Au sein de la foule s'étant massée pour assister à la première du film d'Hitchcock, dans une orgie de voilettes, taffetas, sacoches et colifichets proposée par l'image, le personnage principal, narrateur, souligne un autre rapport interpersonnel, beaucoup plus intime : il se trouve alors dans le ventre de sa mère. Simultanément, à l'extérieur de la salle, loin des regards, Hitchcock est furieux de la censure de son film.

Si l'on s'attarde un peu aux scènes se déroulant à l'église, on réalise que l'ambiguïté de l'espace public/privé y atteint un paroxysme. D'abord montrée comme lieu essentiellement privé aux funérailles du père des protagonistes (seuls le prêtre et quelques membres de la famille sont présents), un travelling arrière qui recule à la fois dans l'espace et le temps redonne à l'église sa dimension publique d'autrefois : vide dans les années '80, elle est bondée dans les années '50. Bien que l'opposition public-privé produise une lecture très riche dans *Le Confessionnal* de Lepage, on aurait tort de l'associer à la dynamique passé – présent. Même si le temps semble être un facteur décisif pour l'élaboration des lieux et de leur fonction dans *Le Confessionnal*, l'église permet la co-existence des deux : la nef est représentée comme l'espace peut – être le plus public de tout le film : on y échange ragots, papotages, regards en coin et surtout de travers; mais au coeur même de cet océan public, un oasis privé : le confessionnal.

La caméra de Lepage pénètre à deux reprises ce lieu sacré. La première fois pour y entendre les légères confessions de la mère des protagonistes, qui s'empresse de les répéter à sa belle-soeur, une fois revenue dans la nef. La seconde fois, c'est pour y entendre le personnage de la jeune tante. Mais bien qu'on sache qu'elle y avoue le nom du père du héros, la caméra quitte le confessionnal avant ce troublant aveu, justifiant ainsi la quête de tout le film. Dans les deux cas, les femmes confessées sont associées à un homme confesseur. Dans les deux cas, le virtuel anonymat du confessionnal est pulvérisé par les adresses directes des prêtres qui appellent les deux femmes par leur nom. Et dans les deux cas, on assiste à ce que Foucault appelait la mise en discours du sexe : les femmes, par honnêteté ou culpabilité, sont poussées à faire l'aveu de leur chair, *par la voix*. Plus tard dans le film, gonflée par sa grossesse et par sa honte, la tante sort du confessionnal après y avoir passé, selon sa soeur, beaucoup de temps pour parcourir l'interminable distance qui sépare la cabine du secret du banc sur lequel est assise sa famille. Tous les regards et toutes les conversations se tournent ensuite vers elle. Dans cette scène, Lepage combine la mise en discours et la mise en image. Les murmures des dévots sont impossibles à identifier, mais leur regard est sans équivoque.

Dans son exploration du temps dans *Le Confessionnal*, Kathryn Michalski analyse l'importance de l'Église et la présence de l'église dans le film de Lepage: "Thus although the protagonists in the 50s are shown seeking sanctuary in the church, 80s society, a more transient society seeks it elsewhere. [4]" C'est que si les lieux sont les mêmes dans le Québec d'Hitchcock et celui de Lepage, leurs fonctions diffèrent, et ce n'est plus dans le confessionnal (qui n'est plus visité par la caméra dans la portion années '80) qu'il faut chercher la confession. Lepage le fracasse en morceaux qui ont tous un équivalent contemporain. La relation vilaine fille/homme réconfortant est placée par le cinéaste dans le bar de Charny. Une voix appelle une danseuse dans le confessionnal et, si la cabine est similaire, la grille séparant l'homme de la femme a pourtant disparu. Durant la mise en discours des vices de la danseuse, Lepage troque la mise en images : le corps du personnage semble se diviser. Le sauna aussi peut-être considéré comme espace confessionnel. Construit comme un espace qui préserve le secret parmi les hommes (sur un axe horizontal), le sauna partage avec le confessionnal d'antan un lien direct avec Dieu, à qui l'on ne peut rien cacher, comme la caméra le découvre dans un impressionnant mouvement de grue (axe vertical) où tout est visible : là, il n'y a plus de secret. Encore une fois, la mise en discours est transformée en mise en image et le regard de Dieu, incarné dans la portion années '50 du film par le prêtre et donc représentée sur un axe horizontal, se manifeste dans les années '80 sur un axe vertical.

Même si Marco Deblois considère que «la partie 'suspense psychologique' constitue ce que le film a de plus faible et à vrai dire n'offre pas un grand intérêt, tellement l'identité du père de Marc est prévisible [5] », il est impossible de nier que la trame narrative du *Confessionnal* est entièrement tissée autour de la révélation de cette information. Rapidement dans le film, comme Montgomery Cliff dans *I Confess*, c'est le personnage du prêtre qui devient détenteur de la vérité, gardien du secret. Même si chez Hitchcock – et aussi dans la première partie chez Lepage – la confidence est lourde à porter, elle ne transforme pas moins le porteur en une formidable figure d'autorité, investi, aux yeux du spectateur, du réel pouvoir de l'information. Puisque le film se bâtit comme une quête de cette précieuse information, le personnage de Massicotte, prêtre devenu diplomate, devient l'élément donnant son issue au film. En imitant Hitchcock, Lepage transforme la relation sexuelle ayant unit la tante et le père du héros en un moteur narratif et réussit, grâce à son éventuelle mise en discours, à faire ce qui, selon Foucault, constitue peut-être un des plus extraordinaires stratagèmes occidentaux: «Ce qui est propre aux sociétés modernes, ce n'est pas qu'elles aient voué le sexe à rester dans l'ombre, c'est qu'elles se soient vouées à en parler toujours, en le faisant valoir comme le secret. [6] » Pour cette raison, l'endroit choisi par Massicotte pour révéler *son* secret, devient l'ultime espace confessionnel du film.

En fait, Lepage divise en quatre parties la divulgation de cette cruciale information. D'abord la tante se confie au jeune Massicotte dans le confessionnal. Ensuite, le film nous amène à penser que cette information est révélée au héros par Massicotte 20 ans plus tard dans sa limousine. Le père, dans son taxi 20 ans plus tôt, fait l'aveu de son secret en le formulant comme s'il s'agissait d'une histoire pour Hitchcock : cette révélation n'a de valeur qu'aux yeux du spectateur. C'est dans son regard que le film est un *suspense*; pour Hitchcock, il s'agit d'une tragédie. Finalement, c'est la maladie héréditaire évoquée par Massicotte au frère du héros qui prouve la filiation et constitue le dernier étage de cet architectural aveu prenant place sur le palier de sa chambre du Château Frontenac.

