Matthew Rankin

A Wolfe in Montcalm’s Clothing: 
An Exploration into the Figure of Betrayal within 
the Mythistories of Meech Lake 
(Québec Français, 1987-1995)

Mémoire présenté 
à la Faculté des études supérieures de l’Université Laval 
dans le cadre du programme de maîtrise en histoire 
pour l’obtention du grade de maître ès arts (M.A.)

FACULTÉ DES LETTRES 
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL 
QUÉBEC

Décembre 2004

NOTICE: The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

AVIS: L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.
RÉSUMÉ / ABSTRACT


This Master’s Thesis aims to examine the way by which Franco-Québec intellectuals and public figures have approached Canadian constitutional history between 1980 and 1995 as a narrative of Québec nationhood. Using the post-modernist tool-kit of discourse analysis and the constructivist approach to identity and nationhood, the essay explores the meanings and narrative function of Pierre Elliott Trudeau as an archetypal traitor figure to the Québec nation throughout a large canon of narrative, political writings published between 1987 and 1995.
REMERCIEMENTS

Tout d'abord et avant tout je dois sincèrement remercier Monsieur Jocelyn Létourneau, titulaire de la Chaire de recherche du Canada en histoire et économie politique du Québec contemporain, pour sa générosité, ses conseils et son encouragement. C'était toujours très stimulant d'étudier sous la direction de cet historien qui, par son originalité, m'a conduit aux nouveaux lieux de savoir.

J'aimerais également exprimer ma gratitude à Monsieur Martin Paquet de l'Université Laval, dont les commentaires et critiques d'une version préliminaire de ce texte ont grandement amélioré le produit final, ainsi que Monsieur Brian Young de l'Université McGill pour sa grande érudition et sa confiance en mon travail d'historien.

Je dois également remercier mes chers amis et collègues étudiants à l'Université Laval. Je pense notamment à Frédéric Demers, Patricia-Anne DeVriendt, Yves Bégin, Dominique Foisy-Geoffroy, Frédéric Boily, Louis-Pascal Rousseau, Julie Lavigne, Marie Lebel et Julie Gagné. Nos échanges et discussions ont beaucoup alimenté ma pensée tout au long de la recherche et de l'écriture de ce mémoire. Je peux dire que ce mémoire est beaucoup plus riche et nuancé grâce à la présence de ces personnes dans ma vie.

Je n'aurais certainement pas eu le même niveau de liberté pour mener à bien ce projet d'études sans l'appui financier du CRSH (le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada). Cette institution est une grande amie des jeunes chercheurs au Québec et au Canada et je les remercie pour avoir appuyé mon travail.

Finalement, je dois prononcer ma gratitude à l'endroit de l'Université Laval pour m'avoir permis de rédiger ce mémoire dans ma langue. Ce n'est déjà pas facile d'articuler des idées complexes avec la précision dans ma première langue et je peux dire sincèrement que ce travail serait considérablement moins éloquent si je l'avais écrit dans ma langue seconde. C'était pour moi un honneur d'étudier à cette grande institution francophone et je suis reconnaissant de sa compréhension et de son ouverture à mon égard.
TABLE DES MATIÈRES

RÉSUMÉ/ABSTRACT.................................................................................1
REMERCIEMENTS..................................................................................ii
TABLE DE MATIÈRES...............................................................................iii

INTRODUCTION..............................................................................................1
I. Quelques hypothèses.................................................................................3
II. Problématique.........................................................................................7
III. L’état de la question..............................................................................9
IV. Déroulement...........................................................................................11

CHAPTER 1: Methods of Probing for Betrayal in the Meech Universe..................12
I. Traitor as Discourse..............................................................................13
II. Meech as Mythistory............................................................................15
III. Corpus analytique...............................................................................19
IV. Awkward Positions............................................................................25

CHAPTER 2: The Robes of Montcalm: Notes on Continuity, Interiority and
Legitimacy within the Betrayal Discourse..............................................29

CHAPTER 3: The Inner Wolfe: Trudeau as Agent of Tragedy and Hate..................41
I. Sadness and the Law of Infinite Return: Meech as Tragedy.......................42
II. Une identité piégée: The Argumentative Expatriation of Trudeau.............48
III. Trudeau as Master, Trudeau as Slave: The Two Imaginative Postures of Betrayal..................................................................................56
IV. Repatriation and Death........................................................................62
V. Lord Durham is Alive and Well and Living in Brockville, ON.....................66
VI. The Tragic Order..................................................................................70
VII. The Opposite of Québec.......................................................................74
VIII. Conclusion: The Wolfe in Montcalm’s Clothing....................................77

CHAPTER 4: L’Homme de 1982: A Comparative Glance at Jean Chrétien............80
I. Chrétien as Bargain Basement Trudeau.................................................81
II. Chrétien and the Pompes of Satan.........................................................84
III. Les Rocheuses.....................................................................................89
III. Conclusion: Chrétien as Evidence of Tragedy.......................................94

CHAPTER 5: On Betrayal, the Crisis and Mythistory: Une conclusion exploratoire.....96

BIBLIOGRAPHIE.......................................................................................119
A Wolfe in Montcalm's Clothing: 
An Exploration into the Figure of Betrayal within 
the Mythstories of Meech Lake

INTRODUCTION

"In this imaginary world of the Crisis, it is always five minutes to midnight."
- IAN MCKAY

AS QUÉBEC AGONIZED THROUGH the political crisis of the early 1990s, our intellectuals and public figures unremittingly attempted to focus our collective attention upon a specific set of stories. We are now quite familiar with these stories, and their habitual patterns, for they have been repeated in the political discourse almost by rote, hammered into public consciousness in an emergency effort to mobilize us all away from various impending catastrophes of impoverishment, fragmentation and collapse. The story of the Repatriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982 was sewn into a seamless narrative fabric with the ensuing Death of the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 and both histories were recounted with the aim of explaining why the 1995 referendum on sovereignty was being held, and what our most semantically and morally assured response to it should be. These histories of the Crisis were ordered into intricate narrative continuities with all envisaged federalist and sovereigntist futures (and pasts) for Québec. And regardless of the political framework in which these stories of Crisis are retold, there is one thematic element that feeds through all. And that element would be betrayal.

"On avait honteusement trompé les Québécois!" shouted Lucien Bouchard before a room full of people in 1990, "Au lieu de faire ce qu'on a dit on a fait le contraire!"² In this declaration of betrayal Bouchard was joined by an entire community of political observers. For UQÀM political scientist Pierre Fournier, Québeckers were "trahis et bernés"³ by the federal government in 1982. For René

---

¹ Ian McKay. “After Canada: On Amnesia and Apocalypse in the Contemporary Crisis.” Acadiensis. XXVIII, 1 (Autumn 1998), pp.76-97
Lévesque’s former Inter-Governmental Affairs minister Claude Morin, the secret defection of the Anglophone provinces during the Nuit des longs couteaux was for Québec “une inexcusable trahison.” Christian Dufour and Léon Dion write that cries of betrayal reverberated throughout Québec in the revelations of 1982. To La Presse columnist Marcel Adam, the betrayal of 1982 was so egregious as to virtually constitute a criminal act of fraud and observes that “après l’adoption de l’Acte constitutionnel de 1982, le premier ministre Trudeau a été accusé de toutes parts, au Québec, d’avoir trahi son engagement vers le Québec.”

Behind every act of treason there is a traitor, and at the very core of this 1982 treason discourse lies the image of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Indeed, Trudeau – that History-perverting ubermensch who betrayed the Québec dream - is held personally responsible for having derailed the nation into crisis. The betrayals represented in the Crisis narratives find their mythic centre in the political intentions, desires, character and actions of this former Prime Minister of Canada. The Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal publicly denounced Trudeau as traitor to Québeckers during the Repatriation discussions of 1981-82, condemning his politics as “anti-Québec.” In his analysis of Canadian constitutional politics in the 1980s, Pierre Fournier qualified the former Prime Minister and his Minister of Justice, Jean Chrétien, as opportunistic “Frogs’ à la rescousse du Canada anglais.”

Political scientist Guy Laforest likens Trudeau’s liberalism to the assimilationist politics of the antithetical figure of Lord Durham, arguing that Québeckers should not trust this politician who is singularly

---

7 Ibid. p.130
8 See Léon Dion. Québec 1943-2000, tome I: À la recherche du Québec. Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, p.70
9 Ibid. p.88
11 Ibid. p. 50 “Pierre Elliott Trudeau n’a selon toute vraisemblance pas menti au printemps de 1980. Toutefois, il ne fut pas digne la confiance des Québécois.”
motivated by “le désir de broyer l’épine dorsale de la communauté québécoise.”
Stepping outside of political science, journalist Michel Vastel plainly observes that within the Québec social discourse Trudeau is “[ce]lui qu’on a si souvent appelé ‘le traître’.” Writing in Montréal in 1994, the radical essayist and filmmaker Pierre Falardeau explains, “Le système de Vichy, c’est ici et maintenant. Les collabos pétainistes, c’est depuis 234 ans.” But perhaps the most public and politicised usage of the traitor image was produced by Lucien Bouchard. In his televised address to the nation at the height of the 1995 referendum campaign, Bouchard famously held up to his television audience the front page of a newspaper from November 1981 identifying Trudeau and Chrétien as traitors. “Tous se rappellent de ce triste épisode de l’histoire du Québec et du Canada.”

Quelques hypothèses

Traître. Trahison. Traîtrise. Trahir. What exactly are we witnessing in these multiple charges of treason? It is not easy, after all, to commit an act of treason in Canada, and even harder to do so in Québec. According to the Criminal Code of Canada, there are basically two legal methods available to those who aspire to the crime. The first is to murder the Queen of England. The second is to assist a foreign enemy who is at war with Canada in undermining the Canadian war effort. Given the fact that Canada has few, if any, clearly defined military enemies with whom it is at war and the fact that the Queen does not even reside on Canadian soil, the traitor’s métier is encumbered from the get-go. In Québec, the state has not formulated any definition of treason independent of the Criminal Code of Canada. In juridical terms, then, it is in fact impossible to betray Québec. Yet within these formal definitions of traitor we immediately detect the link between traitor and the myths of nationhood that lie beyond the juridical forms of the state. For why else would it simply be “murther” to kill Paul Martin or anybody else while it is “High Treason” to

---

12 Ibid, p.245
assassinate the Queen? The answer lies in the imaginary elements that structure the political and institutional culture in Canada, which have in turn been enshrined in law to define the juridical meanings of “loyalty” to the state. The law, then, is in this sense born of the imaginary of nations. But of course, the imaginative drive of national belonging extends the discourse of loyalty far beyond the legal apparatus of statehood. During his Free Trade negotiations with the United States in the late 1980s, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was frequently accused by Anglo-Canadian nationalists of having betrayed Canada, of glad-handing Ronald Reagan, of selling out to the American colossus.\textsuperscript{16} Juridically, Mulroney committed no crime of disloyalty. The \textit{Criminal Code} includes no subsection that would forbid the singing of “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling” with an American president. Yet within the imaginary framework of Anglo-Canadian nationalism and the systems of morality that affirm and defend that realm of national belonging, Mulroney’s transactions with the American Other were conceived as an act against Canadian nationhood, against the very people whose democratic power the office of Prime Minister is meant to symbolize.

In exactly the same manner, the traitor we are witnessing in the textual forms attributed to Trudeau and Chrétien is a figure born of political imagination whose crime is identified and determined within an interpretive, moral position on the Québec national interest. Four hypothetical observations about the mythic traitor will guide the inquiry of this mémoire, all of which are firmly rooted in the way by which national communities recount their story of nation.

Firstly, the traitor is an archetype within a textual mise-en-scène of national history. As Raoul Girardet has observed in his studies of the recurring theme of \textit{la Conspiration} within political writings of France, the archetypal “homme du complot”

is located and represented within a real human actor. This figure is then brought to
textually incarnate all that is horrible, dark and destructive within the national
imagination: “l’homme du complot s’épanouit dans les fétidités obscures; assimilé
aux animaux immondes, il rampe et se faufile; visqueux et tentaculaire, il répand le
poison et l’infection.”17 In essence, the traitor is one role within a Pantheon of
archetypal characters that are distributed in historical narratives by way of an
imaginative “casting”. The Traitor, like the Hero, the Saviour, the Scapegoat and so
forth, is thus an imaginative structure under which the identity and actions of a real
human actor are narrated. This is not as abstract as it may sound. Anyone who has
witnessed an election campaign will have noticed how political parties often portray
their candidate as an heroic, right-thinking leader while the rival candidate is
contrarily portrayed as a dangerous extremist. We assign symbolic roles to real
people by processing their actions within an ideologically-conditioned narrative
framework and subjecting them to scrutiny.

This brings me to my second point, that the traitor figure is identified first and
foremost by his actions and as such the identity of the traitor can scarcely be
conceived outside of a narrative system. In its most elementary of states, narrative
structure is formed out of conflict and characters in a temporal intercourse that hinges
upon action. A traitor is not genetically programmed for betrayal; his identity is born
out perceived acts of disloyalty, acts of rupture, breech, contradiction and hypocrisy.
In essence, if a human actor is designated as “traitor” it is because the narrative can
show his personal trajectory to run contradictory to an established parcours of the
nation.

The narrator’s use of contradiction reveals my third point: the contradiction
inherent within the act of betrayal is that of both belonging to and acting against the
defined community; it is the existential position of being both an agent of Self and of
the enemy Other. As Léon Dion observes of the traitor figure in Québec identity,
“Les Québécois ont eu leur part de ‘collaborateurs’ avec l’‘ennemi’ ou, du moins,

---

ont-ils souvent cru que tel était le cas.” With the narration of Self, the traitor figure is deeply implicated in some association with an at least potentially hostile and foreign Other. Whether it be André Laurendeau’s famous conception of Maurice Duplessis as the colonial roi-nègre who gratified Anglo-American imperialism at the expense of his own, or Maurice Séguin’s denunciation of Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine as an impostor that sold-out French Canada to the British Crown, the traitor’s narrative function is marked by transactions with a powerful and dangerous Other. The traitor’s narrative function is one of antagonistic conflict with his own people. Though he can claim membership within the defined community, his association with the Other makes him imaginatively unrecognizable – indeed, veritably foreign – within his community’s established texts of national Self. It is in this narrative framework that the traitor can be seen as a text of identity fundamentally marked by paradox, contradiction and ambiguity. To betray is to step out of the coherence of continuity and step into an incomprehensible and dangerous world of opposites.

Fourthly, and perhaps most important of all, the traitor is an historical paradigm, a way of thinking about and imagining the past in its ensemble. Trudeau as a traitor figure is a functional constituent part of a broad historical synthesis, an ideologically structured observation post from which many be conceived as a coherent process. The traitor figure emerges in a very specific political context – one of conflict and crisis, in which the coherence of the national narrative and the very meaning of “continuity” within the national context is being challenged, contested and even attacked. To reformulate in brief, the traitor is an archetypal construction of antagonism and contradiction, represented within the actions of a real human actor and ordered within mise-en-scène of historical narratives of nation.

---

18 Léon Dion, À la recherche du Québec, p.69
Problématique

How might we bring these hypotheses to historical study? In what intellectual space can we isolate this figure of betrayal for historical analysis? While the traitor figure might be a perenniel icon in the discourse of any national community, the images of traitor, as I have already proposed, are perhaps most intense when the nation finds itself political crisis and its intellectual and political elites aim to mobilize public opinion. As such, we may collect interesting historical data from a deep reading of what Ian McKay has perceptively termed the Canadian “Crisis Literature.”20 This is an extraordinary body of writing, largely produced by Anglo-Canadian and Franco-Québec academics in response to the Canadian Constitutional “Crisis” of the early to mid 1990s.21 The Québec Crisis Literature, from which I have already liberally quoted above, provides a rich corpus of Québec national identity narratives in which we may investigate and analyse the traitor archetype. Produced almost entirely between 1990 and 1995, the Québec Crisis Literature includes volumes written by virtually every major contemporary observer of the Québec national question – from radical indépendentistes like Pierre Falardeau and Pierre Bourgault to anti-nationalist Québec federalists like Pierre Trudeau and Max Nemni. Most of these authors, furthermore, privilege narrative structures in debating the “Canada-Québec Crisis.” Even in their rhetorical argumentation, the authors afford much detailed attention to the role of character, conflict, plot and even genre. Léon Dion, for example, emplots the constitutional intrigue thusly:

Il s’agit bien d’un duel. D’un côté, c’est toujours un seul et même héros qui s’escrime: le Québec. De l’autre coté, le gouvernement fédéral est son principal opposant. Les autres – les provinces – lui souhaitent la victoire, lui prêtent main-forte à l’occasion, font des crocs-en-jambe à l’adversaire commun. ….Les protagonistes s’essouflent, observent une trêve, reprennent les hostilités, se livrent à des mises en forme solaires, s’élancent, reculent, feintent,

The chaos of crisis is in this way ordered into a literary form that Vincent Lemieux has designated as "a social drama in two acts," comprised of the Repatriation narrative – act one – and the Saga of the Meech Lake Accord – act two. To these two acts might be added an avant-garde third act climax in the form of an emerging sovereignty referendum, for the authors continually project their narratives into this yet unattained eventuality. It is through storytelling that these "époque-making events" are made; it is in part through this literary process that meanings are generated for facts such that they may become événements marquants. As Paul Ricoeur has written with uncharacteristic simplicity, "les événements sont construits en même temps que le sont les récits qui les englobe." Indeed Ricoeur’s observation can just as easily be extended to the construction of "historical figures," heroes and villains. And certainly the Crisis authors have given much narrative attention to the "historical significance" of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Jean Chrétien against whom, as we have seen, the charge of treason has been explicitly enunciated by many political observers. What we are witnessing in the Crisis Literature, then, is the construction of a new chapter within what Jocelyn Létournau has termed the "grand récit collectif des Québécois d’héritage canadien-français"; one that brings meaning to the past and the present and draws continuities with imagined futures. These narratives of Meech may also be termed "mythstories," for within their presentation of "facts," there are aesthetic, argumentative and ideological operations at play (of which the traitor is part) that aim to mobilize political action. Mythstories may be conceived as an essential intellectual operation in the construction of national communities. The underlying presumption of this study is that the mythistorical construction, far from being the erroneous falsehood or fabrication upon which their structuralist detractors

---

22 Dion, Duel constitutionnel, p.7
so urgently insist, may actually be appreciated as a source of *truths* within the historical reality of social, cultural and national construction. The aim of this study, thus, is to take a look at the traitor figure (and by consequence, the nation) from a constructivist, as opposed to primordialist, viewpoint in order to explore how the discursive processes of myhistoire bring form to this object of political imagination. This position is explored with the belief that the traitor figure can be conceived as a social construction much like race, gender, ethnicity and class would be.

*L’état de la question*

There are a few minor discussions of the traitor as a construction, though all of them are brief tangential notes that form a molecular part of a broader analytic synthesis. Raymond Morris, in an article published in *Recherches sociologiques*, observes representations of federalist traitors to Québec in the political cartoons of Berthio in the mid-1960s. But Morris’ observations are anecdotal, limited to the work of one artist and certainly not reflective of the place of the traitor within a broader political discourse. Closer to my domain of investigation is Anne Trépanier’s reference to the traitor figure in her analysis of the sovereigntist literature that surrounded the 1995 referendum campaign for the OUI. Again Trépanier’s reference to the traitor construct is fleeting, almost inconsequential to the main thrust of her study, but she does situate it within a narrative order. Elaborating a semiotic argument inspired by Roland Barthes’ “Analyse structurale des récits,” Trépanier maintains that the sovereigntist discourse in 1995 contained a certain narrative grammar in which the idea of the traitor was of semantic relevance. She does not,

---

21 Here I am borrowing from Girardet’s definition of political myth: “mythe au sens le plus complet du terme: à la fois fiction, système d’explication et message mobilisateur.” *Myths*, p.98
however, examine precisely how the traitor figure is constructed or represented within this narrative order, nor the meanings attributed to it, which are the central pillars of my proposed study. Furthermore, I withdraw theoretically from Trépanier’s use of the structuralist, semiotic argument, which I will explain further along. Political scientist Léon Dion has made the most interesting analysis in a very brief but nonetheless useful two-page bilan of the figure traitor in the collective imaginary of Québec. Dion looks at the traitor figure as an artefact of Québec identity and argues that it is an image formed out of the nationalist desire for political unanimity.29 Dion’s observation is interesting, but remains anecdotal. What simply does not exist in Québec historiography of any kind, however, is an in-depth analytical engagement with the traitor figure as a construction in narratives of nation.30 This is in a sense somewhat surprising given the fact that social scientists and political observers have manifestly detected the presence of this figure in the Québec political discourse for some time. Furthermore, there have been no critical studies of the mythic spaces occupied by Trudeau and Chrétien within discourses of Québec identity, notwithstanding the complex and widely criticised relationship that

30 The most systematic study of traitor would be the recent monograph published by sociologist Stéphane Kelly. La petite loterie: comment la Couronne a o bien c ollaboration du Canada français. Montréal: Boréal, 1997. In it Kelly asks how Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, Étienne Parent and George-Étienne Cartier, all of whom were republican Patriots in the 1837 rebellions, could transform into Conservative monarchists with the Act of Union and the 1867 Confederation. To explain this metamorphosis, Kelly structures his analysis around the disloyal figure of the Parvenu, a conceptual formula developed by Hannah Arendt to describe the political fragmentation of the Jewish diaspora in pre-Fascist Europe. Kelly argues that the British Crown regained support in French Canada after 1837 by bribing a small number of influential and opportunistic sell-outs. Much of Kelly’s book is spent arguing that Lafontaine, Cartier and Parent put their own material interests ahead of the national interest of their own people. Effectively, Kelly’s history takes a primordialist approach to traitor. The traitor is conceived as being a given, a concrete historical operative that can be empirically measured and demonstrated. The object of the historical investigation is not to study the traitor, but to prove the existence of the traitor as a sociological phenomenon within a given historical process. Conversely, I could also site a highly partisan essay written by the UQAM linguist and Trudeauphile, Monique Nenni. In “Les histoires qu’on raconte sur Pierre Elliott Trudeau.” Cité Libre. Mars-avril 1997, Nenni attacks what she perceives to be a negative representation of the former Prime Minister in Québec history textbooks. Here the effort is to disprove the charges of treason harboured against Trudeau and Nenni’s argument seems to fundamentally rest on the belief that certain “myths” surrounding the former Prime Minister are untrue and should be corrected with “facts”. And yet the “corrections” Nenni proposes are really no less “mythological” or “untrue” than those she denounces. They simply form a rival, a heterogeneous mythistory about Trudeau. Ultimately, then, there exists some systematic, but resolutely primordialist efforts in social science prove or disprove a perceived historical reality of frowned. Such a historiography is interesting for it suggests the extent to which historical heroes and villains are argumentative by-products of historical narratives.
these politicians have maintained with their *collectivité natale* and its identity politics. In this sense, then, the proposed study is poised to take us into analytical terrain of Québec national identity that has not, to this point, been critically explored.

*Deroulement*

Unravelling in five parts, this essay will demonstrate how the historic figure of Pierre Elliott Trudeau is narrated and argued into an archetypal form of traitor within the Crisis literature and the meanings and functions of this construction within the Crisis authors’ discourse on Québec national identity. The first chapter will showcase the conceptual and methodological approaches I will be favouring in order to isolate the traitor figure within mythstories for analytical observation. Chapter II will show how the authors have approached the question of Trudeau’s *quębécité* and how the initial establishment of Trudeau’s Québec Self is an essential structural precondition to narrating his act of betrayal. Chapter III will demonstrate the discursive strategies employed by the Crisis narratives in assigning Trudeau his identity as betrayer. I will show how the Trudeau text is imaginatively expatriated from defined realms of *quębécité*, how Trudeau is presented as a space of identity possessed by the English Other, the meanings associated therein, and finally, how Trudeau the antagonist is emplotted within a tragic narrative order of Québec national Self. Chapter IV will conduct a comparative survey of the images of disloyalty attributed to Jean Chrétien, charting further spaces and narrative functions of treason. Throughout I will attempt to show how these images of betrayed Self are narrated in the interest of collective mobilization and imaginative reawakening in an hour of political crisis. Chapter V will propose an exploratory conclusion, appraising these mythstories of betrayal, the historical understanding and paradigms of identity they defend, the historical and intellectual contexts that produced them and the collective action they aim to provoke.
Chapter I.  
Methods of Probing for Betrayal 
in the Meech Lake Universe

"La fidélité est la première de toutes les vertus; elle donne son unité à notre vie 
qui, sans elle, s'éparpillerait en milles impressions fugitives.... 
"Trahir, c'est sortir du rang. Trahir, c'est sortir du rang dans l'inconnu."

- Milan Kundera

IN THE MONTHS FOLLOWING the 1995 referendum, a brief war of words was 
exchanged between Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Lucien Bouchard in the pages of La 
Presse. Trudeau, in what would be the last public intervention before his death in 
September 2000, accused Bouchard of having betrayed Québec. Bouchard objected 
to such a use of rhetoric and formulated an intriguing response. He wrote:

Même s’il a été largement utilisé pour décrire les événements 
entourant la promesse référendaire de M. Trudeau, puis l’attitude 
du Canada anglais lors des négociations de 1981, le mot ‘trahison’ 
ne fait pas partie de mon vocabulaire et, contrairement à ce 
qu’affirment certains leaders fédéralistes [...] je ne l’ai jamais 
employé.

During Bouchard’s years as Opposition leader in Ottawa, the word “traitor” was not 
infrequently hurled at him as an insult during his visits to Anglophone Canada, and 
Bouchard was disturbed by its demonizing severity, its nearly war-like vilification. 
Speaking to Le Soleil he said, “Accuser quelqu’un [d’être un] traître, transposé en 
terms criminels, c’est la pendaison. La traîtrise dans le domaine public, c’est à peu 
près le pire crime qu’on puisse commettre. » To use such language lightly, then, is 
in a sense to see an aberration rather than an opponent. And indeed Bouchard has, 
throughout his political career, meticulously barred this term from his active 
vocabulary.

32 Lucien Bouchard. “Quinze ans n’ont pas suffi à réparer le tort que Trudeau a fait au Québec. » La 
Presse. 10 février 1996, p. B3
33 Lucien Bouchard, Le Soleil, 4 février 1996.
Yet, at the same time, a deeper reading of Bouchard’s rhetoric reveals that much discursive space is made available for this very accusation to take form. Even in the above citation we see that Bouchard is in fact feeding the image of traitor through various texts that he situates outside of his intellectual being. Though he does not sanction the word himself, he identifies a broader social discourse, a collective memory even, which has consigned Trudeau’s behaviour to the realm of treason. His letter goes on to invoke the names of distinguished Québec federalists such as Daniel Johnson fils and Claude Ryan and remarks that it is “intéressant” that they too have observed a betrayal of Québec in Trudeau’s constitutional behaviour. During the referendum campaign, furthermore, in his televised speech to the nation, Bouchard built his Repatriation narrative up to a climactic revelation of betrayal, holding up the front page of the Journal de Québec from November 5 1981. The caption read “Lévesque trahi par ses alliés” and featured an image of Trudeau ad Jean Chrétien laughing hysterically. Bouchard looked at the camera and, again appealing to collective memory, he said, “Tous se rappellent de ce triste épisode de l’histoire du Québec et du Canada. »

By the use of many discursive voices, then, Bouchard constructs a complex image of Trudeau le traître without ever using the word.

_Traitor as Discourse._

My point here is not to make Bouchard out to look like a hypocrite; he is not, and really we should admire his rhetorical gifts. My point is simply to show how the Author may appropriate various different (sub)texts through which the image of the traitor is conveyed and constructed. And this observation could be extended more generally across the Crisis Literature where, as with the Bouchard Canon, the word “traitor” is almost totally absent. When it is invoked, its meaning is subsumed under various objective texts, social artifacts that are situated outside the subjective gaze of the Author, but which he nonetheless decidedly amasses and exhibits as “objective” evidence. It is invoked passively, in quotation, in image, or as a narrative action, or in

---

social discourse to designate "what people say" about Trudeau. Ultimately, the use of word itself irrelevant, for its meaning may be detached and re-channeled into various other argumentative, narrative, metaphoric texts. As such the word "traitor" may remain completely unuttered, and yet its meanings can still be fully transmitted and entrenched. The discursive space in which the meaning of "Trudeau" is represented in the Crisis Literature is one in which the image of the treason is central. To put it simply, the traitor is not constructed out of accusation but out of discourse.

In this sense, Trudeau participates just as actively in the discourse of treason as Lucien Bouchard. Consider Trudeau's 1996 attack on Lucien Bouchard in the pages of La Presse, for example. In it, Trudeau claims that Bouchard misrepresented "the facts" of Canada's constitutional history and of Trudeau's involvement in particular. Trudeau identifies what he believes to be the erroneous assertions in Bouchard's discourse and then proceeds to "correct" them. A close reading of Trudeau's polemic reveals that he is veritably obsessed with the charges of treason that have been waged against him. Repeatedly, Trudeau asserts a version of the Meech Sagas in which his identity and his actions are those of a Québec insider, who legitimately represents the historical continuity and the democratic will of the francophone Québec Self. Trudeau's arguments directly contradict those of Bouchard, and yet we see that the argument is elaborated within a discursive space in which the image of traitor is pivotal. Furthermore, as I will explain in greater detail further along, the establishment of legitimacy – the image of loyalty – is an essential precondition for the act of treason and for the identity of the traitor.

To probe the figure of betrayal then, the student must sift and excavate down into the magma of discourse. As Marc Angenot has argued, social discourse is generated by all of the énoncés that narrate and argue within society.\(^\text{35}\) The figure of betrayal in the Québec political context can be thought of as being the an intellectual artifact (among others, of course) of the complex interplay of different, even rival, agents of narration and argumentation, which may be as wildly contradictory as

Bouchard and Trudeau. In this historical study of the mythistoric figure of the traitor, then, we may consider the author – the one who narrates and argues – as the central historic actor. It is the author that will assign or deny the figure his role in the mythic Pantheon. The isolated discursive case study of the Crisis Literature provides us with an opportunity to approach the traitor as an artefact of intellectual history in an era of politico-constitutional breakdown and to trace its literary construction, its argumentative function, its narrative meanings, and its imaginative value within an historically conditioned political discourse. But it must also be remarked that the strata in which this treason discourse is housed is one of narrativity, that of national history, or more specifically, the mythistory of Meech Lake. The “Crisis” is presented in this literature as something of a chapter in the grand récit national des Québécois in which the traitor plays a central role. By looking specifically at the narrativity of the Trudeau text, we may demonstrate in what way, and to what ends, this figure has been structurally ordered and imaginatively conceived within this chapitre du grand récit as well the function of the traitor archetype within the narrative “syntax,” to borrow Lévi-Strauss’ term. For the traitor figure is part of a broader effort at historical (and national) synthesis; it is discursively employed in reconstructing and arguing the story of the Crisis.

Meech as Mythistory.

We must think of the Crisis – or “Meech” – as a mythistory. In his deconstruction of 19th Century historiography, Hayden White has argued that historical writings may be conceived as literary artifacts and that the indisputable “facts” of history contain no meaning until they are processed into a narrative strategy that is itself extra-historical. This use of narrativity involves the structural (re)ordering of the chaos of history into a coherent literary form involving a beginning, a middle, an end and a “point.” But beyond formal strategizing, narrativity also processes the “facts” of the past through what White has termed an

---

“employment,” a *mise-en-intrigue*, which is an essentially aesthetic and literary structure, such as tragedy, comedy, romance and satire. White goes on to argue that emplotments can be conceived as metaphoric systems that are held up to historical argumentation to colour the meaning of events and organize them into a coherent, meaningful order. Certain facts are retained and underlined whilst others are marginalized or discarded. Neatly organized stories of nation are assembled out of the chaotic and pre-codified detritus of the past, which has been reconstructed into a repertoire of images, tropes, patterns, clichés, Pantheonic figures and so forth.