Dans *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity,* Edward Dimendberg propose deux différentes conceptions cinématographiques de la ville: centripète et centrifuge. Chacune d'entre elles est caractérisée par plusieurs éléments, mais ce qui les distingue principalement est la ville telle que construite autour d'une centre névralgique dans le premier cas, et l'absence de ce centre dans la ville du deuxième cas :

> ***For if the former [centripète] elicits the agoraphobic sensation of being overwhelmed by space, fears of constriction, or the fear of losing one's way in the metropolis […] by contrast, the anxieties provoked by centrifugal space hinge upon temporality and the uncertainty produced by a spatial environment increasingly devoid of landmarks and centers and often likely to seem permanently in motion [7].***

Cette dichotomie entre deux perceptions de la ville peut générer plusieurs raisonnements : on pourrait argumenter, en simplifiant, que la ville centripète s'organise essentiellement sur un axe vertical. Elle est en cela similaire à une tour de Babel, à des gratte-ciels toujours plus élevés dans un dialogue architectural avec le divin. Par opposition, on pourrait décrire la ville centrifuge comme répandue sur un axe horizontal, plus près de la terre des hommes que du dialogue avec le divin, elle est moins métaphysique et plus matérialiste. Elle comprend banlieues, stationnements et centre commerciaux, mais d'abord et avant tout, une autoroute. Dimendberg considère l'autoroute comme la consécration bien tangible de l'utopie moderne du mouvement ininterrompu, elle devient le symbole par excellence de ville centrifuge : elle est le meilleur moyen de s'éloigner du centre, elle redéfinit le concept de centre, elle est la ligne qui remplace le point, elle est la quintessence du mouvement.

Ce n'est sans doute pas un hasard si, des trois espaces confessionnaux (excluant le confessionnal lui-même), deux sont des espaces mobiles (le taxi et la limousine). Lepage, ajoutant au passage une autre référence à Hitchcock en utilisant sa fameuse *rear projection*, propose des confessionnaux en mouvement où le secret, pour le spectateur, apparaît de façon aussi ineffable que l'image aperçue par la vitre de la voiture. Le taxi et la limousine deviennent des sanctuaires de vérité, et la quête identitaire associée à cette vérité devient inextricablement liée à une forme de migration, à un mouvement qui constitue peut-être l'un des grands déterminants de l'identité québécoise contemporaine. Lepage fait du mouvement l'ultime géographie du *Confessionnal* et on réalise son omniprésence dans le film. C'est le mouvement qui, par les impressionnants travellings dans l'église et l'appartement, constitue l'alliance entre passé et présent dans *Le Confessionnal*. Le mouvement, c'est aussi la nature nomade du héros, qui n'a pas de maison où se poser (la ligne et non le point). Le mouvement, c'est le train qui tonitrue sur la tête de la danseuse et de son fils dans le motel de Charny (motel impossible à différencier de tous ceux que l'on retrouve sur les autoroutes et, ainsi, foncièrement associé à la ville centripète). Le mouvement, c'est le restaurant qui tourne et l'ascenseur qui descend, c'est le héros qui erre dans les rues de Québec, c'est l'histoire du film qui commence en Chine et puis se perd au Japon. Le mouvement, c'est la distance entre deux points, c'est donc, dans le temps et l'espace, la France, le Québec et la Grande-Bretagne. C'est donc le pont. C'est donc Lepage.

Québec a maintenant achevé les festivités associées au 400ème anniversaire de sa fondation. 400 ans d'histoire. Pour célébrer cette donnée du *temps*, on avait demandé à Robert Lepage de concevoir un spectacle et pour l'occasion, il avait envisagé un nouvel espace. Sans toutefois abandonner sa fameuse Caserne, Lepage avait entrepris la construction d'une salle de spectacle nichée au creux d'un tunnel d'une impressionnante superficie perçant Québec en son plein centre. Le tunnel, construit au début des années '70, avait pour but éventuel de relier les autoroutes du Nord de la ville au boulevard Champlain, qui borde le fleuve au Sud. L'utopique projet d'autoroute n'a jamais vu le jour mais peut-être un jour ce rêve architectural de Lepage rapprochera-t-elle Québec de sa représentation Hitchockienne : une ville qui reste tournée vers le passé, une ville dont le centrifuge présent et les autoroutes n'arriveront jamais

qu'à effleurer.

FOOTNOTES

1 Martin Lefebvre, Sense of Time and Place: The Chronotope in I Confess and "Le Confessionnal", Québec Studies, 1998, page 92.

2 Marc Lajoie, Imagining the City in Québécois Cinema, dans Carles Perraton ed. Le Cinéma Imaginaire de la ville, Cahiers du Gerse, no 3, page 53.

3 Aleksandar Dundjerovic, The Cinema of Robert Lepage, the poetics of memory, Wallflower Press, Londres, 2003, page 55.

4 Kathryn Michalski, dans une jumelle partie de ce travail sur "Le Confessionnal".

5 Marco Deblois, «A Great Tragedy», 24 images, Montreal no 78-79, Décembre 1995, page 85.

6 Michel Foucault, Histoire de la sexualité I : La volonté de savoir, Gallimard, Paris, 1976, page 49 (ed.2006)

7 Edward Dimendberg, Film Noid and the Spaces of Modernity, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2004, page 172

Edited by Charlie Ellbé

The Fatality of Origins in Quebec Cinema

Gilda Boffa

Gilda Boffa explores how cinematic depictions of immigrants in Quebec cinema often perpetuate the oppressive dominant discourses of identity, and how recurring tropes of death and disappearance affect a problematic image of the immigrant experience in modern day Quebec. Boffa references Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics and Erin Manning's exploration of the meaning of sovereignty, in relation to filmmakers such as Paul Tana and Denis Chouinard, in order to examine how political structures, such as the Quebec identity, ultimately work to suppress difference.

Note: This is the second edition of this article. It was first published in 2006 and then edited in 2016.

Despite all the recent media commotion about cultural communities, immigrants, reasonable accommodations and Canada's stance on its supposed peaceful multi-cultural reality, images of immigrants are still lacking in Quebec media. In the specific case of feature length narrative cinema, a large number of the few films that feature immigrant characters as the main protagonists have underlying themes of death and sacrifice. This essay will examine how these representations of immigrants, despite the fact that they aim to engage critically with the political implications of this lack of visibility, often serve to feed and repeat the dominant discourses about identity, borders, belonging, territory and nation-building that perpetuate the very oppression they are denouncing by reinforcing dichotomous ideas about these concepts. I will start by an overview of several films that support this thesis, and continue with a more in depth analysis of two of them: La Sarrasine (Paul Tana, 1992) and *L'ange De Goudron* (Denis Chouinard, 2001). This essay will look at both the successes and failures of these films when it comes to subverting dominant hegemonic discourses. To support my analysis I will use ideas from thinkers, namely Michel Foucault and Erin Manning, who have written about racism and hegemony as being intrinsic to the nation-state as a political entity. In Quebec, there is the added tension from a portion of the population's desire to create a sovereign state. Sovereignty is described as follows by Erin Manning in her book *Ephemeral Territories:*

> **"Sovereignty, whether in the name of a Western understanding of territory and identity or in the name of a defection from these terms of engagement, is, it seems, about expressing a relationship to power that involves the imposition of binary structures and totalizing logics on social subjectivities, repressing their difference." (Manning 4)**

It is thus not surprising that director Denis Chouinard laments the fact that: "In general, Quebecers are not very curious about others." [1] (Soulié A16) and that "I've always been shocked to observe how the multiethnic nature of Montreal is absent from our cinema, our television and our literature." [2] (Lussier C1). To analyze this situation it is useful to refer once more to Manning's ideas. What she writes about Canadian films can be applied to how nationalism and identity is articulated in Quebec (though arguably Quebec's national identity is seen as less elusive than Canada's because of its efforts to be seen as a distinct society):

National narratives in Canada are written to support the elusive notion of "Canadian identity". (…) The idea of a culture that belongs to 'us' remains rooted in an essentialism about who 'we' are, underscoring a desire to remain rooted even as we speak of transnational and global phenomena, of boundary-crossings and social movements. Within such a frame, any discussion of culture is inextricably bound by the limits of identity politics. (Manning 61)

Because we are trapped in this model for delineating identity, or in even thinking that it is possible or necessary to finitely define identity, immigrant communities have also often defined their culture and identities in an "us versus them" way. The conflicts that arise from this are apparent throughout the structure of the films that will be discussed in this essay. The binaries inevitably cause oppositions and often result in the death of one or several characters. Ideas of sacrifice (akin to those a military formation has to go through to ensure a sense of security and stability for a nation) and of belonging are thus omnipresent in the films that will be examined.

A brief plot summary of some films that follow this premise is in order. *Clandestins* (Denis Chouinard and Nicolas Wadimof, 1997) is about six people from various countries that hide in a container on a ship sailing to Northern Europe to make their way to Canada. The ship's engine breaks down severely endangering their lives as food and water supplies become scarce. Many of them do not make it alive to Canada.

In *La Déroute* (Paul Tana, 1998) Joe, an Italian immigrant, is the wealthy owner of a cement factory in Montreal. He is angry at his daughter for refusing to work in the family business and for dating Diego, an illegal Salvadorian immigrant. Tana has mentioned that though his character claims to be fully Canadian he has not let go of some of the archaic ideas from his peasant Sicilian past (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 179). Furthermore, though he fully embraced the right for Italians to immigrate to Canada, he refuses to give Diego this same opportunity and is extremely racist towards him. He is deliriously possessive with his daughter which causes her to move in with Diego, who she will eventually marry. To seek revenge, Joe kidnaps Diego and drives him to the United States. The film ends with a double death: Diego is killed by Joe who then commits suicide. This film is a valid commentary on racism between cultural communities despite its commercial failure and sometimes awkward screenplay. It should be noted that both Chouinard and Tana have also directed shorts with immigrant characters that had to deal with death. For Chouinard it was *Le Soleil Et Ses Traces* (1990, co-directed with Louis Bélanger) and *Deux Contes De La Rue Berri : Les Gens Heureux N'ont Pas D'histoire* (1976) for Tana.

Littoral (Wajdi Mouawad, 2004) is about Wahab, a blasé young man of Lebanese origins who was born in Montreal. He was brought up by his aunts and uncles because his mother died giving birth to him, and her family forbade his father, who had refused to encourage his wife to terminate a dangerous pregnancy, from ever coming into contact with him. Shortly after Wahab's twenty-fifth birthday, his father comes to Montreal to see him, but he dies on a park bench, amidst a mythical/typical Canadian snowstorm, before he has the chance to do so. Wahab then finds out that his father had not abandoned him, but was forced by his family to stay away from him. He decides to bury him in Lebanon, making the trip for the first time. This post-mortem reconciliation with both his father and Lebanon is hardly easy, however, as Wahab will encounter several obstacles to finding an appropriate burial site in the post-civil war climate. Finally, with the help of a few locals, he decides to release his father's corpse to the sea. *Littoral* is problematic in terms of its representation because none of its actors are Lebanese, though they play Lebanese characters. [3] While discussing the issues that arise with these representations is beyond the scope of this essay, it is, however, one of my intentions to denounce archaic ideas of ethnic purity. I do not wish to imply that it is impossible for a Quebecer actor to play a Lebanese character, yet the uncomfortable association to the use of blackface in early cinema can be made. Power dynamics are reinforced, as minorities are not allowed to represent themselves.

A more recent example of a film about immigrants in Quebec is *De Ma Fenêtre, Sans Maison*… (Maryanne Zéhil, 2006). Sana (again, played by Louise Portal, a Quebecer actress) is forced to leave Lebanon, leaving her four year old daughter Dounia behind. Seventeen years later, when Dounia's father dies, Sana invites her to Montreal. Dounia is extremely resentful towards her mother, and several conflicts arise between the two women. We discover that Sana left because she could not deal with the repression imposed upon women in her country, and her husband forced her to leave her daughter in Lebanon. During her stay in Montreal, Dounia is confronted with the cold winter climate of Quebec, in addition to views about sexuality, family and ethnic identity that challenge her own. When Sana's mother dies shortly after Dounia's return to Lebanon, Sana decides to accompany her daughter to the funeral,

marking the end of her self-imposed exile. Conflict ensues when Sana and her brother wish to sell the family home that Dounia is still emotionally attached to. The film ends with Sana remaining in Lebanon, and Dounia returning to Montreal.

What is disconcerting with this recurrent theme of death for immigrant characters is the possibility of reading these narratives as a metaphor for self-sacrifice because there is no place for them anywhere (not in their "host" country; nor in their country of "origin"). The sacrifice is often for the sake of other members of their community and family, with the intention of making room for them in some way. This is akin to the blood that is shed in the process of creating nation-states, or going to war for one's people. The dichotomies of "us versus them" are maintained. Through the homogenous and potentially suffocating concept of the community, symbolic borders are created anew with regard to who belongs and who doesn't. This is the same logic that has led immigrants to live in ghettos. In thinking about what these films are saying about death, we will consider Michel Foucault's ideas on biopolitics as they relate to state racism. This idea of having to "kill" or suppress a dimension of one's identity to belong to the host society can be linked to biopolitics, as immigrants, seen as subordinates, have internalized this mechanism of oppression.

LA SARRASINE

Paul Tana frequently uses the metaphor of roots when talking about the Italian community in Quebec and Canada. He explains how the fig tree, a typically Mediterranean tree, is for him a symbol of Italian immigrants because they have succeeded in making it grow in their gardens, despite the colder climate, by digging it up and covering it during the winter months. He uses the metaphor in talking about what he and Bruno Ramirez, scriptwriter, did for Quebec cinema with their film *La Sarrasine*: "We tried to etch in the Canadian and Quebecer imagination characters that so far have been almost completely invisible. Our gesture is both similar and different from that of our parents." [4] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 131). He goes on to say that he sees this as an act of enracinement (rooting): "…it's rooting, but it's also a transformation. Rooting in the sense that there is the image of the tree. But it's also a transformation because the tree has to adapt to survive." [5] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 131). In *La Déroute*, Joe's dream of a dead fig tree acts as a premonition for his own death.