Let us consider “The Meech Sagas” as a narrative order. The lifespan of the Meech Lake Accord as a constitutional document is the three years between 1987 and 1990. This is not, however, where the authors begin and end their Meech narratives. With remarkable unanimity the authors situate the genesis of the Meech story in the 1980 referendum and most of the narratives start with Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s famous referendum speech of May 14th 1980. In many cases the authors refer to narrative events occurring in the Quiet Revolution, but the Meech narrative as a “chapter” of Québec history begins unerringly in 1980. Even for the Repatriation narratives that were written before the collapse of the Accord are narrated into the yet-to-be-spun fabric of Meech.\(^{37}\) The Referendum, Repatriation and Meech Lake are unified into a semantic order and all three episodes share a common historic temporality. Writing mainly in the early to mid 1990s, the “end” of the Meech narrative is, according to most of the Crisis authors, yet to come and most of them foresee an impending referendum on Québec sovereignty as the terminating sequence or “rendez-vous avec Histoire.” The Charlottetown Accord is almost completely irrelevant to the Crisis Authors. If they mention it at all, its narrative function is dismissed often within one sentence.\(^{38}\) In essence this ensemble of events is

---


\(^{38}\) Léon Dion is the one to give narrative attention to Charlottetown in *Le duel constitutionnel Québec-Canada*. Jean-François Lisée also engages with it in the context of his study of Robert Bourassa, *Le
connected by the intricate narrative decisions of the Author, and this narrative force is what becomes “Meech.” But these narratives operations do not stop at structural organizing. Aesthetic decisions are made which breathe meaning, form and “History” into the Meech Sagas. Out of the aesthetic functions of emplotment spawns the Pantheon. Consider, for example, the following conversation between Lucien Bouchard and Denise Bombardier in September 1992. With extraordinary candour, Bouchard reveals the narrative strategy privileged by his political discourse and its calculated ordering of the historical figures of Trudeau and Lévesque into an extra-historical interplay between the literary archetypes of antagonist versus protagonist, traitor and tragic hero:

BOUCHARD: Évidemment, il [Lévesque] a été vaincu. Et parce qu'il a été vaincu, maintenant on l'aime plus qu'avant encore. [...] BOMBARDIER : Mais, nous aimions aussi M. Trudeau. BOUCHARD : Oui, mais c'était l'anti-héros....on en avait besoin pour bien faire paraître M. Lévesque et peut être pour le faire battre. Ça nous prenait un héros pour battre M. Lévesque. Puisqu'on aime les héros vaincus, il nous fallait un victorieux. Alors on a choisi M. Trudeau. 39

What Bouchard is describing is in effect a sort of théâtre politique or Pantheon in which each actor plays a specific role in an essentially metaphoric mise-en-scène of tragedy. To Hayden White, this tragic arrangement of historical data would in a sense be fictitious, for it is not strictly “history” that prescribes a tragic framework for the analyzing author, but rather the author that prescribes it for history. Yet at the same time the tragic emplotment is quite real, for it reflects the interpretive viewpoint of an author who is attached to the living political and cultural contexts of “national identity” and its many truths.

It is not my intention to propose simplistic dichotomies between “fact” and “fiction,” “reality” and “mythology,” but I believe Claude Lévi-Strauss is right to say that “a clairvoyant history should admit that it never completely escapes from the nature of myth.” In effect, as William H. McNeill reminds us, histories cannot fully escape the mythic in part because they are general statements about the truth, general ways of thinking about the past to define or affirm contemporary or future collective identities. For the student of mythistory, the question is not “where does the truth lie?” – my study has no interest or belief in what “really, truly” happened at Meech Lake. Rather we must ask, to use Joseph Mali’s words, “What have groups of people known and believed about their past and found necessary to preserve as essential for their entire social existence, namely their ‘truths’?” The plain reality that Trudeau and Bouchard can generate narratives of Meech that diametrically contradict each other is a strong testimony to the presence of mythistory. And this is interesting. The past has the ability to support any number of readings and what may be true and factual to one point of view is purely fictitious to another. What leads the author to adopt one point of view to the exclusion of all others has very little to do with facts or with science. Just as in nationalism, the facts we choose to forget to in constructing our national histories are as important as what we choose to remember. However, mythstories must not be thought of as deformations of some presumed fundamental truth. The contradictory versions of the past recounted by Bouchard and Trudeau are among the ‘truths’ of Québec’s collective being. The mythstories of Meech aim to define national experience, stabilize collective belonging and determine collective action. Bref, they are prescriptions for fidelity, and therefore, for betrayal. I will return to this idea in the final chapter, but what is important to grasp for the moment is that I will be tracing the traitor figure within the discursive operations within mythistory.

Corpus analytique.

Within this framework of mythistory, then, I delimit my analytical corpus to the Meech narratives generated by political thinkers in Francophone Québec between 1987 and 1996. I am limiting my investigation to the intellectual production of those who, by profession, analyse and interpret the political behaviour of states. I am interested in those who attempted to bring intellectual coherence to the chaos of the Meech Crisis, to bring meaning to the past and draw semantic links with the political options in the society’s future. It is thus within the uses of narrative within the political thought of Québec intellectuals – politicians, political scientists, polemists and, in some cases, journalists – that I will be tracing the image of the traitor figure.

Certain volumes in the Crisis Literature will therefore be necessarily excluded. Among such texts are many Meech-related works devoted to policy and strategy, such as briefs on the economic development of a sovereign Québec, as well as legal studies of constitutional law. As such I have excluded many of the mémoires submitted to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission by various interests groups such as the Fédération québécoise de karaté or the Comité pour l’abolition de l’armée and even the Société St-Jean-Baptiste. Such interest groups may certainly have a political position on the constitutional future of Québec, but their functions and goals are determinedly in other domains. Their decided engagement is not to act as intellectual generators of political understanding of state behaviour in the public arena. For the same reason, I am not going to consider the work of political columnists or newspaper reports. This may seem a strange decision, for certainly such texts are narrative and politicised. But they fall within the domain of “actualités” and the narratives they recount are subject to the day-to-day chaos of current events and the often arbitrary requirements of publication.43 Newspaper reports are the intellectual

43 The one exception I have made to this rule is debate between columnist Marcel Adam, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Claude Morin, which appeared in the pages of La Presse. The reason for this is that Adam’s articles have been inserted in their entirety into a broader narrative synthesis constructed by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in Donald Johnston, Lac Meech: Trudeau parle. It is also a rare instance in which the historic gaze of the newspaper columnist extends beyond the realm of actualités: Adam’s
orchestrators of the present; the historicity of such narratives is immediate and is rarely conceived as being part of an historical order. The narratives that interest me are not the ordering of daily events, but the retrospective gaze of the historian into the past, the large-scale syntheses of many daily events in semantic dialogue with the past and the future. Such is the order that constitutes “The Meech Sagas.”

Furthermore, I have also excluded various Meech narratives that have been produced since 1996. While certainly this literature is intriguing, and I will touch upon it briefly in my conclusion, it was produced outside the historical context of the “Crisis.” I demarcate the temporal limits of my evaluation at the brief war of words exchanged between Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Lucien Bouchard in February 1996. To my mind, this dialogue represents the final settling of scores between rival narrative a gents up on t he dus k of poli tical c risis and m erits c onsideration in t his discussion. The post-1996 literature can be conceived as something of a residual literature, written in a different historical context. I am not trying to suggest by any means that the crisis necessarily “ended” in 1995 with the referendum failure – far from it. But after the 1995 referendum the narrative context of the crisis shifted. Whereas the pre-1995 literature was written with an avant-gardiste glance towards a moment of collective response to the Meech failure, an ultimate rendez-vous avec Histoire or “étape décisive”46, usually envisaged in the form of one referendum or another. In the post-referendum works, the Meech Sagas are recounted in an atmosphere of political uncertainty, even if the authors are no less certain about the political options they defend. Meech is no longer conceived as a narrative generator of collective action, even if the problem it represents remains very real. As such I

44 And by “historian” I mean one who orders the past, not necessarily a professional social scientist.
46 To borrow from the title of the 1993 Bloc Québécois manifesto: Un Nouveau parti pour l’étape décisive.
have chosen to concentrate on the historical context of the Meech Sagas as a resource of collective mobilization in an hour of political crisis.

The sources I have retained can be divided into four distinct groups: a.) Analytical texts, b.) character studies, c.) polemical works, and d.) the Lucien Bouchard Canon.

The first of these groupings is composed of critical examinations of the Meech era published mainly by Québec political scientists, and all of it between 1990 and 1995. This literature includes works by some of the most important political thinkers in contemporary Québec such as Guy Laforest, Léon Dion, Christian Dufour, Roch Denis, Denis Monière and Daniel Latouche. I have also included in this section works of political science by more explicitly partisan students of Québec politics, such as Georges Mathews, Pierre Fournier and Claude-V. Marsolais, who have nonetheless produced notable syntheses of the Meech era and whose publications are thus major texts in the Meech literature. Jacque’s Godbout’s remarkable documentary film, *Le mouton noir*, which follows Québec society through the year immediately following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, may also be considered as an analytical study of post-Meech Québec nationalism and constitution making. It also joins the social scientists I have mentioned above in transforming Meech from a brute chronological process into a narrative order.

Similarly, this narrative order reappears, though from a different angle, in my second group of sources. This group is composed of the biographical works and personal m émoires o f t he c entral p olitical a ctors i n t he M eech S agas. Within the defined periodization of this study, a numerous such works were published, beginning with Michel Vastel’s untimely 1989 biography of Pierre Trudeau, *Trudeau le Québécois*. This was followed by Trudeau’s own *M émoires politiques* in 1993, and Jean Chrétien’s updated reissue of *Dans le fosse aux lions* in 1994 which covers the Meech period and reworks some aspects of his original 1985 edition. To this list should be added Claude Morin’s repatriation memoir, *Lendemains piégés*, Jean-
François Lisée’s journalistic 1993 best-seller, *Le tricheur*, which, though not technically a biography, is nonetheless a character study of Robert Bourassa. In these works, Meech is presented as a collective narrative that is filtered through and even embodied by the lived experience of an individual, a human figure of identity. A reading of this literature is thus apt, for it is extremely pertinent to my analysis of how real human actors represent themselves, and are represented by others, within the Meech narrative.

Thirdly, I will include an analysis of polemical works, which constitutes the vast majority the textual production surrounding Meech. By polemic I mean non-critical, non-scholarly, unscientific recounts of Meech which are explicitly designed to champion a specific (often partisan) political option to the exclusion of all others. Here I have included the numerous polemical essays written by Pierre Bourgault, Pierre Falardeau, Francine Lalonde, Claude Morin, Max Nemni, Claude Ryan, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Pierre Vadeboncoeur. These essays are accompanied by a number of partisan political documents such as the Parti Québécois’ pre-referendum pamphlets *Le coeur à l’ouvrage* and *Projet de loi sur l’avenir du Québec*. I have also referred to some notable allocutions pronounced by Brian Mulroney, Jacques Parizeau and Jean Chrétien that formulate some resonant narrative representations within the Meech canon. This literature is highly narrative and constitutes surely some of the most canonical popular texts within the Meech debate.

However, there is simply no other author within the Crisis Literature that has generated a greater quantity of narrative representations of the Meech Sagas than leader of the Bloc Québécois, Lucien Bouchard. Bouchard has personally produced an extraordinary amount of work, which variously falls into all three of the above categories. He has written analytical documents both in favour of Meech and in favour of sovereignty, he published a political autobiography in 1992, *À visage découvert*, whose central narrative track is structured around the Meech Sagas and the radical birth of the Bloc Québécois. He has also penned a political manifesto, *Un
nouveau parti pour l’étape décisive, and has uttered an uncountable number of intra- and extra-parliamentary speeches between his resignation from the Mulroney government in 1990 and the 1995 referendum. His discourse is a veritable powerhouse of representations; his constructions are made with extraordinary literary detail, narrative intrigue and partisan subtext. The artistic precision of his narrative structures, combined with the sheer quantity of his retellings, make Bouchard the unrivalled master narrator of the Meech Sagas. For these reasons I have chosen to treat Bouchard’s body of work as a distinct pillar of the Meech literature, a dominant gene in the narrative ecosystem as it were. To put it another way, the Bouchard Canon can be conceived as what Laurent Jenny has called a “texte centreur,” which claims a certain leadership within an intertextual discourse of meaning\(^{47}\). It is in part for this reason that I will include certain speeches by Bloc Québécois members within what I designate as the Bouchard discourse. For the narrative articulated by the Bloc Québécois up until 1995 is Bouchard’s by discursive design.

These four groupings present us with a perspective upon the ensemble of narratives that form the overarching meta-structure of the Meech Sagas within the political context of Francophone Québec intellectuals. Naturally all four groups serve multifaceted communicational ends in their use of narrative. The constituent elements also differ radically in their narrative forms – film, print, spoken word – and may be communicated in a chapter, a sentence, a montage, or spread out across an entire monograph. And, of course, the ideological thrusts of the narratives differ widely from text to text. What is the coherent thread between these structures?

The simple answer is that I will be looking at these narrative structures comparatively with an eye for one object alone: discursive information about the traitor figure. I will examine where the narratives meet – not necessarily where they agree, ideologically or otherwise, but the narrative elements pertinent to the

\(^{47}\) Laurent Jenny. “La stratégie de la forme.” Poétique. 27, 1976, p.260 One could say that Bouchard occupies the same place within the grand récit de la spécificité that Trudeau occupies in the grand récit de l’intégration. The intellectual production of both authors amount to textes centreurs in their respective narrative ecosystems.
construction of the traitor figure that the authors have commonly approached, regardless of their political position. The contradictory political options these authors variously defend is less important than it may seem, for all participate, as we have seen in the example of Bouchard and Trudeau, in a common discourse on loyalty and betrayal. The imaginative space, the political consciousness created by the ensemble of this Crisis Literature can be seen as a kind of intertextual “ecosystem” in which each element - some of which are dominant, some recessive – contributes in its own way to the discursive functioning of the whole. This is not to suggest by any means that one, single coherent récit can be extracted from the ensemble of the constituent texts. It would seem, in fact, that there are at least two.

Indeed, the mythistory of the Meech Sagas may be divided into two vast narrative tendencies, though not without some difficulty. Broadly speaking, we might delimit one tendency as the récit de la spécificité, whose narrative functions elaborate a specific/primary/singular adherence to Québec as a political community and as an historical continuity/inheritance/destiny. The récit de la spécificité would broadly incorporate Québec nationalist writing, whether it be indépendentiste, sovereigntist or autonomist-federalist. These authors, it must be said, have generated the vast majority of French-language writing on the Meech Sagas. The second broad tendency might be termed the récit de l’intégration which is promoted predominantly by what are often termed militants inconditionnels du fédéralisme, which would include Canadian nationalists, the second-generation Citélibristes and anti-nationalists of the Trudeau variety (Max Nemni, Nadia Khouri, William Johnson, Mordecai Richler etc.) These groupings are somewhat problematic in the sense that they overlap and if too strong a dichotomy is established between them, perilous ideological landmines await! For example, it would be an error to suggest that Trudeau has no conditions for federalism – for few politicians have been more insistent that their conditions be obeyed to the letter than Trudeau – even if his opposition to modern Québec nationalism was remarkably vehement.\textsuperscript{48} Furthermore, it is ideologically problematic – even if there are important points of intertextual narrative convergance – to group

\textsuperscript{48} A more precise term might be opposant inconditionnel au ‘séparatisme.’
the narrations mélancoliques\textsuperscript{49} of a Pierre Falardeau in with the more post-modern nationalist thinking of a Guy Laforest. It is important, however, to establish that the central realm of Crisis literature I will be evaluating in this study is that which is built around the idea of Québec specificity. This is because it is fundamentally this idea of specificity that the authors argue have been betrayed in the Meech Sagas. The same could be said for the récit de l'intégration. A quick skim through Cité libre in the Bourdouxhe-Nemni period will easily unearth an entire host of traitorous "separatists" who have betrayed Canada's presumed true "essence" and "special purpose" in the Meech era. As we shall see, the two rival dichotomies of this obstreperous Kulturkampf do do build upon each other in some important respects, but because the object of my study is the figure of the traitor to Québec (as opposed to that of Canada), the récit de la spécificité will form the primary basis of inquietey

\textit{Awkward Positions.}

Given the fact that the Meech Sagas, betrayal and belonging, are so deeply entwined with the concepts of nationalism and nationhood, a few final words must be said on how "nation" is to be conceived in this study. My position on nation exactly parallels my position on mythistory, because I agree with Edward W. Saïd's general thesis that "nations are narrations.\textsuperscript{50} In privileging the idea of nation as a construction, my aim is not to practice the cool structuralist malice of affirming a supposed arbitrariness or fallacy of "national identity." As I have already outlined in my discussion of mythistory, the semiotic argument that reality is something indifferent to and separate from the stories constructed by human imagination will find no cheerleader in this study.\textsuperscript{51} Like the narrative, the idea of nation can likewise

\textsuperscript{49} To borrow the term that Jocelyn Maclure develops to designate histories of Québec identity founded upon notions of abnormality, weakness, tragedy and the Aquinien "fatigue culturelle." \textit{Récits identitaires: le Québec à l'épreuve du pluralisme}. Montréal: Québec-Amérique 2000.