La Sarrasine is set in 1904 Montreal and is inspired by a true story. Giuseppe Moschella and his wife Ninetta are Italian immigrants who run a hostel for recent Italian immigrants. Giuseppe is also a respected tailor. The couple seems well "integrated". Giuseppe speaks French fluently and his closest friend, Alphonse L'Amoureux, is a French-Canadian. Giuseppe makes him a suit for his wedding and as a gift, he sends one of his boarders, Pasquale, to play music from a music box at the door of the church. However, in his excitement, Pasquale plays it before the end of the ceremony, causing the outrage of Théo Lemieux, L'Amoureux's son in law. The conflict results in Pasquale taking out his pocket knife and cutting Lemieux's hand. Later, in a drunken state, Théo and his friends decide to take revenge on Pasquale by stealing and breaking his music box, and taunting him in front of his home. Giuseppe unsuccessfully attempts to calm them down peacefully through an invocation of his friendship with L'Amoureux. The incident ends with Giuseppe accidentally shooting Théo dead. He is then sentenced to the death penalty, and though his wife succeeds in reducing his sentence to life in prison, he eventually commits suicide. Despite Giuseppe's wish, and the mobilization of his brother from Italy to take her back, Ninetta refuses to return to Italy and stays in Montreal after his death. The film ends with Ninetta, dressed in black, walking across a vast white snowy landscape.

Throughout the film, Tana alludes to the limiting narratives of the nation-state. Its very title can be seen as an indication of this. Saracens is the orientalist term that was used to designate the Muslim enemies of Christians during the Crusades. The film opens with a traditional Sicilian puppet show in Giuseppe's living room. Ninetta explains to Alphonse that this re-enacted episode of Jerusalem Delivered is about Tancredi, a Christian warrior, who unknowingly kills the Muslim warrior Clorinda, the Saracen that he is in love with. Muslim populations settled in large numbers in southern Italy, particularly in Sicily, where the Moschella couple is from. This introduction alludes to the fact that the ethnic origin of the Italian immigrants is in itself a hybrid, and the population that they had historically considered enemies left significant traces on their cultural legacy. Ninetta plays the symbolic role of a Saracen, as she is seen as an intruder in Montreal. When she hides from Giuseppe's brother in the empty Lemieux family home, Félicité, Théo's widow, is horrified to find her there. In a scene where Ninetta prays over Théo's grave while engaging in a traditional ritual to ask that he not seek revenge on Giuseppe, Félicité finds her and yells: "Go back to where you came from, damn foreigners." [6] This

theme of invasiveness is present once again in the stark contrast of the final shots of Ninetta, dressed in black walking over the white snowy landscape. However, these allusions to the unstable nature of ethnic identity contradict other elements in the film. For one thing, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the patriot and soldier responsible for the unification of Italy into a modern state in the 19th century, is mentioned twice and held in high regard. This is not surprising, as when asked what he thought about nationalism, Tana replied:

I feel rather torn on the subject. I believe that the Quebec of tomorrow will be transcultural and mixed. (…) Having said that, the feeling of origins, of rooting, risks becoming lost in such a society. So I also understand why nationalism is necessary. It's a way to leave a trace, to know who we are, where we come from. And humans cannot live without identity. Evidently, with nationalism, there is always the danger of being intolerant with the Other, of cultivating a vengeful spirit and an ideology of resentment. So according to me, people should not be scared of mixing with others, of opening up to different cultures while remaining themselves and not forgetting their origins. [7] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 26)

This perspective again proposes that "origins" is an invariable category that will and must always be and mean the same thing to all who share it. Giuseppe also calls Pasquale a "zingaro" when he scorns him for cutting Théo's hand. Though this is translated as "vaurien" (good-for-nothing) in the French subtitles, the Italian word actually means "gypsy" and it is a common insult. It is interesting to note how the gypsies, a nomadic group, have come to symbolize a threat to those who wish to maintain the cohesiveness of the nation.

It is useful to examine how the critical reviews of these films made use of a conventional vocabulary of ethnic identity. It should be noted that according to Gural-Migdal and Salvatore,

> ***Anglophone critics read La Sarrasine differently and quite opposite to the way that Francophone critics read it. For them, it's Ninetta and the rooting that counts while Anglophones stress the historical context of intolerance and the exemplary value of Giuseppe's death. [8] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 175)***

This is not to imply that the Anglophone critics are flawless in their analysis, as the authors also point out that Italian stereotypes were consistently perpetuated by critics of both languages. Furthermore, the implications of the word "tolerance" are far from suggesting the desire for a perfect communion between communities. In one critic's words, we can see how the desire for uniformity in identity is still the norm. Carlo Mandolini wrote about the image of Ninetta dressed in black over a white background representing: "…the uniformity of Western cultures confronted with black stains, of people from other places." [9] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 162), reinforcing the false belief that Western cultures were ever truly uniform. The desire to create a new homogeneous identity of the "Italo- Québécois" is expressed in the following comments by Tana:

Unlike Italian Americans represented by Coppola or Scorsese, young Italian Quebecers speak a language that mixes English, French and Italian. There is thus a language to be created to install the immigrant story in this country. It is how Quebecer culture with other roots will emerge. [10] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 163)

This expresses the belief that a culture must speak one unified language. Several critics and Tana himself have insisted on the fact that: "…Giuseppe's trial and death aren't really a failure because they lead to Ninetta's emancipation." [11] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 172), implying that patriarchal values can be eradicated only through contact with the "civilized" West. This is reminiscent of the declarations of quite a few journalists and politicians in the debate about "reasonable accommodations", and more recently the Quebec Charter of Values [edit, 2016] to the effect that we should make it clear to immigrants that here, equality between men and women is not negotiable. An easily debatable declaration to position the "host nation" as superior by refusing to acknowledge all the inequalities that still exist in Quebec.

On the question of Quebec sovereignty, Tana has said the following, which relates to biopolitics and state racism: "The referendum question seems extremely superficial as long as we don't ask the real question: "Am I ready to die to obtain a country?" If we don't ask about death, we can't create a country, and we can't make art, either." [12] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 35-6). He goes on to talk about how this corresponds to the sentiment of urgency in political change and in art making.

In their introduction of *Le cinéma de Paul Tana*, Gural-Migdal and Salvatore write:

The director has often examined the presence of Italians in Quebec, the third largest community in the province. This is another reason to take interest in his work when we know that the presence of Italians on the territory of Quebec goes back to the era of New France. It is therefore a well established community that has not yet received the historical attention it deserves. [13] (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 10)

Tana is himself an immigrant, having moved to Quebec at the age of 11 (Perrault). For him, *La Sarrasine* is about the "desire to be rooted in a new country and this duality that must be faced by a foreigner" [14] (Perrault).

Gural-Migdal and Salvatore, as well as several other critics, have said that Tana has done for the Italian community what Claude Jutra did for Quebecers with *Mon Oncle Antoine* (85). He is relegated to the role of identity builder, where what he represents must then by definition become representative of the whole "Italian community" in Quebec, with a monolithic voice. It is also unsettling to see how freely the term "Italian colony" is used in Gural-Migdal and Salvatore's book to designate the Italian community in Quebec. Citing Rancière, Manning makes an important point about the limits of community:

Through a focus on heterology of the political, the encounter with "the political community" becomes an encounter not with the community as self, but with the impossibility of community as a homogeneous political entity. The question then becomes not simply "How are we to face a political problem?" but "How are we to reinvent politics? (Manning xviii)

In reviewing this film, several critics have implied that it exposes a reality from the past and that racism towards the Italian community is no longer an issue in Quebec (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 171). However, anti-Italian stereotypes are alive and well in the media. For example, a recent issue of *The Montreal Gazette* published a derogatory article about the Italian parliament titled "The Pizza Parliament". Reactions from the Italian community to this and other questionable articles were largely ignored and dismissed (Sabetti 18). This is reminiscent of the negative press about Italians that we witness in *La Sarrasine*. The first example of this is when a barman reading an article about a mafia leader hiding out in Montreal asks Giuseppe jokingly if the man is hiding in his house. Giuseppe's response to this is to throw the money on the bar to pay for his drink and leave angrily, mumbling his disdain for the man in Italian; "Ignorante de merda…" The use of the Italian language here is an example of how racist prejudice can move even the most well intentioned individual back into the confines of his native language.