\textsuperscript{51} While I accept, for example, Ricoeur's notion of narrative mimesis being a creative generator of reality rather than a strictly imitative process, I would withdraw from his suggestion that the constructed, narrated reality is any less "real" than his idea of an inert "real world" that would exist in a pre-narrative form. See Paul Ricoeur, \textit{Temps et Récit}. Paris: Seuil, 1983. I would also reject the arguments of more vehemently structuralist/semiotic thinkers who claim that the reality generated by narratives is the only reality and that this reality is itself false. For such staunchly structuralist/semiotic
be conceived (and criticized) as an imaginative response to the chaos of the world. Nation is a construction by which we bring creative coherence to the complexity of our societies. But again I would withdraw from those theorists, such as Ernest Gellner or Eric Hobsbawm\textsuperscript{52} (not to mention Monique Nemni for that matter!), who would assimilate the invention and imagination involved in the production of nationalism with untruth, fallacy or fabrication. As Charles Taylor reminds us, "myths are part of social reality and their contribution to that reality is not to be neglected."\textsuperscript{53} In my view, imagined phenomena can be conceived as historic artefacts – part of the lived reality of the discourse of Self – and to simply dismiss them as false or inauthentic is to ignore the meanings with which they are so deeply encoded. I will therefore favour an approach more aligned with the thinking of Benedict Anderson whose *Imagined Communities* allows for imagination as a creative generator of realities and approaches "nation" and "nationalism" as an historical object as opposed to an historical non-entity. As Anderson writes in his introduction, "communities are not to be distinguished by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."\textsuperscript{54} Indeed, the real critical question to be asked of the imagined structures of nation is not whether nations exist or not, but the value of these concepts of nation and nationalism contain for the communities that imagine them and how well they serve the public good.\textsuperscript{55} In essence then, this study will take

as one of its key foundations the conception of Québec as a nation; that is to say, a reality that has been constructed, relatively recently, by the human creativity and imagination that generate nationalism.

Finally, since we are dealing with some highly politicized subject matter – nation, crisis, Meech, traitor – I should gasp for one final explanatory breath. One of the primary assumptions of this project is that the Author is the central orchestrator of meaning in the Meech Sagas. So what about this author? Where am I speaking from? Firstly, let me say that I enter this project with the firm belief that it can be realized with a sense of good humour and without being overly irritating. Since the “traitor” has been a favourite subject for a number of frothing polemists (which is in part why it is so intriguing) I should say quite flatly that this project is not an underhanded effort at either condemning or redeeming the political legacy of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, nor is it to subliminally advocate or oppose either “sovereignty” or “federalism” or any other political programme. I share E.J. Hobsbawm’s belief that “no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist[.]” More fundamentally, however, I genuinely believe in the legitimacy of multiple democratic options and could not articulately advocate one to the exclusion of all others. This is the work of a néo-Québécois and an ex-Manitoban, making it mercifully difficult for me to wholly subscribe to or wholly reject either of the two great nationalisms of “northern North America.” I feel that this is perhaps an unusual and interesting observation post and, borrowing from Ian McKay, I am going to take the position of the “Lapsed Canadian” in this study. The Lapsed Canadian refuses to dine (where others have literally gorged themselves) at the traditional buffet table of dichotomy, contradictions, oppositional paradigms and primordialism. The Lapsed Canadian enters this study with the curiosity of exploration, not the


\[\text{56} \text{ It is important, however, to be at least partially irritating. The surrealist filmmaker Luis Bumuel used to say that with each of his films he hoped to metaphorically insert a single, aggravating grain of sand into the collective eyeball of his audience. Bumuel believed that when he was irritating to people, he was penetrating new, original territory.}\]

\[\text{57} \text{Hobsbawm. Nations and Nationalism. p.12}\]
dogma of partisan politics. The Lapsed Canadian chooses to live without the rigid certainty of any country. However, if I approach this subject with any kind of foundational bias, it is intense suspicion of reductionism, a desire to campaign for complexity and a deep affection for the Québec national community that is my home and, in a complex way, my patrie.

58 See McKay, “After Canada.” Acadiensis. p.83
Chapter II

The Robes of Montcalm:
Notes on Continuity, Interiority and Legitimacy
within the Betrayal Discourse

"Mon nom(n) est québécois."

- Pierre Elliott Trudeau

TRUDEAU IS A FRANCOPHONE QUÉBECKER. Trudeau himself reminds us of this repeatedly in his mythstories, to the point that it is a veritably unavoidable factor in any discussion of Trudeau within Québec identity. Indeed, Trudeau’s québecitée is at the heart of the treason discourse and the Crisis Authors must necessarily explain it and take a position on it. Why did people vote for Trudeau? Why did he win the 1980 referendum? Why were his actions (il)legitimate? The answers to such questions, which are structurally crucial to the Meech narratives, depend fundamentally upon how Trudeau’s identity as a Québécois d’héritage canadien-français is conceived and defined by the Crisis Authors. In Trudeau’s own Crisis narratives, particularly in his polemical denunciations of Québec nationalism, the former Prime Minister makes consistent argumentative appeals to French-Canadian/Franco-Québécois identity, narratives of pride and Self. Trudeau continually underlines and affirms his appartenance québécoise and narrates his political actions using the voice of a legitimate, inside representative. Trudeau also weaves his political vision, his personal identity and his historical phenomenon into mythstories of Québec continuity, going so far as to claim that he alone represents the aboutissement of Québec’s historic aspirations, the nature of which formed one of the central themes of the Meech debate. Trudeau’s assertions of Québec Self are in dialectic with the opposing intellectual configurations that position him outside the limits of québecitée. As the following chapter will attempt to show, the two contradictory representations are structured in response to one another and form the central intellectual vector of the treason discourse.

For to every antithesis there must also be an equal and opposing thesis. We know that the one who betrays is not conceivable without a parallel conception of the one
who is loyal. Within the discursive image of traitor, images of both fidelity and betrayal are equally present and the narratives of a treasonous act recount how the loyalty gives way to betrayal within a single organism. Indeed the idea of the “breech of trust” – often attributed to Trudeau’s actions in 1980-82 – implies this very idea of contradicting, breaking, rupturing with the established order and coherence with which one has been entrusted. In the Crisis literature, ideas of continuity, interiority and legitimacy are major discursive loci in which collective identity is recognized and all fall under the dominion of this controlling idea of fidelity. In essence, fidelity is evidence of Self. Those who are loyal belong to the defined national community of Self; they represent themselves, and are seen, as legitimate representatives of it, faithfully carrying the mantle of an historic lineage stemming down through the national experience of time. Indeed, such fidelity is perhaps expected of political leaders more than most, for by their very profession they aim to symbolize and incarnate a collective will.\textsuperscript{59} I will now proceed to an evaluation of Trudeau as he is positioned within mythhistories Québec collective Self and how he is brought to represent continuity, interiority and legitimacy within the Québec context. This realm of representation constitutes the main thrust of Trudeau’s own participation within the treason discourse; but as we shall see, his detractors participate in it as well. As the traitor is poised upon a phenomenological axis between opposites, an appraisal of Trudeau as image of Self must necessarily precede the revelations of Otherness.

It is often said that the federalist discourse privileged by Trudeau in Québec was one of economic fear mongering and that federalism was only maintained in Québec by exploiting this dread of economic collapse.\textsuperscript{60} While certainly such a strategy may be observed in Trudeau’s discourse it is not the whole truth. Trudeau also made active use of the language of identity, patriotism and tradition, constructing an unusual reading of the historical continuity of the Québec Self. Guy Laforest has

\textsuperscript{59} In Anglophone Canada it is largely inconsequential that a sizeable portion of the retired Canadian bourgeoisie spend the cruel winter months in the warm and sunny United States. They are even lovingly referred to as “Snowbirds.” Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, however, received popular disdain for vacationing in Miami Beach, Florida. Canadian state symbols, it would seem, should be more “Canadian” than Canadians themselves.
interestingly observed that, in his referendum speeches, Trudeau made a number of
direct, and convincing, emotional appeals about the historic role of Francophone
Québeckers in the building of Canada. In his May 7th 1980 allocation in Québec City,
for instance, Trudeau inserts himself, his federalist cause and his Québec caucus into
a configuration of the historical continuity of Québec identity politics. Flanked by
Jean Lesage and Claude Ryan, Trudeau invoked the names of Wilfrid Laurier and
Louis Saint-Laurent as the forefathers of a Québec political lineage whose mantle
Trudeau now carries:

Nous allions à Ottawa parce que c’est comme ça que les Québécois
ont toujours vu leur place dans ce pays. Ils l’ont vue comme étant
fiers d’être Québécois, se battant ici pour la défense de leur droits,
mais affirmant aussi leurs droits d’être Canadiens en envoyant parmi
leurs meilleurs représentants à Ottawa pour affirmer la place des
Québécois au sein du Canada.  

Trudeau did not reserve such invocations of continuity singularly for the crisis
situation of the Québec referendum alone. In his Mémoires politiques television
series, broadcast during the Charlottetown debates, Trudeau goes so far as to invoke
the historical continuity of the Francophone experience to explain his rejection of
Québec nationalism, which he defines as a renfermement des Québécois. “Cette idée
pessimiste, » Trudeau explains, « que les Canadiens français ne sont pas capables de
confronter les autres et remporter des victoires - c’est pas dans l’esprit de mes
ancêtres, ni ceux de la plupart des Canadiens français. C’était des gens qui allaient
découvrir les Rocheuses! »  

I will return to les Rocheuses further along, but we see
that Trudeau’s conceit attempts to turn Québec nationalism on its head. Within this
framework, a Québec-centred nationalism is a rupture with Francophone continuity,
even a degradation of Francophone identity and, as Guy Laforest has likewise
observed in Trudeau’s discourse, the veritable patriotism, the “true essence” of the
Francophone Québec Self lies in beyond Québec alone. Trudeau also exhibited this

---

60 Such was one of the central arguments of Denys Arcand’s influential film, Le confort et
61 Quoted in Kenneth McRoberts. Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity. Toronto:
62 Brian McKenna. Pierre Elliott Trudeau: Mémoires politiques, III tomes. Montréal : CBC-Radio-
Canada, 1993.
reading of Québec continuity during all of his major Meech Lake interventions. Perhaps most notable was his invocation of Henri Bourassa in his presentation before the members of the Comité mixte spécial du Sénat et de la Chambre des communes in August, 1987. Trudeau represents the founder of Le Devoir as a figure whose credentials as a Québec patriot could scarcely be called into question, reminding us that Bourassa was a courageous opponent of British colonialism and grandson of Patriote leader Louis-Joseph Papineau, “héros de la rebellion de 1837”63. Trudeau goes on to explain that Bourassa was also a “nationaliste canadien” who felt that Canadian citizens had to develop a common Canadian patriotism that transcended provincial and regional loyalties. Trudeau appropriates this idea and situates it at the very moral centre of his objections to Meech and the distinct society clause in particular. Again, Trudeau incorporates his political argumentation into a mythistory of continuity for the Québec Self, such that the Canadianism he represents — not unlike the Québec nationalism he opposes — appears able to trace its intellectual lineage back into the very historical roots of French-Canadian patriotism.

Trudeau also makes use of a Nous that is manifestly Franco-Québécois in nature. His Cartesian sketches of Québec continuity implicitly achieve this, but Trudeau also phrases his critiques of Québec nationalism as those of an insider, as one who speaks from the existential centre of Francophone Québec society. Consider Trudeau’s use of Nous in his famous indictment of the Meech Lake Accord in 1987:

La vraie question à se poser, c’est celle de savoir si nous, Canadiens français vivant au Québec, avons besoin d’un gouvernement provincial doté de plus de pouvoirs que les autres provinces. Pour ma part, je crois que c’est nous faire injure de le prétendre. La génération montante...ne souffre pas de complexe d’infériorité et croit bien révolus ces temps où nous n’osions nous mesurer aux «autres qu’avec crainte et tremblements. » Bref, elle n’a point besoin de béquilles pour marcher. Bien au contraire, elle sait que les Québécois sont de taille pour jouer un rôle prépondérant sur la scène canadienne,

et que le pays tout entier peut — si nous le voulons — nous servir de tremplin puissant.  

What is significant is not only the fact that Trudeau identifies himself as an insider within the Francophone Québec community, but that the Nous québécois from which he speaks is an heroic representation — dressed in a discourse of greatness and strength, patriotism even, within the Canadian framework. Once more, Trudeau’s rhetoric attempts to invert Québec nationalism by making it appear as something decidedly unpatriotic and unheroic - a crippling, misguided insult to the Franco-Québec Self. Trudeau also personally appropriates a number of texts of Québec identity that are commonly found within the nationalist discourse, much like in the case of Henri Bourassa and les Patriotes. In his Mémoires politiques, for example, Trudeau tells us that he too objected to conscription and to Canadian participation in the Second World War. He recalls an anecdote in which he defied a unilingual Anglophone drill sergeant by pretending he spoke no English, obliging his commanding officer reformulate his orders in French.  

Similarly, Trudeau’s Nous is also summoned into phenomenological dialectic with a defined Autre. His narratives of identity conceive of British Nationalism/The Monarchy/British Imperialism as a text of alterity before which the Francophone Self is made alien. In defending his repatriation initiative, which aimed, in part, to remove this presence of the colonial Other, Trudeau represents himself as the true defender of the collective goals of French Canada. As such, he ridicules Lucien Bouchard who claims that repatriation was forced upon Québec by Anglophone pressure. “M. Bouchard interprète singulièrement notre histoire constitutionnelle! Ne sont-ce pas plutôt les Canadiens français qui, traditionnellement, voulaient relâcher les liens coloniaux avec la Grande-Bretagne en rapatriant de Londres la Constitution canadienne?”  

Trudeau’s uses of the Nous francophone are calculatedly constructed to exclude Québec nationalists and sovereigntists, to show that, while the Québec nationalist discourse is rooted in many of the same historical referents as that of Trudeau, it is flawed in such a way that morally compromises the honour of Francophones. Trudeau’s pronounced

---

64 Ibid. “Comme gâchis total, il serait difficile d’imaginer mieux.” p.21
65 Trudeau, Mémoires, p.47.
identification with the *Nous franco-québécois* is beyond the obviousness of the mere accident of his existential being, but situated within a heroic discourse of pride and loyalty.

These configurations of continuity and interiority within an image of Québec pride fundamentally build toward Trudeau’s central argumentative ambition: asserting the legitimacy of his Repatriation. He meets this challenge on two fronts by contending both democratic and intellectual legitimacy as a representative of Québec’s political will. Throughout Trudeau’s Repatriation narratives he reminds us of the fact that Québec voted for him continuously and maintained his power during his numerous terms in office. Notably, he continually underlines the fact that, in the 1980 election, which was campaigned in the foreshadow of the referendum on sovereignty-association that had already been scheduled for May, his government was elected in 74 of Québec’s 75 federal seats and won 68.2% of the popular vote. He unfailingly adds that, when consulted in a referendum on whether or not they wished assert sovereignty(-association) from Canada, the population of Québec answered No at 59.2%, the cause for which Trudeau had actively campaigned. Trudeau uses these texts to demonstrate his democratic legitimacy as a representative of Québec, to the point of negating the legitimacy of his major political rival, René Lévesque, who lost the referendum. Trudeau famously retorted to Newfoundland Premier Brian Peckford, who claimed that he preferred the vision of Canada proposed by Lévesque to that of Trudeau, that “certainly in the referendum, the people of Québec said clearly that they didn’t agree with the vision of Canada held by Monsieur Lévesque.” Peckford was of course referring to Lévesque’s idea of a decentralized federalism and not sovereignty-association, but Trudeau’s rhetorical skill overcame the Premier. By assimilating Lévesque categorically with the sovereignty-association that Québeckers rejected, he thereby attempts to discredit Lévesque as both a negotiator of federalism and as a representative (or representation) of the people he governed. Trudeau would extend his monopolistic

---

claim to representative legitimacy in his critiques of Meech Lake, claiming that the 1987 Accord amounted to a reformulation of the sovereignty-association that Québécois had democratically refuted in 1980. “What was the point in winning the referendum,” Trudeau asked the Senate, “if we were going to give away to those who lost it everything they were trying to get by winning it?” For Trudeau, legitimacy resides in the Non as he defended it, and in fédéralisme renouvelé as he implemented it. This of course raises the famous question about how, exactly, Trudeau articulated the meanings of his Non campaign to the Québec public, and what idea Québécois believed their vote for Trudeau represented. This question has raised considerable debate among political scientists and lies at the heart of the Meech Sagas and the discourse of betrayal.

On this point, Trudeau likewise formulates a mythistory of legitimacy. Trudeau's narrative strategy is founded first and foremost on the argument that his constitutional project of 1982 perfectly adhered to the political vision that he had loyally and continuously maintained throughout his illustrious political career. As he explains to political columnist Marcel Adam in the pages of La Presse in 1989, “Durant mes 19 années de vie politique et durant mes 16 années antérieures de collaborations à Cité libre et d'enseignement constitutionnel, je me suis toujours opposé à l'idée d'un statut particulier pour le Québec...Durant toute cette période, ma pensée n'avait pas dévié.” The Trudeau narratives go on to argue, furthermore, that the majority of Québécois lucidly understood and supported his political vision, not only during the referendum but also in the two years of constitutional debate that followed. He reveals an historical anecdote about how, during the referendum campaign, René Lévesque announced in a speech that Trudeau’s talk of “renewed federalism,” would not include any special status for Québec. Lévesque understood, Trudeau reasoned, and so did the rest of the Québec population. But beyond the referendum campaign, Trudeau’s narrative continues to unfold with images of legitimacy and loyalty. With characteristic rhetorical swordsmanship, Trudeau’s

---

69 Trudeau, Lac Meech, p.124-125

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
narrative is structured such that it was neither he nor the Anglo-Canadian premiers who isolated Québec in 1981, but rather René Lévesque, who abandoned his colleagues in the Gang of Eight and whose categorical separatism aimed to repulse any efforts to improve Canada. Trudeau then goes on to unveil a number of surveys conducted in 1982 which appear to indicate that only a minority of Québeckers disapproved of the Repatriation while nearly half felt it was "une bonne chose pour le Canada," and, furthermore, objected to Premier Lévesque’s refusal to sign.⁷⁰ Continuing the number crunching, Trudeau alerts us to the fact that 70 of Québec’s 75 federal MPs voted in favour of the Repatriation Act and claims that 38 out of 108 deputies in the Assemblée nationale likewise approved. From these figures, Trudeau essays to empirically measure the democratic legitimacy of the Repatriation initiative: "moins de 40 pour 100 des députés élus au fédéral et au provincial par les citoyens du Québec s’opposaient irréductiblement à l’entente constitutionnelle."⁷¹ Claude Ryan, one of a very modest number of Québec nationalists to defend the value of the 1982 constitutional revision, nonetheless claims that Trudeau’s arithmetic on this particular point constitutes "une déformation d’histoire."⁷² Much harsher things have of course been said about Trudeau’s reading of these events, but what is important for our purposes is not the verity or fallacy of Trudeau’s narrative, but the fact that loyalty to Québec constitutes its thematic centre. In essence, Trudeau’s narrative strategy aims to refute the thesis that "le Canada a adopté sa constitution sans l’accord du Québec" by insisting that Trudeau and his MPs represent the collective will of Québeckers as well and it is therefore erroneous to suggest that "Québec" was isolated. Lucien Bouchard would later describe this situation as the double légitimité of Québec politics.

Trudeau’s images of appartenance québécoise, his claims to historical continuity as an insider within the Québec political tradition and his argument for the democratic and moral legitimacy of his actions are the central pillars around which

---

⁷¹ Trudeau, “ J’accuse!” La Presse. B3
his narrative is constructed. There is a defense of ideas, a political argumentation, and
a critique of the Meech Lake Accord certainly, but all of this falls under the
imaginative dominion of fidelity. What we are witnessing is the construction of a
political identity, and indeed, in a number of his writings – such his public
correspondence with Marcel Adam, Claude Morin and later, Lucien Bouchard –
Trudeau’s representations of loyalty have been compelled by the desire to contradict
the representations of betrayal formulated by his detractors. In this territory of the
betrayal discourse, Trudeau has been largely alone in the Québec Crisis literature. He
is flanked on either side by Max Nemni and William Johnson⁷³ and other
Citélibristes, but few others. Yet the apparition of the Soi québécois within
Trudeau’s being is nonetheless an important narrative element, even for the former
Prime Minister’s most diametrical opponents.

Indeed, the “inciting incident” in most Meech narratives, regardless of their
political persuasion, is situated in Trudeau’s solemn declaration of Québec Self in the
Paul Sauvé Arena on May 14th 1980. This famed utterance is the starting off point,
from which Québec crosses the threshold into a “road of trials” that leads into the
world of Meech.⁷⁴ It is quoted with such astonishing regularity in Meech narratives
as to verily constitute a metatext of the Crisis mythistory – the very genesis of the
Crisis itself – and should likewise be examined here:

Je sais que je peux prendre l’engagement le plus solennel qu’à la suite
d’un NON, nous allons mettre en marche immédiatement le
mécanisme de renouvellement de la constitution et nous n’arrêterons
pas avant que ça soit fait ! Nous mettons notre tête en jeu, nous,
députés québécois, parce que nous le disons aux Québécois de voter
NON, et nous le disons à vous dans les autres provinces, que nous
n’accepterons pas ensuite que ce NON soit interprété par vous comme
une indication que tout va bien puisque tout peut rester comme c’était

Editions de Septentrion, 1991 and William Johnson. A Canadian Myth : Québec, Between Canada and
⁷⁴ See “The Herald Call” and “The Road of Trials” in Joseph Campbell. The Hero with a Thousand Faces.
auparavant. Nous voulons du changement et nous mettons nos sièges en jeu pour avoir ce changement! 75

Trudeau begins with a « Je » which is followed by nine invocations of the word “nous,” two “notre,” two “Québécois” and one “les autres.” All of these configurations of Self are gathered together under the dominion of “l’engagement le plus solennel,” “renouvellement” and “changement.” Certainly Trudeau is referring explicitly to constitutional revision, but the meanings accorded to this sound-bite in the Crisis Literature go even deeper than that. In the narratives of spécificité, the Crisis Authors designate this fragment of monologue (at least to the listening population of Québec) as the proclamation of québécité which Trudeau will later betray. Trudeau’s declaration is not read purely an announcement of policy, but it is also represented as a personal commitment to be Québécois, a solemn existential pledge to take on the representative forms of identity in which Québec may recognize itself. As Trudeau stated even more explicitly in a revealing flourish of wordplay in the same speech, “Mon No(m) n est québécois.”

The Crisis Authors frequently begin their Meech Narratives with an image of Trudeau as something of a Patriote, as a loyal and faithful figure of Québec identity. As Léon Dion writes, “Ses propos ont émerveillé les Québécois. Il a évoqué les sentiments les plus sublimes et les plus nobles idéal […] Il a persuadé […] un grand nombre de Québécois qu’il exprimait le fond de leur pensée en ce qui concerne le régime politique qui convient au Canada.”76 Guy Laforest, building an argument that echoes in the writings of Léon Dion and Claude Ryan, argues that the Québec Self, as it could be recognized in the word Non in 1980, intellectually resided within two major political documents: The Livre beige of the Parti liberal du Québec and Se retrouver, the report of the federal Commission Pépin-Robarts77. Much like Dion and Ryan, Laforest is essentially arguing that Trudeau’s declaration of québécité, and

75 Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Discours prononcé le 14 mai 1980, Montréal. Montréal : Radio-Canada, 1980. My source is a video recording of Trudeau’s speech and these are his exact words. This sound-bite is misquoted in all citations within the Crisis Literature. Guy Laforest’s citation is the most precise.
his use of the word “Non,” took on the discursive forms of these two texts of identity within the Québécois political imagination. Marcel Adam agrees, telling the readers of *La Presse* that he was present in the Paul Sauvé Arena when Trudeau uttered his promise, and that he believed in Trudeau. The fact that Trudeau’s declaration of legitimacy, continuity and Self comes in this case in the explicit form of a promise, which by definition is a projection into the future of works yet to be accomplished, implies that its truth can only be maintained imaginatively by a collective expression of faith. To listen to a promise is to trust that the person who is promising will be loyal, not only to the engagement in question but also to the faith with which he or she has been invested. In the Bouchard Canon, Québeckers are shown to have bestowed great honour upon Trudeau by their belief in him. “Le chef du gouvernement fédéral, le premier ministre du pays, » says Bouchard, building up the Trudeau character in his narratives as a being of extraordinary power, « celui qui était revêtu de la dignité suprême, le premier ministre du pays qui en plus avait le respect des Québécois. Les Québécois étaient fiers de Trudeau. » To Bouchard, Trudeau’s appeals to Québéc pride were convincing, the Québécois were captivated and believed in him. The Québécois population gave to Trudeau his legitimacy and his power to speak for them. It was the people who made him a collective representation of Self. These deeply moral concepts of dignity, honour, trust, and loyalty with which the meaning of Trudeau is encoded in the referendum intrigue will be set against the ensuing catastrophe of his betrayal and the humiliation of Québécois’s ostracism. For such is to betray. To establish faith, then break it.

In 1989 journalist Michel Vastel published a biography of Pierre Elliott Trudeau entitled *Trudeau le Québécois*. On the front cover, the former prime minister looks up at us. His hair is wild and his face is locked in an icy stare. It is a strange, sinister portrait of Trudeau, and evokes the image of a hostile, belligerent animal that refuses to be captured. Reinforcing this interpretation, Vastel coupled the image with

---

78 Marcel Adam dans Pierre Elliott Trudeau. *Lac Meech*. P.129 “J’étais présent à cette assemblée et je ne croyais pas mes oreilles. Je me suis dit que M. Trudeau devait avoir vraiment peur que le oui l’emporte pour se résoudre à faire des concessions dans un domaine où il s’était toujours montré extrêmement intransigeant. »
a mysterious caption: "...Mais la colombe avait des griffes de faucon." Developing a similar idea, Georges Mathews has said that Trudeau's appropriation of the Québec Self, "n'était que jeux de miroirs."\textsuperscript{80} For the Robes of Montcalm conceal the antithetical reality of the inner Wolfe.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{80} Mathews, \textit{L'Accord}, p.51
\end{itemize}
Chapter III.
The Inner Wolfe: Trudeau as Agent of Tragedy and Hate

Changer une constitution, c’est modifier la nature. 81
- GUY LAFOREST

...MAIS LA COLOMBE AVAIT DES Griffes de Faucon. Michel Vastel is not alone to
“unmask” Trudeau as a predatory animal. Guy Laforest, surely one of Trudeau’s
most important intellectual critics, continually represents the former Prime Minister
as a sort of mythological beast of Conquest, constructed under the metaphoric guise
of various sinister attack animals. In his Trudeau et la fin d’un rêve canadien,
Laforest reveals the traitorous image of “Trudeau le renard,”82 and indicates that in
the aftermath of the 1980 referendum the renard “se métamorphosa en lion.”83 On
page 25 Trudeau has the tentacles of an insatiable octopus, and throughout Laforest
adapts Vastel’s image system of the voracious “oiseau de proie,” whose predatorial
claws entrap and imprison nationalist Québec. Out of this literary cross-pollination of
the dangerous symbolic forms of the fox, the lion, the octopus and the falcon,
Laforest gives life to a horrifying, omnipotent monstrosity of air, land and sea; an
organism born to attack, possess, kill and feed upon Québec. Laforest’s use of
imagery is but one example of the many abstract metaphors of inhumanity in which
Trudeau has been represented in the Crisis books. What is the narrative and
argumentative process that eventuated in metaphoric structures such as these? How
are Trudeau’s narratives of Francophone Self textually re-ordered and re-organized in
the récits de spécificité nationale into an anti-narrative that runs in adversarial
contrast to the grand récit national du Québec? Bref, how is the traitor constructed
and in what realms of meaning is he conceived to habitate? Through a deep reading
of the textual content of Crisis writings, this chapter will demonstrate the various
methods by which the traitor takes archetypal shape in the form of Trudeau and how
it functions within the mechanical workings of the Meech narratives. But before

81 Guy Laforest, Trudeau. p.174
82 Ibid. pp. 156-157
83 Ibid. p.157
these processes may be understood, we must first of all consider the question of "employment" in the context of the Meech Sagas. Establishing the aesthetic and argumentative implications of employment will help us better appreciate the narrative function of the traitor figure, the lieux de mémoire in which he is identified and the meanings he transmits. The first section of this chapter is therefore devoted to how the authors have recounted the story of Meech as a tragic narrative of nation. As we shall see, the identification of "tragedy" is in many respects a structural precondition for the emergence of the traitor and, conversely, the tragic system can only maintain its coherence as a synthesis by way of identifying the historical presence of betrayal.

1. Sadness and the Law of Infinite Return: Meech as Tragedy

The Meech Sagas are a narrative repository for collective sadness. The narrative space in which this chapter of Québec political history is told and retold is almost invariably one of tragedy. Right across the wide spectrum of Québec national politics, the word "tragic" has been invoked with remarkable regularity. Lucien Bouchard, who defended Meech inside the federal government up until his resignation in May 1990, has referred to the Meech era as perfectly resembling "une tragédie classique". Guy Laforest, a political scientist favorable to the Meech proposals, agrees that "la saga du lac Meech prend la forme d''une grande tragédie à l'ancienne," and foreshadows that the continuation of status quo federalism in Québec "nous fera entrer dans l'univers du tragique." The demographer Georges Mathews has said that the final weeks of June 1990 were "jours de grande tristesse pour le Québec" and designated the Meech era as "une periode tragi-comique" in Québec history. Even unwavering partisans of sovereignty such as Pierre Bourgault and Jacques Parizeau have used the word "tragic" to describe this failure of Canadian

---

88 Ibid. p.95
federalism. Not only is Meech a single tragedy isolated in time, it is conceived as being part of the tragic process of Québec’s collective experience of his try. For Pierre Vadeboncoeur, the conscription crises, the imposition of the War Measures Act in October 1970 and the exclusion of René Lévesque during la Nuit des longs couteaux are all part of the same, continuous “chronique d’écrasement” of a subjugated Québec within an imperialistic Canadian federalism. Christian Dufour, a self-described fervent supporter of the Meech Lake proposals, writes that when the Accord collapsed, reactions in Anglophone Canada revealed “qu’on était conscient de renouer une tradition historique de mise au pas du Québec. Celle-ci va de la pendaison de Louis Riel, dans les années 1880, aux conscriptions successivement imposées aux Québécois contre leur volonté, durant les deux guerres mondiales.”

In announcing his resignation from the Mulroney Government in the days immediately following the Accord’s death, Louis Plamondon positioned Meech within Québec memory as the culminating injury in a grand récit collectif d’empêchement:


Similarly inserting the Meech failure into an eternal hiver de la survivance, Lucien Bouchard’s historical conclusions contain something infinitely upsetting and death-

---

89 Pierre Bourgault, Maintenant ou jamais! Montréal: Stanké, 1990. p 55. Jacques Parizeau, discours, 25 octobre 1995, Verdun. Le Devoir, 26 octobre 1995, p.A1. In the case of Bourgault, he is referring to the actual failure to ratify Meech in Manitoba and Newfoundland after months of intense debate: “La drame tourne à la tragédie. Rien ne va plus.” As for Parizeau, he is speaking specifically about the events of November 4th and 5th in which the repatriation agreement was struck by the Anglo-Canadian premiers at the exclusion of René Lévesque. He represents it metaphorically as “cette nuit tragique.”


93 To use Fernand Dumont’s formulation, Genèse de la société québécoise. Montréal: Boréal, 1996.
laden: "À quel moment, au cours de son histoire, le Québec s’est-il trouvé en position de force? La réponse est quelque peu mortifante: jamais."94

At its thematic centre, Meech is about sadness. It is summoned into the historical discourse to stand amid Québec’s most painful of collective wounds. The Meech Sagas reveal to us a Québec that is lost forever in Canada, no matter what illusions of hope may present themselves therein. The English-Canadian decision (not once, but twice!) to lead Québec into the constitutional forest and abandon it there amounts to a final epiphany of hopelessness. It is like a word so hurtful it can never be unsaid.

What exactly do the authors mean when they emphasise the sadness of Meech? What is implied in describing Meech as a tragedy? It is, first of all, a deeply moral conception that is marked by the sentiment of collective loss. Joseph Campbell’s description of the tragic worldview in The Hero with a Thousand Faces resonates deeply within these representations of Québec Selfhood. “The happy ending” Campbell writes, “is justly scorned as a misrepresentation; for the world, as we know it, as we have seen it, yields but one ending: death, disintegration, dismemberment, and the crucifixion of our heart with the passing of the forms we have loved.”95 But the moral concept is also lodged within an order of tragic law, for tragedy is equally a narrative structure, a metaphoric emplotment into which history is channelled. Northrop Frye has described tragedy as “The Mythos of Autumn” in his seminal Anatomy of Criticism. He employs the term “Mythos” to indicate that tragedy constitutes an archetypal narrative form based on a specific grammatical ordering of characters, actions and plots in an interplay between good and evil that recur often enough as to be recognisable as an element of one’s total literary

94 Bloc Québécois sous la direction de Lucien Bouchard. Un nouveau parti pour l’étape décisive. 1992, p.102
experience. Frye designates this narrative archetype as the "Mythos of Autumn" because, just as Campbell has indicated, tragedies are overwhelmingly preoccupied with Death.