Another example of this is the article that gets published after Giuseppe's arrest. In the aptly titled *Le Patriote* newspaper, Carmelo reads the following: "The situation in which you find yourself is due to your habit, and that of many of your compatriots, to always keep weapons in your home. This practice is contrary to Canadian law and has involved foreigners such as yourself in offences that lead to long prison sentences… this condemnation shall serve as an example to all those…" [15].

The fact that the court condemned Giuseppe to the death penalty can be related to Foucault's ideas on the biopolitical. The attempt to use their power to "let live" in changing the penalty to life in prison is another example of this. Giuseppe had to serve as an example for all other Italian immigrants, thus he was victimized by a sentence that was overly severe. However, this narrative twist proves that: "Once the mechanism of biopower was called upon to make it possible to execute or isolate criminals, criminality was conceptualized in racist terms" (Foucault 258). The inherent violence of territorial borders and its exclusionary practices are evoked by Sherry Simon in her essay about the film:

Through Moschella and his wife's behaviour, we grasp the fragility and the insecurity of the immigrant, to whom we communicate – by constantly repeated gestures – his subordinate status. [16] (Simon 633)

And about the scenes of violence she says:

…these scenes of violence are all built around relationships of authority and territoriality. [17] (Simon 633)

It is also highly symbolic that Giuseppe and Ninetta cannot have children because he is impotent. According to Michel Foucault, one of the targets that biopolitcal forces seek to control is the fertility of a population (Foucault 243). Gural-Migdal and Salvatore have an ironic way of describing the character of Giuseppe in *La Sarrasine*:

Today we would call him a model neo-Quebecer; honest, hard-working, who knows his place, but who sadly ends up becoming an outlaw because of an

unfortunate altercation with Théo Lemieux. With this act, he turns back into the foreigner who the law must punish in an exemplary way. [18] (188)

In the film, Théo says about Italians (or "Macaroni" as he likes to call them): "They'll learn to stay in their place!" [19] The idea being illustrated here is that there is a restricted "place" (literal or symbolic) where these supposed subordinates must remain in isolation, not causing trouble and being as invisible as possible.

Though Ninetta's refusal to go back to Italy suggests that identity is always evolving, this film still fails to completely subvert all the hegemonic narratives about the state by implying that Ninetta wants to become "rooted" in Canada, thus bringing the evolution of her identity to a standstill. Giuseppe's brother Salvatore comes to Montreal from Italy to force Ninetta's return to their native country, but because Ninetta has decided that she now belongs in Canada, he will not succeed. Having been betrayed by his host country, Giuseppe wants her to leave, saying that this country is not for her, not for them. Tana's insistence on the drama of immigration is apparent in the following comments about the film:

The double structure of *La Sarrasine* aims to reflect the double drama of immigration. The murder is really just a metaphor for the violence of uprooting (…) Because immigration is always this double experience: the death of something and the birth of another. (…) For me, nothing is more dramatic than seeing people leave for a destination and reach another, sometimes with no future and always as a one-way trip. [20] (Privet 13)

Gural-Migdal and Salvatore point out several instances where in the press and with financing institutions Tana has been relegated to the category of "ethnic filmmaker", one that he hates. This has once again created the opposite effect of what he desired, as it perpetuates stereotypes about Italian immigrants because their ethnic origin cannot be transcended (but we should remember here that he himself does not wish for it to be fully transcended). When their book was published, Tana was still writing the screenplay for *La Déroute*, and Gural-Migdal and Salvatore point out how this film will be about "the fatality of origins" (179). This is because the main character cannot let go of his peasant Sicilian identity, and thus he cannot belong to Canada, and so he inevitably must die (Gural-Migdal and Salvatore 179). However, I would argue that it is not primarily Joe's "Sicilian temper" that makes him unfit to live in Canada, but it is rather the frightening spectre of difference he represents that must be annihilated. The constraints imposed by "the culture of a country" have been termed "inevitable" by Gural-Migdal and Salvatore (193). Are we not voluntarily locking ourselves in a fatalist discourse if we perpetuate this perception? In this line of thought, anyone who does not conform to the homogenous and restrictive construct of what has become the cultural norm of a country risks marginalization.

L'ANGE DE GOUDRON

L'ange De Goudron is about a family of Algerian immigrants living in Montreal who are awaiting their citizenship documents. This is jeopardized, however, by their son Hafid's involvement with a radical activist group that is trying to stop the deportation of illegal immigrants. When he is caught on camera stealing documents from the Immigration Canada office, Hafid goes into hiding. His girlfriend (Huguette) and his father (Ahmed) then embark on a road trip across the snowy landscapes of Quebec to find him. Though they do manage to find Hafid, they are unable to stop him from destroying the immigrants' papers, an act which will prevent their deportation. As a result, Hafid is then beaten to death by angry police officers. Denis Chouinard has said that his films about immigrants carry the desire to build bridges between them and Quebecers (Chouinard backcover). He says to always have been fascinated by their lives which he saw as parallel universes to his own (Chouinard 7). Though they are the relevant reflection of a pressing reality about racism and violence, his films do not subvert the vocabulary of the state because they adhere to the fatalism that I am describing in this essay. His characters are consistently forced to experience profound loss, mainly through death, in order to come anywhere close to achieving a sense of belonging.

The film also criticizes how activist groups can sometimes fall prey to a type of religious secularism, and how this can perpetuate hierarchical power structures of the status quo. When Hafid gets too carried away with the activist group without thinking of the possible repercussions, Huguette tells him that he should stop thinking they are the IRA (a movement that strove for the unification of a nation-state). Roberto, the veteran activist who paradoxically acts as the authority figure in an anarchical structure, is criticized for involving Hafid in something that will jeopardize any chance he has of getting Canadian citizenship. Roberto also forces Ahmed, a Muslim, to drink alcohol or else he won't talk to him. Through his hypocrisy and authoritarianism, we

see that Roberto refuses to engage with alterity and he ultimately recreates the very social dynamics of power imbalances that he denounces. He firmly believes in defending the right to citizenship for immigrants, but only if they agree to live as he does. The film ends on a bitter note, because though the Kasmi family do receive Canadian citizenship, their son died fighting for other immigrants that were not offered this privilege.

Released in theatres only four days before September 11, 2001, the film suffered from bad timing. Some journalists described Hamid's actions as terrorism, though Chouinard stressed the fact that there is a difference between activism and terrorism (Kelly F6). *L'ange De Goudron* has been called "…a type of UFO in the landscape of Quebec cinema, which is usually white, Francophone and de souche (pureblood)." [21] (Blanchard 60). A less than flattering comparison between aliens and immigrants… (Though by this I am not implying that aliens are unflattering species to be compared to, but rather referring to the fear that they evoke in certain earthlings).