But Death is not decidedly "tragic" in and of itself. Death is made tragic by its structural position within the tragic narrative order. The archetypal tragic hero, according to Frye, is somewhere between the divine and the all-too-human. He is at once endowed with awesome power and a singular weakness, suspended between the dream of divine freedom (Québec libre) and the world of bondage (l'hiver de la survivance). This extraordinary destiny of greatness for which the hero is the deserved candidate is so very nearly within his grasp. But at a crucial moment, at which the road to what might have been and the road to what will inevitably be is simultaneously conceived, the hero is pulled downward by the villain's betrayal and by the dizziness of his singular flaw. The fundamental centre of tragedy, Frye observes, is the moment at which the hero is isolated; isolated at once from the society with which he has allied himself and isolated from the original greatness to which he appeared so rightly destined. It is at this point of absolute isolation that we witness "the shattering of the forms and of our attachment to those forms" in a moment of physical or spiritual death and dismemberment. This archetypal Death occasioned by isolation brings us to an epiphany of Law, a deepened awareness of the Natural Order to which we are all helplessly subject. The tragic death exhibits the extraordinary power of an external fate, the supremacy of an impersonal power whose order is foreign to us and cannot be altered or pleaded with by any amount of human effort, regardless of its moral quality. In tragic retellings of the Meech Sagas, the authors demarcate two centres of tragedy, one for each "act," at the moment of Québec's isolation in 1981-1982 following the Nuit des longs couteaux and again with the isolation imposed by the Meech Death of 1990. This tragic negotiation of Meech not only implies a great deal about how the Québec nation is imaginatively

97 Campbell, Hero, p.28
conceived and ideologically defined in the Crisis books, but it also determines the structural possibilities for narrating this chapter in Québec political history. Both have important implications for the construction of the traitor.

As mythstories are told with the aim of mobilizing collective action, we must also consider the role of tragedy as a narrative of nation. For the Crisis authors, the tragedy in which Meech is recognized is also a narrative of nation, a signal passage through which the nation is defined, expressed, remembered and projected. L’abbé Lionel Groulx, for example, was certainly gripped by the tragic weight of deathliness when he described French Canada at the end of the 1940s: “Nous appartenons,” wrote the priest-historian, “à ce petit groupe de peuples sur la terre au destin d’une espèce particulière: l’espèce tragique. Pour eux, l’anxiété n’est pas de savoir si demain ils seront prospères ou malheureux, grands ou petits, mais seront ou ne seront pas.” Groulx envisaged the tragedy of Death, and his nationalism, like so many other nationalisms, was compelled in response to this sepulchral *memento mori*. In his studies of Québec identity Léon Dion has broadly observed that national sentiment in Québec has been in part compelled by what he terms “la hantise d’un destin tragique.” Of course, Québec is very much like other national communities in this respect. Benedict Anderson tells us that Death is a central imaginative concern of nation-states and may be detected in their evolutionary narratives and in their collective memory of the past and of the future. He writes that the rise of nation-states coincided with the twilight of religious modes of thought in 18th Century Western Europe. The sustaining power of religion was, and still is, lodged within its imaginative response to Death and the many forms in which its presence burdens human life, whether it be age, sickness, deformity, mutilation, loss or sadness. To these seemingly arbitrary mechanisms of Death, religion brought meaning. It promised contingency in the form of Salvation, in the promise of a life that would continue on in Paradise. In cosmology there is the certainty that meaning exists

99 Dion, *À la recherche du Québec*, p.23
100 See Anderson’s discussion in Chapters I and II in *Imagined Communities*. 
beyond the seemingly arbitrary suffering of human life, that there is a higher order. Anderson maintains that the secular Enlightenment discredited these ideas and that the human need for meaning was re-channeled and re-imagined in the form of nationalism. In the cases of both religion and nationalism, he argues that the two imaginative structures translated fatality into continuity. For the idea of continuity wards off Death by weaving a continuous, immortal thread between the forefathers, the here and now, and the yet-to-be-born. Continuity brings meaning to the fatalities that surround us and redeems us from them. Stories of continuity keep a national community coherent, binding its constituent parts together in a collective drive towards the common ideal and the common belonging around which national identity is conceived. Through nationhood, immortality is imaginatively seized by establishing simultaneity between generations.

In this sense then, there is scarcely a figure more Death-laden in a national community than that of the traitor. The idea of treason assumes discontinuity. The traitor is the breaker of continuity, the fouler of unity; it is he who ridicules paradise and disdains salvation, he who impedes the regenerative capacity of the nation. When the traitor prevails, the nation is swept into tragedy and Death. When the traitor appears in tragic narratives of nationhood, then, he serves a key functional role in the transmitting the theme of fatality and Death to which national communities are so imaginatively attached. Indeed, identifying the traitors within – the Other that dwells inside the collective Self – becomes part of the narrative resistance against Death. In the sections that follow, I will show how Trudeau is narrated in such a way that he is brought to incarnate all that is discontinuous, antithetical and fatal to Québec’s existential being. In the Mythstories of Meech, Trudeau is situated as the central agent of tragedy for Québec. As Guy Laforest has written, in language loaded with narrative emplotment, “Le visage du tragique, c’est évidemment celui de Pierre Elliott Trudeau, fondateur du nouveau nationalisme canadien.”

II. Une identité piégée: The Argumentative Expatriation of Trudeau

The image of the trap, *le piège*, is a metaphor that contains much currency within the treason discourse. In his seminal *Lendemains piégés: du référendum à la "nuit des longs couteaux"*, Claude Morin has constructed an entire Repatriation narrative around the image system of the *piège*. Other Crisis Authors have explicitly borrowed this metaphor in their retellings, but on a more implicit level the narrative idea of Québec being led into a trap in 1980-82 is one that resounds throughout the representations of not only the Repatriation drama, but of Trudeau’s identity as traitor. The genius of the *piège* is contained within its power of contradiction, its ability to deceive. The trap betrays the confidence of its victim by the guise of legitimacy it assumes. Moving confidently forward towards his destination, the lone walker steps upon a patch of ground that appears secure and safe – it appears in coherent, continuous and unblemished unity with the established environment surrounding it. But this confidence in his stride is but an illusion and the walker suddenly finds himself swept into the cataclysm of injury, imprisonment, and Death. Danger awaits the trusting wayfarer at this conflux of opposites, where nothing is what it seems to be, and where Trudeau le Québécois is Prime Minister of Canada.

As we have seen, Trudeau’s identity as a Francophone Québecker is one of the major structural problems that any coherent retelling of the Meech Sagas must address. Some authors have simply attempted to dismiss Trudeau as a mere eccentric in the Québec political landscape, an isolated hiccup in Québec’s evolution who represents no one but himself. Most authors, in a similar fashion, have intellectually situated Trudeau on the outside of all coherent narratives of the Québec Self. In a sense, such an enterprise is not a difficult one in light of Trudeau’s vocal opposition to the major texts in which Québec identity is located within the Meech

---

102 During an interview on anglophone television, for example, journalist Keith Morrison proposed to Bouchard that the Anglo-Canadians who objected to Meech did so in large part because one of Québec’s most prominent Francophone politicians, Pierre Trudeau, had told them Meech was a bad deal for Québec. To this Bouchard responded that Trudeau was simply an individual citizen, an isolated voice, and nothing more. Interview, Canada AM. Toronto: CTV, 12 June, 1994.
Lake universe – namely nationalism, duality, sovereignty, distinct society and so forth. And yet, as we have seen, Trudeau responds to his detractors by pointing to his legacy of electoral support in Québec, to his ensuing legitimacy as an inside representative of the defined Québec group and to the mythstories of continuity in which his Meech narratives are formulated. The task of rendering Trudeau unrecognizable within the texts of québécité is thus a complicated undertaking, and yet it is necessary if Meech to maintain its narrative coherence as a tragedy. The Crisis Authors have generally responded to this challenge by situating Trudeau’s identity at a locus of contradiction – un piège – where nothing is what it seems to be. At this existential locus, Trudeau’s interiority is in fact exterior, his continuity is in fact a rupture and his legitimacy is in fact illegitimate.

That is to say that Trudeau is a figure that pivots between oppositions of identity. Figure A. shows the various leitmotifs of oppositions in which Trudeau’s identity is conceived within the Crisis Literature:

**FIGURE A: THE ECOSYSTEM OF OPPOSITIONS WITHIN THE MEECH UNIVERSE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soi</th>
<th>Autre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Québec</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intériorité</td>
<td>Extériorité</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Légitimité</td>
<td>Illégitimité</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuité</td>
<td>Rupture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dualité</td>
<td>Uniformité</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Français</td>
<td>Anglais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appartenance</td>
<td>Exile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarité</td>
<td>Fragmentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmation</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oui</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombe</td>
<td>Faucon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriote</td>
<td>Lord Durham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In essence, the traître as an actor is structured around the idea of the trap, an identity that pivots between oppositions of Self and Other. As a site of contradiction, Trudeau is postured at the point of conflux between these points of opposition, inhabiting both of them. If I may step briefly into semiotics for simple metaphoric utility, the Crisis
Authors generally conceive of Trudeau’s paradox as one of a gap between sign and signifier. That is, to say that there is nothing to connect Trudeau as an image of Québec Self with the meanings that this image is assumed to contain. Indeed Trudeau’s meaning is often represented as being in direct contradiction to the image he assumes. In essence, while Trudeau may technically lay legitimate claim to group insiderness, this belonging is removed from its context by the texts of identity in which Trudeau’s actions, desires and references are recognized. Exactly like his Québec identity, Trudeau’s constitutional behaviour is qualified by Morin as “légal mais illégitime.”

Externally, Trudeau is an insider; internally, he is an exile.

This meaningless Québec façade that the Authors behold in the image of Trudeau is a major leitmotif in their argumentative narrations of the Meech Sagas. Numerous Crisis Authors, for example, posit the argument that Québécois voted for Trudeau for no other reason than the simple, technical fact that he was Québec Francophone. Georges Mathews rationalizes that “chaque fois que les Québécois ont eu au fédéral le choix entre un chef québécois et un chef non-québécois, ils ont toujours opté pour le premier.”

Denis Monière takes this argument further, arguing that Trudeau’s reflective image of intra-Québec Self was the principal source of his electoral success in a collectivity that wished to consolidate its representative being within the governing political apparatus. Monière writes, “Ilots [les Québécois] ont voté massivement pour le Parti libéral du Canada principalement parce qu’il était dirigé par un chef provenant du Québec.”

Yet the Crisis Authors go on to explain that this collective support for Trudeau was incomplete, or even misguided, because of the contradictory abyss that existed between sign and signifier within the Trudeau text. Mathews reminds us of the “fossé qui a toujours existé entre Pierre Trudeau et les Québécois, nonobstant ses triomphes électoraux.” Similarly recognizing the gulf between Trudeau’s external belonging to the Québec Collective Self and his internal exile, Claude-V. Marsolais, Claude Morin and Pierre Bourgault go so far as

---

103 Morin, Lendemains, p.312
104 Mathews, Accord, p.57

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
to chastise their Québec compatriots for electoral immaturity and naïveté. To them, Québec voters did not grasp the complete absence of québecité that lay beneath Trudeau’s outer crust. In essence, Québécois are shown to have voted for a Francophone, not for a political programme or for a political vision. They are shown to have supported a façade and not the meaning it contained.

Such is the historical situation that virtually every nationalist perspective (from Claude Ryan to Pierre Bourgault) identifies in the referendum drama. Yet here the situation is slightly different. In this case Québécois are shown to have voted for the meanings with which Trudeau deliberately encoded himself during the referendum campaign. As we have seen, Trudeau is shown to have appropriated a number of defined texts of québecité above and beyond the simple fact of his technical insidership, namely a dualistic and decentralized approach to federalism. In 1980, the Québécois who voted NON are represented as having done so in the belief that the fossé between Trudeau and Québec was at last being bridged and that Trudeau’s image of Selfhood was no longer merely a façade but intellectually attached to realms of meaning in which Québec identity was recognizable. As Marcel Adam writes of listening to Trudeau’s Paul Sauvé promise, “Je me suis dit que M. Trudeau devait avoir vraiment peur que le oui l’emporte pour se résoudre à faire des concessions dans un domaine où il s’était toujours montré extrêmement intranigo.” But as the Authors immediately go on to reveal, Trudeau’s appropriation of Québec meanings was simply thicker layer of façade that further obscured the true nature of his interiority. This contradictory space is cordoned off in the Crisis literature as the crime scene in which Trudeau’s metatextual act of treason took place. Trudeau is frequently described as having “seduced” Québécois with these seigned texts of québecité. Subliminally recalling the metaphor of the piège, Bourgault even compares Trudeau to the mythic Sirens of Greek antiquity who

106 Mathews, p.84. Similarly Fournier writes that, despite the fact that a majority of Québec gave him power, Trudeau was « irrémédiablement déconnecté de la réalité québécoise. » Autopsie. p.70
108 Adam in Trudeau, Lac Meech, p. 129
109 Fournier boldly refers to the “mensonge” of renewed federalism, Autopsie p.13
lured the ancients into the jagged rocks of Death with their songs of love.\textsuperscript{111}

Similarly, George Mathews uses the image of the mousetrap:

Ces mêmes Québécois qui, en mai 1979, avaient assuré la survie politique de Pierre Trudeau et qui, en février 1980, l’avaient plébiscité, auront la surprise quelques mois plus tard de voir venir vers eux le rouleau compresseur du rapatriement unilatéral de la Constitution....le grand malentendu allait se refermer sur le Québec comme une souricière.\textsuperscript{112}

The genius of this metahistorical act of betrayal is commonly identified in what the Authors perceive as Trudeau’s deliberate choice to reside in the ambiguous space between opposing texts during the referendum campaign.\textsuperscript{113} And like the ambiguous trickery of the piège, what Trudeau allowed people to believe was contrary to what he intended. As Bouchard has said of the Trudeau government’s behaviour in 1980-1982, “Au lieu de faire ce qu’on a dit, on a fait le contraire.” Bouchard’s remark is revealing for it identifies the interplay of oppositions of the piège and defines Trudeau’s post-referendum actions as the “opposite” — that is, antithetical in form and meaning — to what was solemnly pledged in the Paul Sauvé Arena. Trudeau is a booby-trapped site of contradiction fashioned out of an external insider who conceals an internal outsider. \textit{La colombe avait des griffes de faucon}.

The Crisis Authors have also commonly identified a further major contradictory space that argumentatively reconfigures Trudeau’s claims to legitimacy into an image of illegitimacy. This phenomenon is termed in George Mathews, Pierre Fournier, the Bouchard Canon and elsewhere as the problem of “double légitimité” in Québec national politics. This paradigm is argumentatively structured to rebuke Trudeau’s claim that the Assemblée nationale does not have a monopoly on Québec’s will and that he and his Québec MPs represent Québec as well. The framework of the

\textsuperscript{110} Bouchard is fond of his conceit. See notably his \textit{Message à la nation}, 25 novembre, 1995.

\textsuperscript{111} See Bourgault, \textit{Moi, “Oui! Ce peuple a encore envie d’exister, même s’il se laisse séduire parfois par le chant des sirènes.”} p.278

\textsuperscript{112} Mathews, Accord, p.58

\textsuperscript{113} See in particular Guy Laforest, “Trudeau et le référendum” in \textit{Trudeau}. Laforest pinpoints Trudeau’s use of ambiguity during the referendum campaign as the key to his electoral success and core of his treachery. Laforest’s analysis constitutes an academic approach to Marcel Adam’s original thesis that ambiguity was Trudeau’s method.
double légitimité accepts Trudeau’s argument technically, but rejects it morally. The argument goes that, while the Assemblée nationale is the primary political apparatus of the Québec collectivity, federal MPs in Ottawa, though of secondary importance, are equally legitimate, having been elected by the same population. Invoking in turn the metaphor of the piège Bouchard writes, “Cette ‘double légitimité,’ on le voit, peut constituer une véritable souricière pour le Québec.” Within this configuration, the secondary representative authority, especially when it is in opposition to the first, can claim legitimacy in actions that are in fact illegitimate. The Bloc québécois manifesto elaborates this idea, positioning Trudeau at the centre of the problem:

Un autre objectif du Bloc québécois est d’empêcher tout politicien fédéral d’agir comme Pierre Trudeau. Les Québécois se rappellent que ce dernier justifiait le rejet des revendications de leur gouvernement en arguant de sa légitimité, aussi fondée que celle de René Lévesque, puisque le Québec avait élu 74 députés libéraux à Ottawa. Jusqu’à maintenant, les Québécois n’avaient qu’une alternative : élire les fédéralistes ou s’abstenir de voter.

There is an implicit rejection in this passage of the idea that Trudeau represents Québec in anything but an artificial sense and of the argument (consistently insisted upon in the Trudeau writings) that his federal government is also that of the Québécois. Trudeau’s legitimacy, much like his Québec identity, is technical, not moral. It appears arbitrary and dangerous that a figure identified in a discourse of treason such as Trudeau should be able to claim the same representative authority as Lévesque, a figure that the Bouchard canon works very hard to enshrine as an archetypal hero. Bouchard goes on to imply that Trudeau was elected simply because the Québec people could not articulately vote against him before the Bloc arrived in Ottawa, thus rendering Trudeau’s legitimacy even more superficial, even accidental, exonerating the Québec electorate of all responsibility for his power in Ottawa.