It is significant that the men who die in these films fall prey to the police, as the police serve as a state run tool of control over the population and tend to target "others" more often than the dominant population. Foucault explains how such a notion functions in the modern state: As a result, the modern State can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain limits and subject to certain conditions. What in fact is racism? It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die. (Foucault 254)

Ultimately, it is really what is different about their identity that must be usurped for the current status quo to thrive. As Foucault states: When I say "killing," I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection and so on. (Foucault 256)

The unexplained acceptance of some immigrants for citizenship versus the deportation of others can also be linked to Foucault's ideas on state racism and the aforementioned form of "killing" symbolized by expulsion and rejection. A line such as: "Ah! Mon sacrament! [Quebecer swear word/insult] I'll show you how it works here!" [22] from a police officer towards Hamid before beating him to death shows how state racism creates and perpetuates inequalities.

There are numerous examples of biopolitical forces at play throughout *L'ange De Goudron*. The immigration officer's patronizing comment about Naima's pregnancy and the fact that the baby will be born after they receive citizenship is indicative of this: "…he'll be a real little Canadian in good standing." [23] The images of Immigration Canada and the hackers' success in deleting the files containing information about the immigrants to be deported show an interesting attempt to defy biopolitical technological disciplinary and regularizing power. This control functions at the level of the individual but also with the multiplicity: "…I would say that discipline tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and, if need be, punished" (Foucault 242). The film activates Foucault's observations, because as the hackers succeed in erasing information about the immigrants to be deported, the surveillance cameras record their actions. At the end of the film, what Ahmed says to his deceased son is very significant in light of the present analysis and shows the key moment where the film is unable to step out of the established vocabulary of the nation: "Your presence here, now eternal, definitely seals our sense of belonging to this territory for me, Naima, Djamila and the little Salim who you will never meet, but who will grow up knowing how his big brother's heart was filled with so much courage. I now walk with my head held high, Hafid. I've understood that a man's place in society, is the one he takes." [24]

For Ahmed, the death of his son has created the promise of belonging to this territory. New space is created in the confines of the territory for them to exist on, as Hafid sacrifices himself like a brave warrior and martyr, saving two hundred refugees from deportation, and ultimately symbolizing his family's new roots now that he is six feet underground. Once more, the tragic narrative of sacrifice creates the possibility of belonging. As in wartime logic, for "us" to be safe and truly prosper, some brave souls among us must give our lives. To speak the language of the biopolitical is to buy into the hierarchies of state formations that encourage hegemonies, borders, injustice and inequality.

Chouinard has said about his film that it is "…a very tragic story that accurately depicts the reality of immigrants today." [25] (Martel 42) It represents part of the reality, but is it not creating a new hegemony to insinuate that it represents the reality of all immigrants?

Contributing to the discourse about the immigrant as sacrificial, Chouinard has said about his film: "I wanted (…) to show the calm strength and the abnegation of these shadow people…" [26] (Press release for *L'ange De Goudron*). Again, the belief in the inevitability of loss and tragedy is conveyed in these words: "I chose to build the film around contrasts to demonstrate the huge cleavage that must necessarily happen within the Kasmi family so that it can integrate into a such a different universe (Quebec) compared to their native Algeria." [27] (Press release for *L'ange De Goudron*).

Chouinard also sees immigration in terms of rooting: "For Denis Chouinard it's useless to ignore it: within a generation or two, Quebec society will be radically transformed by the rooting of all these new citizens. The displacement of populations is a major issue of the 21st century. In Quebec, it's only just starting, especially considering the large territory we have." [28] (Provencher G1). As welcoming and well intentioned as this may be, it still implies the necessity for the problematic notion of rooting in the creation of identity.

LANDSCAPE

The use of images of landscape in these films contributes to the mythical notion of what Quebec identity is intrinsically anchored in. In four out of the six films that have been discussed, images of vast white snowy landscapes (both urban and rural) abound. The notion of the immigrant as antagonist to this terribly cold weather results from this persistent imagery. This bilateral hostility feeds into the conflicting relationship between the immigrant and the host country, though there have been instances where it is engaged with critically. As Tana has said about the image of Ninetta over a white field: "Snow represents this uniformity that can no longer be. It's the purity of the race, of the pure laine francophone identity. It is challenged by this immigration." [29] (Perrault) This frequent return to the image of the landscape to symbolize the essence of Quebec or Canadian identity, even if it is intruded upon by a new group, does not subvert the original mythology that it creates. Using the work of the Group of Seven to speak about this, Manning says:

Generations of Canadians have grown up seeing Canada through the paintings of the Group, taught the link between territory and identity as a window into "their" landscape, where "the great purpose of landscape art is to make us at home in our own country" (Hill 1995:83). The landscape, foregrounded as the "true" image of Canada, is understood as an essential proponent in the nationalizing attempts to relegate the discourse of "Canadian identity" to notions of vastness and emptiness… (Manning 2)

We still carry this belief, occluding the presence of the First Nations before the arrival of Europeans on this land. The idea that there is a vast emptiness that immigrants can also now appropriate occludes it further. On Chouinard's choice to put Ahmed in the "snowy desert" of Quebec as he calls it, he has said that he wished to remove the immigrant from the safe Montreal ghettos in which they are often confined to put him in "…this big white desert that also belongs to him and that his duties as a citizen lead towards "all" the territorial reality of his new country, not only to the small, tangible and "secure" ghetto that is often that of newcomers." [30] (Press release for *L'ange De Goudron*).

SPEAKING THE DOMINANT LANGUAGE VERSUS TRANSCENDING IT

Though these films are critical, they are not subversive. They do not fully challenge the discourses that have caused the very inequities that they deplore. Death can be a metaphor for transformation of course. But these narratives also imply that after the death of the sacrificial lamb, the transformation has been completed and those that are left behind are free to root themselves in this new territory. It is unfortunate that this state of transition has to be consistently punctuated with tragic deaths. Not because they are not part of the potential reality of what it means to move from one place to another, but rather because they imply that it must necessarily be tragic. The recurring image of rooting also implies a finality in the formation of identity. As we have seen, these films potentially reiterate exclusionary narratives about state sovereignty. Perpetuating these narratives where death becomes inextricably bound with the loss of one's ethnic identity will simply result in the stagnation of ideas on belonging, nationhood, identity, origins, etc. This is not to say that we should ignore all the very real and terrible violence that the racism inherent in homogenous visions of the state has caused and keeps causing, nor stop making movies or other artworks about them. However, remaining stuck in narratives that keep reiterating this fact risks producing the opposite effect desired by the creators that are denouncing them; remaining trapped in them without the possibility of moving beyond them. Origins will remain fatal only as long as we insist that they must be stable, hence static and uniform, if we refuse to see that they are perpetually in motion. A useful concept in thinking about this is that of errant politics as suggested

by Manning:

> ***Errant politics subverts attachments that depend on the stability of territory and identity, rewriting the national vocabulary of belonging into a language movement. To err within politics is to initiate a dialogue that transgresses monologic state sovereignty. (xxvii)***

And also:

> ***Instances of errant politics can be observed in countercoherences to the nation, such as cultural texts that decry the nation's exclusivity by emphasizing counterarticulations that serve to undermine national narratives of attachment. (Manning xxix)***

The films I have written about do not sever themselves from these narratives of attachment. On the contrary, they crave them because of their unattainable nature. This of course does not imply the need for a perpetual physical nomadism, however it is an important plea against the stagnation of ideas and politics. Representing origins as fatal may be an important stage in the representation of groups that have been marginalized, however if we wish to contribute in removing them from this marginalization, their representations must evolve past this state. Let us not forget that as Michael Shapiro says:

> ***The identity stories that construct actors as one or another type of person (e.g., Jew versus Arab, native versus immigrant) and that territorialize identities (e.g., resident versus nomad, citizen versus foreigner) are the foundations for historical and contemporary forms of antagonism, violence, and interpretive contention over the meaning of actions. (Shapiro 173)***

To maintain the trend of these narratives about immigrants who inevitably go through loss in the form of death as a metaphor for loss of identity is dangerous because we risk contributing to an essentialist idea of what the immigrant experience must look like. These narratives of killing also prove the necessity for biopolitics to: "… expose its own race to the absolute and universal threat of death. Risking one's life, being exposed to total destruction, was one of the main principles inscribed in the basic duties of the obedient" (Foucault 259-260). Thus constantly reiterating that immigrating can be a risk, even a deadly risk, might make immigrants more afraid of challenging injustices in a non-dichotomous way. Foucault also suggests that racism can exist only when there is the risk of physical death (262). Our aim should thus be to reduce these risks of death by dismantling structures of power that contribute to them instead of simply reiterating ad nauseam that they exist. Constantly creating images of death risks feeding the fear, anger and hate that cause racism instead of dissipating it. To perpetuate images of immigrants as victims divests them of their power to move beyond that state. Similarly, several pure laine Quebecers are also tired of seeing themselves as the colonized victims of Anglophones and wish to move beyond this position to think their politics and their culture differently.

To resist the stagnation of ideas and politics, the concept of the ephemeral is useful: "…the ephemeral refers to the aspects of culture that permit culture to remain incomplete, uncertain, unstable, and, ultimately, indefinable" (Manning 149). However if these films insist in creating an identity of immigrant, that though it is hybrid, becomes itself locked into the semantics of the national, it will become sterile and stop evolving. We should keep in mind the extremely relevant question posed by Manning: "How does a rearticulation of the political ensure that it doesn't simply become a rearticulation of the very politics it seeks to undermine?" (151). It is important to at least conceptualize that it could be possible to go beyond the limits of the nation because as we have seen, if the assertion of identity must be done through the origins, it is inevitable that it will be hegemonic and create divisions. It may seem utopic and impossible to transcend the current system of state formation. However, to wish for it, to consider its possibility, is the first step in moving beyond the current limiting narratives. As Shapiro states: "… ethical theories aimed at a normative inhibition of these antagonisms continue to presume this same geopolitical cartography. To resist this discursive/representational monopoly, we must challenge the geopolitical map" (175-6). When quoting Michel Foucault, Shapiro also says: "…the purpose of critical analysis is to question, not deepen, existing structures of intelligibility" (174). As Erin Manning writes: "…I want to believe that not being 'at home' in the traditional sense does not necessarily belie the possibility of being accommodated" (ix).

"Accommodations" has become a very charged term in Quebec, and holding on to this wish may seem like a provocation to those who view the recent requests for

accommodations by some immigrants as unreasonable. But perhaps this notion needs to be moved outside of the context of ethnicity, outside of a duality between dominant culture and ethnic or religious minority to truly become useful. Denis Chouinard offers an important comment on errant politics:

> ***We are so numbed by the current discourse that Canada is the best country in the world, that all is cool and beautiful. We can't accept to look at the shit around us. It's like we're asleep. I think that filmmakers are there to offer a lucid outlook and say that we should rectify things so society can be in a perpetual selfexamination and in perpetual evolution.*** [31] ***(Porter B1).***

Let's just hope then that the filmmakers we have discussed feel the responsibility to be in constant evolution and their examination of the supposed fatality of origins will only be temporary!

FOOTNOTES

1 Translated from French by the author.

2 Translated from French by the author.

3 They are in fact all well known Quebecer actors, some of which have been in popular films and television shows, making the suspension of disbelief very difficult. Mouawad has been widely criticized for this but he insists that viewers' imaginations can overlook these things. This might be more so the case with his primary medium of expression, theatre, but it does not work cinematically. He has defended himself against these criticisms by saying that if we accept that an actor can play an assassin, he can also play someone from a different culture/origin (Dumais 62). However, it is probably more difficult to hire a real assassin to play in a movie about an assassin than it is to hire Lebanese actors to play in a film about Lebanese people…

4 Translated from French by the author.

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Spotlight on Concordia Film Production: Mike Rollo

Amanda D'Aoust

Mike Rollo is a Montreal-based photographer, filmmaker and professor at Concordia University. He is a founding member of the experimental filmmaking collective, Double Negative. His latest film, *Ghosts And Gravel Roads*, has enjoyed a significant amount of exposure and praise this year at film festivals around the world. He was chosen by the Toronto International Film Festival Group as one of Canada's Top Ten Filmmakers (short film division) for 2008. The following interview is a mixture of two interviews, one by email correspondence and another performed in person. An earlier film of his, *Still/Move*, is also discussed as both "are part of an ongoing study of the Canadian prairie landscape."

Amanda: What initially struck me about your two films, *Still/Move* and *Ghosts And Gravel Roads*, was how successful you were in producing two films, which, on a superficial level, appear to be on similar subject matter. That being said, through your use of subtle aesthetic differences (with sound, camera movement, editing…) you changed the atmosphere, the meaning, of the two films quite a bit.

Mike: *Ghosts And Gravel Roads* is a companion piece to *Still/Move*. Both films explore the history of my family's homesteads rooted in the family album. In *Still/Move*, I was shooting family portraits and snapshots in movement – memory passing in time whereas the landscape was still, trapped in the present. With *Ghosts And Gravel Roads* I was exploring the idea of the photograph as epitaph, commemorating a particular place and time by placing the photographs on decaying buildings in my home province of Saskatchewan. All photographs used in *Ghosts And Gravel Roads* are from my mother's family whereas the photos in *Still/Move* were of my father's family. The aesthetic issues regarding sound, camera movement, and editing were influenced by the surrounding environment. Also, *Still/Move* focused on the rail.

AD: I interpreted *Still/Move*, the earlier of the two films, as having a more nostalgic, even comforting, take on the passage of time. The people in those photos and home movies seem to be so happy (and predominantly children). Is this depiction partially expressing a yearning for that kind of simplicity?

MR: This film takes on a more nostalgic point of view of a community. Perhaps it had something to do with the amount of photographs I was able to work with. My grandfather was an avid photographer and amateur filmmaker. He accumulated a huge amount of prints and home movie footage, which made it easier for me to understand and to organize the history of my father's childhood. I am also thankful that my grandfather had a great eye for composition and framing. The photos do depict happiness, but that's inherent in most photo albums where selfediting does present a dualism of emotion. We are never prone to present the bad memories on celluloid. The most interesting aspect of my grandfather's photography was the sense of motion, whether it was a body in motion, the gestural camera work, or the serial multiplicity of photographs. I was then able to animate these photographs in movement, allow the illusion of motion to present a passage of

time.