---

116 Christian Dufour is the only Crisis author to explicitly acknowledge popular Québec responsibility for Trudeau, but he goes onto make the strange claim that Québec supported Trudeau out of a self-loathing desire to destroy itself. As such, Dufour allies himself with the thesis that the Québecker who voted for Trudeau did so because they were not lucid, or compelled by some irrational, unhealthy instinct running counter to their best interest. See Rupture, p.62

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
effect, we are presented with a situation whereby the power structures designed by
the Canadian Other have created a situation in which Québeccers had seemingly no
choice but to impose Trudeau upon themselves, against their own conscious will.
Trudeau is conceived as the leader of the *pays des Autres*, and though he has been
harvested from Québec, his legitimacy does not reside there. Laforest insists, for
example, that Trudeau and his Charter are valid in the exterior Canada alone and are
morally and even democratically illegitimate inside Québec territory. And yet this
knot of political contradiction creates a system of power that legitimately empowers
foreign objects to illegitimately manipulate the fate of the Québec nation. “C’est ça le
pire,” explains Bouchard, “la double légitimité est ce qui permet au Canada de nous
demeurer les pires coups, avec la caution de s ‘empêcher des fédéraux du Q übec.”117 In
the universe created by the *double légitimité*, the Québec deputies in Trudeau’s
government that voted in favour of the 1982 repatriation are an aberration. Indeed,
Bouchard’s schema directly identifies the Trudeau government’s massive Québec
presence as the very factor that ensured Québec’s absense and ostracism in 1982.
Trudeau has thrown Québec into a confusing, negative-image ecosystem of opposites
in which illegitimacy receives legitimate sanction. Approaching this problem from
another angle, Adam, Mathews and Brian Mulroney have asked rhetorically if an
Anglo-Canadian prime minister could have carried out the same constitutional
operation as Trudeau did in 1982. No, they respond – it would be political suicide.
The implication is once more that Trudeau’s Québec surface visage was the very
factor that allowed him to legitimately commit illegitimate acts, hence the *souricière*,
the *piège*. The Canadian trap is structurally hinged upon an axis of betrayal.

What we are left with is the complete dialectical undoing of Trudeau’s claims
to legitimacy, continuity and interiority and the laying of the imaginative foundations
of the traitor construct. We behold a Trudeau that has been imaginatively expatriated
from Québec, a foreign object. We are told that Québeccers are practically exempt
from any responsibility for Trudeau’s power. They supported Trudeau either by

117 Bouchard, “Il manque un pays dans ce pays.” Discours prononcé au CEGEP Sorel-Tracy devant

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
accident or because they were seduced or because of Trudeau’s technical/ethnolinguistic as opposed to moral/mythic/political/metahistorical Québec belonging. In all cases we are led to believe that it was a grievous mistake, a terrible misunderstanding. Scant discursive space is paved in these narratives in which Trudeau can be conceived as occupying any representative space in the Québec Self. Situated squarely outside the texts of Québec’s existential being, Trudeau is delegitimized as transmitter of Québec identity. That is to say, he is constructed to be identified against (as opposed to identified with) as an antithetical villain whose meaning absolutely contradicts his form. We must therefore ask what realms of meaning are native to Trudeau le traître in the Crisis Literature. If we may determine what Trudeau is not, then what exactly is he? Denis Monière provides a clue in his prognosis of Trudeau’s political success:

    Pierre Trudeau profitera d’une prime de sympathie ethnique pour se faire plébisciter par les francophones et il s’appuiera sur l’effet repoussoir du nationalisme québécois pour se faire élire par les Canadiens, qui le considéraient comme le seul chef politique ayant la capacité de mettre le Québec à sa place.  

While in Québec Trudeau’s belonging was one of exterior façade, in the English nether regions it was one of interior force.

---

118 What is curious, or perhaps unsettling, is how the spirit of this realm of the Québec Crisis authors’ argumentation mirrors that of Diane Francis in her fiercely hostile polemic, Fighting for Canada. In it, equipped with the testimony of what we now know to be a temporarily dizzy and delusional Guy Bertrand, Diane Francis claims that the majority of Québecker had been “duped” into supporting a tiny, treasonous separatist sect who cannot rightly claim democratic legitimacy or representative popular power. In his excellent book National Dreams, Daniel Francis rightly argues that Diane Francis’ polemic indicates “a continuing infantilization of the Québécois which contributes nothing to the reduction of political tensions in the country.” (p.174) One is compelled, however, to wonder if there is not a parallel infantilization of the Québec population in the discourse of a Bourgault or a Marsolais, who would castigate their fellow citizens for electoral immaturity. We might pose similar questions about the tacit infantilization at work in the discourse of Bouchard, Adam, Fournier, Mathews and Monière who, like Diane Francis, categorically reject the possibility that the political movement they so detest might be a legitimate, indigenous force alongside others, insisting instead on scenarios involving a “grand malentendu,” in which the population didn’t understand what it was doing, and/or a perceived seduction/perversion/betrayal of the people’s will.
III. Trudeau as Master, Trudeau as Slave: The Two Imaginative Postures of Betrayal

Trudeau’s associations with the “English Canadians”\textsuperscript{120} are apprehended by the Authors to further expose Trudeau as a foreign object, as the insider of an outside community. Indeed, the meanings with which Trudeau’s interiority is encoded in the Crisis Literature are normally assimilated into those meanings associated with the

\textsuperscript{119} Monière, Indépendance, p.96

\textsuperscript{120} The idea of “Canada anglais” is a reductionist construct which is used to give form to an amorphous Other. Within the adversarial dichotomies set up in these Crisis narratives we find the antagonist variously formulated under the terms “les Anglais” (rare) as well as the “Canadiens anglais” (common) and often simply “Canadiens” (common) or even “Canadiens” (Falardeau especially). But all of these formulations serve essentially the same function of alterity. In effect, there is an ambiguous but never fully complete assimilation between “English” and “Canada” such that the two terms mutually refer to each other and are mutually confused with each other. As such, in many of these writings, a Francophone may be conceived as “English” by way of his/her affirmation of “Canadian” identity. Indeed, the term “Canadien français” is often conceived as an identity defined and/or controlled by the “English Canadians” and used to designate an assimilated or complacent Québécois (I am thinking in particular of Guy Bouthillier’s consistent use of the English term “French Canadians” in his A armes égales: combat pour le Québec français. Sillery: Septentrion, 1994) It is this complex intercourse that allows Christian Dufour, for example, to make the argument that Trudeau’s “French Power véhiculait presque tout l’élément anglais de l’identité québécoise.” (Défi, p.80.) The “English-French” oppositional paradigm of early French-Canadian nationalist writing has textually evolved into a “Canada-Québec” dichotomy, but the functions and meanings of these two constructs remain largely the same. When the word “Canada” is used in the Crisis literature, an “English” reality is almost always being discursively designated, and when the word “Anglais” is used, the authors are most definitely referring to “Canada.” Even the term “Canada anglais,” which would seem to account for this ambiguity, generally refers to a foreign Other among whom, as we shall see, a number of Québec francophones are to be found, and against whom a “Québec” (not a parallel and overlapping “Canada français”) is poised within an oppositional function. Therefore, I will use the terms “English Canada” or “English Canadians” in quotation marks because I do not believe this term can be used to designate in any kind of primordial or non-imagined geography, identity, nationality, state, or figure of alterity. “English Canada” unlike Quebec, has no specific territory, head of state, active “English Canadian” nationalism or political apparatus that definitively belongs to it. I will therefore be using the term “Anglo-Canada” when referring to the various groups and identities that form the Anglophone population within Canadian territory. The idea of “English Canada,” I would suggest, is effectively an artifact of the Franco-Québec gaze which aims to graft nationhood upon a profoundly amorphous entity (which does not generally consider itself to be a nation) such that it may better structurally gratify the Franco-Québec paradigm of the two nations compact. Pierre Fournier is a revealing (though extreme) example of this phenomenon as he demonizes “English Canada” for its fallacious absence nationalism! To Fournier, this lack of a decidedly “English-Canadian” nationalism is in fact a calculated and malicious attempt to negate reality: “Pendant longtemps, nos compatriotes anglophones, pour des raisons tactiques et opportunistes [...] ont nié l’existence même de cette entité qu’est le Canada anglais. Tous les acteurs politiques québécois qui cherchaient à reconstituer le pays sur une base binationale se sont inexorablement butés à cet argument.” Autopsie p.114) I should add for precision that the assimilation of Cana and English is not a perfect or fully complete fusion of meanings. It must be said that there are moments in the Crisis literature in which the word “Canada” is clearly used to mean a multinational political entity of which Québec is part. But normally, this use of “Canada” is non-narrative, one that is used to explain policy, objectives, state formation, administration and structures
culture and politics of *Canada anglais*. Having established that Trudeau’s *quéeccité* is confined to a superficial realm, the authors generally conceive of Trudeau’s deeper, interior power and identity as being drawn from the “English Canadian” Other. Michel Vastel observes in his *Trudeau le Québécois*, «ce qui est sûr, c’est qu’il n’aurait jamais été ce qu’il a été si le Canada anglais ne l’avait pas découvert. Pour se servir de lui? À moins que ce ne soit le contraire!» Vastel’s rhetorical questioning unwittingly demarcates the two major frameworks in which the Crisis Literature identifies the Englishness of Trudeau’s textual meaning. Either Trudeau is represented as a sort of passive, obedient creature of the “English Canadians”, or, less common, he is represented as a veritable *texte centreur*, the God-like generating organ that has literally created the “English Canadian” Other and assigned it its meaning. Either Trudeau breathed life into the Other or the Other breathed life into him, but his meaning is inconceivable without this intimate association with the defined adversary.

In the most common of these traitorous postures, Trudeau resembles André Laurendeau’s image of the Duplessisiste *Roi-nègre*. Trudeau is presented as something of a puppet ruler who, like the Nigger King, superficially appears to belong to and emerge from the colonized nation while at the same time serving as an obsequious “Yes-Man” to an imposed, occupying order. Following this line of reasoning, Pierre Falardeau strips Trudeau the “roi nègre biculturel” of his superficial guise of *quéeccité*, referring to him only as “Pierre Elliott” or “Elliott Trudeau,” underlining his English textual forms. All texts of political and economic power associated with Trudeau in Falardeau’s discourse are framed as foreign, “English” objects. He refers to “la gang du Liberal Party of Canada,” and “La

---

of federalism etc. In narrating the conflict, and in identifying the Other, the authors’ use of “Canada” remains an almost uniformly exterior reality.

121 Vastel, *Trudeau*, p.19
122 Vastel’s delineation of the two possible realms of Trudeau’s power relations with “English Canada” is interesting for it not only demarcates two separate “schools of thought,” but also indicates the contradictory interpretations of the source and meaning of Trudeau’s power that may be argued by a single author within a single narrative.
124 Ibid. p.59
bourgeoisie Canadian among which we find “La Bank of Montreal” and “toute la gang des Canadiens français de service.” Through this calculated use of English, Falardeau exposes the Otherness that he perceives hidden beneath Trudeau’s French Power, putting him on display as a body possessed and controlled by Englishness, an Anglo-saxon ethno-linguistic artifact. In referring to Trudeau as a “Frog à la rescousse du Canada anglais,” political scientist Pierre Fournier is developing much the same idea. The suggestion here is that Trudeau is not only the emissary of a decidedly “English” ethno-linguistic ambition, but also that he is a servile push-over who has self-loathingly appropriated the Other’s hatred of Québeckers, willingly playing the subjugated role of “Frog” to structurally befit the racist, denigrating gaze of Canada anglais. The position of the Roi-nègre is similarly invoked to explain Trudeau’s behaviour in the Repatriation narrative. Lucien Bouchard’s double légitimité thesis identifies Trudeau and his Québec c’aucus as the artifice through which the Canadiens anglais committed their act upon Québec in 1982. “Jamais,” writes Bouchard, “le Canada anglais n’aurait osé perpétrer le coup de 1982 s’il n’avait pu l’abriter derrière le paravent de la députation libérale au Québec.” In this sense, the isolation of Québec in 1981-1982 was not imposed by Trudeau or his political vision, but rather by a Canada anglais acting through Trudeau.

Bouchard’s reading echoes that of Pierre Bourgault who summarizes 1982 thusly: “Le retour d’une histoire qu’on se refuse de reconnaître pour ce qu’elle est: les

125 ibid. p.74
126 ibid. p.70
127 ibid. p.74
128 Indeed, the fact that “French Power” – the expression indicating Trudeau’s bilingualization of federal institutions and the civil service and, in particular, appointing French-speakers to the top portfolios of government and crown corporations – has been retained in English within Franco-Québec lexicon may well speak to this very same kind of ironical undoing that Falardeau employs.

129 Fournier, Autopsie, p.89.
130 Bouchard, Visage, p.336 Interestingly, Pierre Fournier observes precisely this same phenomenon in his analysis of Meech: “Il est tout à fait improbable, voire même impensable, que Clyde Wells ou Frank McKenna, deux premiers ministres provinciaux libéraux, aient rejeté l’accord si l’unanimité avait prévalu tant au sein du PLC que du Québec fédéraliste.” Autopsie. Naturally, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Jean Chrétien are identified as the rogue elements that broke this unanimity, providing the two premiers with the traitors structurally required for the double légitimité enterprise.

Anglais ont encore gagné en se servant de l’un ‘des nôtres’ pour arriver à leur fin. Laurier, Saint-Laurent, Trudeau. Vous avez dit: ‘des nôtres’?132 Here once again, Trudeau is presented as being almost irrelevant to the events of 1981-1982, for it is the active desires and mechanistic workings of Canada anglais that brought the imposition of 1982 into being. Trudeau is simply an empty space, a passive Québécois shell, a marionette, a private property that is possessed and inhabited by the “English”. Not all authors take precisely this approach. For example, Michel Vastel explains that, far from being an empty space, Trudeau’s political identity revealed “une raideur instinctive, une hostilité larvée à l’endroit d’éléments très importants de l’opinion québécoise” and for this reason le Canada anglais “chose” him as “the Quebecker We Need.”133 Rather than serving as marionette to be manipulated, Trudeau is presented as independently and organically possessing the anti-Québec ambitions with which the Other seeks to ally itself. But of course, in “finding” and “choosing” Trudeau, as Vastel explains, “English Canada” enshrines Trudeau with political power and he becomes their creature. Trudeau is their “interlocuteur québécois privilégié,”134 their “cadeau du ciel,”135 with which they will at last realize their ardently awaited fantasy to mettre le Québec à sa place.136 The posture of the Roi nègre, appointed by the Other to control the subjugated Self, hovers actively over these intellectual constructions. Trudeau’s power, legitimacy, belonging and continuity are exposed as “English Canadian” possessions. Regardless of what language he is speaking, Trudeau speaks with an English voice, transmitting English meanings and desires.

132 Bourgault, Moi, p.24  
133 Vastel, Trudeau, p.15  
134 Christian Dufour describes Trudeau as the “interlocuteur québécois privilégié du Canada anglais,” Rupture, p.55  
135 Georges Mathews writes that “Pierre Trudeau faisait figure de cadeau du ciel envoyé au Canada anglais pour contrer la montée du séparatism.” L’Accord, p.39  
136 This formulation, often suffixed with a crushing “une fois pour toutes,” is used constantly throughout the Crisis literature and we are often left with the impression that this is the fundamental desire, if not the founding ambition, of Anglophone Canada as a political society.
In the posture of Roi nègre, Trudeau is conceived within a discursive space strongly associated with the antithetical figure of Maurice Duplessis\textsuperscript{137}, against whom both Trudeau and Lévesque waged intellectual warfare in the 1950s. As such, the authors imply an antithetical Trudeau who facilitates Québec’s colonial subjugation and exploitation and frustrates its collective progress. As Quiet Revolution-era Québec mobilized towards the freedom and affirmation that Duplessis had thwarted, “l’arrivée de Pierre Trudeau signifia le début du grand blocage,” explains the Bloc Québécois manifesto.\textsuperscript{138} Vastel jokes that perhaps one day a statue of the antithetical Trudeau will be erected on the grounds of the Assemblée nationale, “car tout peut arriver...René Lévesque a bien sorti la statue de Maurice Duplessis pour la planter au pied de l’Assemblée nationale du Québec!”\textsuperscript{139} From Grande Noirceur to Grand Blocage the Roi nègre obstructs the collective parcours like a wall of iron.