AD: History, storytelling, documenting, searching for origins also seem to be themes of this film. This comes across not only through the inclusion of artifacts like old photos, but also through the staging of yourself holding these pictures in your hand for the camera throughout the film.

MR: The film attempts to mark a history through the process of photography, by using the snapshots of the past as a backdrop to the landscape.

AD: The sequence of you filming yourself in the broken window is also a conscious act of self-reflexivity. There are all of these layers of possible interpretations created through the inclusion of different types of material such as the sounds of a train in movement (from a long time ago) juxtaposed with you, the director, in the present projecting your own interpretation of past events.

MR: Yes. It's a way of justifying my presence not only as a filmmaker but also as a member of the family as well. I felt I should not be completely present in the film as the history is pieced together from these documents. The snapshots are not records of my own memories, so the radical cropping of my body, the shadows and the broken reflection serve to illustrate a belonging but not one that is concrete.

AD: With *Still/Move*, a lot can be taken from the title of the film: how elements of being still, being in movement, tie into issues of mortality or even with the passage of time. You include still photographs that are sometimes animated, which are then put into movement by you. Occasionally, these photographs even look like tracks on a railroad while non-diegetic sounds of trains in movement play. Your film is full of examples like these, which also play into the overlapping of memory, history (the past) from the present.

MR: That's a great observation. The formal structure of the piece focused on the dynamics between the interplay of animated photographs and the stillness of the landscape.

AD: Much action, or movement, even life, is created by your manipulation of shots. This is a bit disconcerting because it comes across as though the railroad, this now isolated town in Manitoba, carried so much meaning to these people. To see it now abandoned and in shambles, and in knowing that this place that held so much importance to these people, is somehow revived by having you return there.

MR: This was my father's hometown when he was very young. Both my great grandfather and my grandfather worked for the railroad as conductor and dispatcher. While my great grandfather worked in Winnipeg, my grandfather worked in Sprague where the film takes place. It's a very small community – still active, but the old railroad station no longer exists.

AD: I was wondering why you chose to switch from color to black and white so early on in the film.

MR: I wanted to play with the materials. I felt that simply documenting the landscape in color appeared too constructed, too artificial. My intent was to remind the audience of the act of photography, and that I am recording a place in time. There is an awareness of the apparatus throughout the film such as the change of color, the flares from the end rolls of film, the reflections and shadows of me filming.

AD: Sound is probably the most noticeable element that changes the tone between the two films. In *Still/Move*, it helps to create this sense of movement that is not really present any longer in the mise-en-scene, in the place you're documenting. At the same time, it helps create a sense that the past is still somehow present in the present.

MR: This relates back to my intention of having the present and past cohabitate in the same image. Sounds of the past will drift in the present and vice versa.

AD: I found that with *Ghosts And Gravel Roads*, the soundtrack made it really creepy to watch. It was a lot like a horror film. It seemed to be grappling with some darker, angsty existential dilemmas than the previous film. I had the impression that the theme of this film was more about the conflict between humankind, or community, with nature. Moreover, I had interpreted it as being a commentary on the fruitlessness of human innovation in the face of inevitable mortality.

MR: Stephane Calce conceived the sound design for the film. Heavily influenced by composers Bartok and Legeti, Stephane evoked the minimal sounds that exist in this open space. He also wanted to create a musical entity of the wind, a chorus of voices that shift and float from one image to the next. There are also sound cues and metaphors in the film. For example, incorporating the French prayer over the image of the photograph of children praying. This sound serves two purposes – one

being a literal auditory cue of the photograph and the other, metaphorical, in which the prayer functions as spiritual blessing, a last rite, to the decaying landscape. The catalyst for making *Ghost And Gravel Roads* was my mother's family album from when she was young. There weren't as many of photos to work with as there were for still/move. Since my paternal grandfather was an amateur photographer, I had a lot to work with. It was easier to channel a history through that and to organize the production side of it, and to place those photos in their settings. It was also more difficult to recreate a history for *Ghosts And Gravel Roads* using this method because the photography I did have at my disposal was very strange. All of the figures were ghost-like, there were washed out backgrounds, faces were blurred … they almost seemed like traces, or drawings of sorts. That made me think of how they were similar to these dilapidated houses, these skeletal forms that exist in these wild, open landscapes. I intended to follow a similar process as in *Still/Move* except I became frustrated and anxious. So, the act of frustration comes out in the film, which is an act of self-expression. I wanted to go to these ghost towns and to document them as they are. I didn't want to have any attachment to them. The more poetic style of the film was meant to invoke contemplation and reflection. I didn't want it to be didactic. I never explain that these are photographs of my mother's family. These could belong to anyone. It happens to a lot of other people, other families.

AD: How much preparation did you do before shooting? How did collaboration function with your thematic intentions?

MR: With this film, I did a lot of research at the Saskatchewan Archives. I researched the towns' histories, what made them ghost towns. I then traveled around with my partner, Amber Goodwyn, and began talking with people, local farmers, who were either residents of these ghost towns or who lived in communities that were not too far from them. I could've done a run-of-the-mill documentary – what happened here, what happened there – but I didn't feel that was necessary because I think the images stand on their own and that they're very evocative. They present a power by themselves. If I had introduced a voice-over, it would've shifted the focus onto more minimal things.

AD: So, it's more about the mood?

MR: Yeah, that's what I wanted to concentrate on. On my second trip, I brought Terryll Loffler, who had a fresh perspective of shooting the landscape. It was a week and a half of shooting.

AD: Where did you stay? These are ghost towns.

MR: We mostly stayed at convents in nearby communities. Many of them have been transformed into B&Bs. They were great. They've basically dug some of these communities out of collapse.

AD: Did staying in convents have something to do with this idea of photograph as epitaph?

MR: There are a lot of religious metaphors and sounds. The soundtrack itself is very divine. I know a lot of people find it really dark, but there's this idea of spiritual blessing that kind of becomes a motif throughout, and the photographs are pinned on structures […] which represents care on my part, represents a history shared by a lot of people in Saskatchewan, for people like my mother's family who were pioneers, who did work very hard, who were very poor, who were farmers – this is a kind of respect for their own memory and history.

AD: Like an ode?

MR: Yes, very much. That's why I wanted to use photography to commemorate these towns. The photographs themselves are very odd, and they even represent death … but more the schoolchildren photos. There's an emptiness, an absence, even a touch of sadness. I think this worked well in contrast with the landscape where there is a sort of melancholy, or sadness, but the remains are still there. I find that very touching. The two main institutions in these communities were the farming co-ops and the Church, which is one reason why I wanted to go with a religious tone for the film. The sound of the Our Father in French is very ghostly, but it becomes this presence that weighs down on the emptiness of this house. Towards the end, the chanting voices become a meditative outlook on what's happened and what's there for the future.

If you're interested in learning more about Mike Rollo and his work, you can visit his personal website Constructor.

Edited by Lindsay Peters.