In the other major posture, which is significantly less common, Trudeau is not a passive creature, but rather the active creator of Otherness. Within this configuration, the Canadiens anglais are not an external monolith that inhabits an empty Trudeau, appropriating his form. Rather it is the opposite. Trudeau becomes the generating organ of “English Canadian” meaning and identity. It is Trudeau that inhabits the emptiness of the “English Canadian” identity and builds from it a monolith. He encodes it with meanings, enshrines a political culture and instructs his creature, dictating to it every act, gesture and intuition. Referring to Trudeau’s uses of Canada anglais in the Meech Lake debate, Vastel muses, “À quoi pense donc Pierre Trudeau quand le Canada anglais, sur son ordre, crache un ‘No!’ méprisant à la figure du Québec? Est-il content au moins de voir son peuple quêter une place particulière à la table familiale et subir l’humiliation de se la faire refuser?” The image is one of unthinkable betrayal bordering on insanity. Rather than simply selling out to the Other, the traitor creates an Other which by design is programmed to inflict damage

\textsuperscript{137} Laurendeau’s original use of this metaphor was of course in the context of Duplessis, his dictatorial negation of opposition and his complacency with Anglo-American capital.
\textsuperscript{138} Bouchard, Nouveau Parti, p.58
\textsuperscript{139} Vastel, Trudeau, p.269
upon his own people. Guy Laforest has structured a number of analytical studies around this controlling idea of Trudeau as the generating organ of "English Canadian" meaning. Over the course of several books and essays, Laforest narrates the birth of a monolithic nationalism that he believes has anchored itself definitively in *Canada anglais* since the constitutional revision of 1982. This singularly "anti-québécois" *nouveau nationalisme*, which Laforest holds responsible for the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, is of Trudeau’s personal design. Laforest depicts Trudeau variously as "fondateur du nouveau nationalisme canadien,"\(^{140}\) and, even more interestingly, as the "grand prêtre du nationalisme canadien."\(^{141}\) This second image is particularly powerful. It depicts a Trudeau who is in concert with an overarching system of laws that are above us all and which control our fate. As Grand Priest, we see a Trudeau sermonizing nationalist meanings to his pious congregation, preparing them for the final Judgement. The image suggests an occult religiosity, even scriptural fanaticism, especially given Laforest’s interest in Trudeau’s constitutional orthodoxy.\(^ {142}\) In this traitorous posture then, which is significantly more perverse and antagonistic than that of the *Roi nègre*, it is not the English who speak through Trudeau, but Trudeau who speaks through the English. “English Canada,” which unlike Québec, does not have a coherent territory, political apparatus or head of state\(^ {143}\), is thus assimilated with Trudeau, the *maître penseur* who gives this shapeless Other both a face and a voice. Such an argumentative configuration of treason seriously reinforces Trudeau’s complete foreignness, his absolute perfection as Other and leader of *le pays des Autres*.

Yet this conceptual posturing of Trudeau within the realm of the Other still beckons an important question. If Trudeau is so intimately attached to *Canada anglais*, what precisely are the meanings with which this Other is encoded? What is

---

\(^{140}\) Laforest, *De l’urgence*, p.66

\(^{141}\) Laforest, *Rêve*, p.162 Dufour engages this view of Trudeau as well in speaking to Trudeau’s design of “English Canadian” nationalism: "Comme inventeur de ce système, Pierre Elliott Trudeau a imposé sa loi.” *Défi*, p.118

\(^{142}\) Laforest is not alone in identifying a religious zeal to Trudeau’s politics. Mathews writes “pour Pierre Trudeau le bilinguisme représentait une véritable religion et tout doute relatif à la politique de bilinguisme s’apparentait à une hérésie.” *Accord*, p.39 Parizeau refers to Trudeau’s vision as an “obsession,” *Pour un Québec souverain*, p.125
the identity of this Other and how is it that Trudeau transmits it within the Meech universe, whether as Godlike master or as enslaved marionette? It would be easy to define the “English” simply as the antagonistic actor, as the adversarial opponent in Dion’s model of the constitutional duel, but this handy definition leaves us with little qualitative understanding. The Meech Lake narrative ecosystem is populated by a number of texts in which the “English Canadians” are recognized and articulated through the figure of Trudeau. These texts of the Other are integral to the tragic emplotment of the Meech Sagas and to Trudeau’s functional role as traitor in particular. The narrative metatext of this tragedy is the Repatriation of the Constitution. Much like the narrative metaphor identified by Vincent Lemieux, the isolation of 1981-82 is positioned as a tragic “first act,” forewarning and even creating the parallel isolation at the “second act” climax in June 1990. The Repatriation narrative not only dictates all ensuing developments, but it is also a veritable power-house of identity. Its conclusions introduce the meanings of Trudeau and Canada anglais that will go on to be tested, confirmed and enshrined in the Meech failure. In “1982”, the “English Canadians” are defined by the political, juridical and nationalistic forms contained within constitutional document and also by their decision to proceed in the repatriation enterprise without the approval of René Lévesque and by Québec’s resulting loss of political power. In all cases, the Other is conceived and identified within the tragic texts of Québec Self. It is in the narrative mise en scène of a tragic Québec, of an injured and dying Québec, that the English find their meaning.

IV. Repatriation and Death

With Lévesque’s isolation during la nuit des longs couteaux, Québec beholds the trap into which it has been led: a tragic world of injury, dismemberment and fatality. In the 1982 Charter born of this isolation, a mournful Guy Laforest looks upon a deathly sickness: “je persiste à voir dans cette Charte un projet maladif, vicié

143 There is no English Canadian state.
144 Laforest uses precisely this image, claiming that the Charter, whose permanence became certain with the Death of Meech, left Québec nationalist-federalists “en deuil d’une certaine idée du Canada.”
et m'alsain."\(^145\) Claude Morin likewise de tects a n’umistakable de athliness in t’his “héritage empoisonné de Trudeau,”\(^146\) while Pierre Fournier employs a more violent, assaulting imagery, referring to the repatriation as a lethal “bombe à retardement”\(^147\) aiming to “écraser une fois pour toutes le nationalisme québécois.”\(^148\) Georges Mathews similarly refers to the constitution as “un mal fatal pour le Québec.”\(^149\) In this story beleaguered with fatality, the Death-forecasting Pierre Vadeboncoeur affirms that Québec must “(se) gouverner ou disparaître,” and Christian Dufour argues that Québec was reconquered in 1982, writing that, like Death itself, a conquest is a “défaite permanente,” from which there is no recovery.\(^150\) Even the textual referent under which the events of November 1981 have been fused, \textit{la nuit des longs couteaux}, is heavily steeped in the violent discursive language of hatred, murder and Death. It is perhaps valuable to recall that this term is of course borrowed from a German referent designating a night of political murders ordered by Adolf Hitler during the Nazi dictatorship of Germany which aimed to destroy opponents of National Socialism. Pierre Fournier even speaks provocatively of the “Reich de Pierre Trudeau.”\(^151\) The metaphors employed by Lucien Bouchard bring this discourse of Death upon the tragic figure of René Lévesque, generating vivid tableaux of martyrdom. In the following formulation, pronounced in the weeks following the Death of Meech, Bouchard represents a metaphoric Lévesque that is actually killed by the isolation of 1980-1982:

Cet homme-là a été détruit par la politique. Détruit par nous [Québécois]. C’est nous qui avons détruit Lévesque, quand on l’a envoyé au front sans fusil, quand on lui a coupé les jarrets pis dit: “Allez vous battre contre Trudeau pis les Anglais. Vas-y René! Lâche pas René! Mais, il est monté au front tout seul […] C’était la fin de la vie de René Lévesque.\(^152\)


\(^{147}\) Fournier, \textit{Autopsie}, p.20

\(^{148}\) Ibid. p.24

\(^{149}\) Mathews, \textit{Accord}, p.115

\(^{150}\) Dufour, \textit{Défi}, p.33

\(^{151}\) Fournier, \textit{Autopsie}, p.64

\(^{152}\) Quoted in Jacques Godbout. \textit{Le Mouton noir}. L’Office national du film du Canada, 1991. Bouchard is arguing that, by believing Trudeau in 1980 and voting Non, Québeckers assured Lévesque’s tragi-
Using a similar metaphoric formula Bouchard describes the events of 1980-1982 in his autobiography. "Tout s’est passé,” he writes, “comme si les Québécois avaient envoyé leur champion à la bataille après lui avoir attaché les mains derrière le dos.” Pierre Bourgault has also invoked the Death of Lévesque using the violent imagery of military confrontation, albeit without the same reverence as Bouchard: “[Lévesque] est vaincu, il n’a pas de munitions, il s’en va se battre sur le terrain miné de l’adversaire dont il sous-estime toujours la force.”

This redoubtable adversary is represented as being armed with his “rouleau compresseur du rapatriement unilatéral” and motivated by the ambition to bring about “l’annihilation définitive” of Québec nationalism. The images are of violence and massacre. The narratively fused Lévesque-Québec entity is sent alone to confront a seemingly omnipotent foreign monolith obsessed with exterminating him.

The Death Charter is furthermore emplotted with tropes of sadness and tragedy. The Charter is shown to dismember the Québec Self. It is, as Campbell prescribes, a tragedy fraught with the shattering of our beloved forms and our attachment to them. The deadliness of the Charter is represented by images of amputation and dislocation meted out upon the body of Québec identity. Québec’s isolation in 1981-1982 is not only an isolation from the negotiating table, but an isolation from Québec’s very being, like a body denied the use of certain vital organs or extremities. In describing how the Charter reduced Québec’s jurisdiction over language and education, Bouchard employs the discursive language of a fragmented, crippled body, weakened by injury. Habitually using the word “déchirure” to depict the events of 1981-82, Bouchard writes that Lévesque was “éreinté par Trudeau” during the Repatriation drama. Christian Dufour writes that the Charter’s bilingualism provisions contrived

---

153 Bouchard, *Visage*, p.124
154 Bourgault, *Moi*, p.18
155 Georges Mathews, *Accord*, p.85. This is a popular metaphor. It is also used in Claude Morin, *Lendemain*, p.106 and in Dufour, *Rupture*, p.75
156 Laforest, *Trudeau*, p.169
157 Bouchard, *Visage*, p.130
to remove the French language from Québec identity. Similarly, Claude Morin argues that the Charter was designed to destroy the juridical forms of Québec national consciousness, namely the *Charte de la langue française*. Even more fundamentally, Dufour argues in his *Défi québécois* that the Charter structurally negates the Québec national specificity, contriving to transplant Québec into a subordinated, standardized provincial unit in which national Self is unrecognizable. Laforest agrees that *québécité* is juridically amputated by the Charter. He explains that in the dualist vision of Canada, the one whispered in Trudeau’s referendum seduction, “on pouvait y être québécois et canadien. Dans le Canada de 1982, celui que M. Trudeau nous a légué...le patriotisme canadien y est devenu une condition exclusive et une référence obligée.” The vital organs of Québec national being are shown to have been confiscated, removed from the Québécois in 1982 as an alien form of identity was forced down their throats. The refrain, particularly in Léon Dion’s writings, that Québec was straightjacketed into the form of *province comme les (A)utres* in 1982 speaks directly to the shattering of the forms of Self inflicted by the Charter Death. It is in this dismemberment that we are brought before the lethal nature of the Constitutional document. It is situated as the fatal organ of Death within the Meech universe which, designed by Trudeau, will create the English. What brings Death to Québec brings Life to the English, for Death is the ultimate Other.

These images of injury and Death follow the English throughout the Meech Sagas. Indeed the sepulchral “Death of Meech” is a natural extension of the 1982 metatext. Meech is often presented as a modest Québec experiment conducted upon the “English Canadian identity”, a chance for the Other to make amends for the injury of 1982 and navigate Canada away from its all-out collision course with tragedy. Robert Bourassa himself referred to Meech as “un test pour la volonté du Canada anglais de comprendre le Québec.” Framed as such, the English fail the

---

158 Dufour, *Défi*, p.85  
159 Morin, *Lendemains*, p.131  
160 Laforest, *Urgence*, p.8  
161 It is certainly no coincidence that Fournier chose to qualify his analysis of the Meech failure as an “Autopsie du Lac Meech.”  
test miserably in June 1990 when Meech goes unratified. Interpreting this failure, the
Crisis authors commonly refute the technical argument that Meech failed because of
two provinces representing a tiny fraction of the Canadian population. Rather, the
authors exhibit statistical documents indicating that the vast majority of the “English
Canadian” populace was opposed to the Accord and that its Death was occasioned by
the popular will of the English majority. As such, Meech did not simply expire, but
was violently killed by an insatiable mob. The Authors do not always explain why
the “English Canadians” were opposed to Meech, though it is commonly attributed to
their incapacity to grasp Québec’s linguistic and cultural difference. “En fait,” writes
the Parti Québécois’ referendum brochure, “la grande majorité des Canadien sont
convaincus que les Québécois ne forment pas un peuple distinct.” 163 Not only have
the “English Canadians” simply failed to understand Québec, but their failure is
made mechanistically certain because of the convictions of hatred that their identity
manifests for Québec.

V. Lord Durham is Alive and Well and Living in Brockville, ON.

The Authors establish the meaning of Canada anglais across a number of images,
actions and objects, mainly gravitating to those that demonstrate some form of
intolerance for Québec and for the French language. Prominent among these is the
widely publicized “Brockville incident,” in which a group of residents in Brockville,
Ontario, protested against Premier David Peterson’s Bill 8 (which aimed to advance
French language services in Ontario) by trampling the Québécois flag in front of the
watchful eye of television camera. In his mammoth, 1994 account of the post-Meech
years in Québec, journalist Jean-François Lisée dismisses the argument that
Brockville was an unfortunate, isolated incident, limited to a small group of
Anglophone extremists that was over-sensationalized by the media. To Lisée,
Brockville was symptomatic of the much larger, general intolerance and hatred for

163 Parti Québécois. Le Cœur à l’ouvrage : Bâtir une nouvelle société québécoise. Québec : Assemblée
Québec that he also holds directly responsible for the Meech Death.\textsuperscript{164} Lisée writes, “Comment mieux illustrer les votes de Sault Sainte-Marie, l’annulation terreneuvienne de la ratification de Meech, le refus d’une majorité d’anglophones de reconnaître qu’il existe au Québec une société distincte? L’image de Brockville était forte parce qu’elle était vraie.” To this text of “English Canadian” identity may be added – as Lisée notes, along with Dufour, Bourgault, Fournier, Bouchard and many authors – the decision of the Ontario municipality of Sault Sainte-Marie to declare itself officially unilingual in a curious small-town retaliation against Bourassa’s Bill 178. Like Trudeau, Canada anglais also has a profound, underlying reality – a true face – and that reality is intolerance. Indeed, many of the authors inform us that, behind all the multiple arguments of a put forward by a multitude of completely different interest groups who objected to the Meech revisions, the « real » reason the Accord failed – the profound, underlying reason – was because of

\textsuperscript{164} There exist a number of metatexts through which the two great national communities of Canada have very eagerly satanized each other. For Franco-Québéco Crisis Authors, the Brockville Incident plays the same narrative role in developing the character of the Other that Jacques Parizeau’s famous “argent pis des votes ethniques” has played in the Anglo-Canadian Crisis Literature. Just as Brockville was an isolated incident that was broadly and rigoursly condemned in Anglophone Canada, Parizeau’s dia tribe was immediately condemned by his own party and, as he himself acknowledged, the Québec media and within 24 hours of uttering his remarks, he was forced resign. Yet both “incidents” would go on to enjoy remarkable immortality in the on-going bi-national competition over which Other is more racist. In the Anglo-Canadian Crisis Literature, Parizeau’s Jacobian discourse became the satanic incarnation of Québec nationalism as a whole, which certain Crisis mongers, such as Howard Galganov or Diane Francis – surely two of the most savagely irresponsible, delerious and probably very simply stupid political observers Québec and Canada have yet produced – are unable to intellectually distinguish from European Fascism. What is interesting is how isolated incidents (which are surely representative of a broader, but nonetheless limited reality or potentiality) are intellectually seized upon, recontextualized, encoded with profound meanings they do not necessarily possess and exhibited as artifacts that reflect the cultural “reality” of vast populations and intellectual movements. The desire for evidence of the Other’s perversion and evil is too good to be diluted by qualifications, nuances, relative clauses or fairplay. Such are the metatextual tools of Crisis. For some extreme primary examples of satanization see Diane Francis. Fighting for Canada. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996, Howard Galganov. Bastards! Montréal: Promar Media Group, 1999, and Normand Lester. Le Livre noir du Canada anglais I à III. Montréal: Les intouchables, 2001, 2002, 2003. For a n historical evaluation of Anglo-Canadian representations of Québec nationalism in the Crisis-beleaguered hour of the 1995 referendum, see Eric Lemieux’ M.A. thesis on Anglo-Canadian political cartoons, « Un Chardon dans les jardins de la Reine: Le référendum de 1995 tel que (re)présenté à travers la caricature au Canada anglais.» Mémoire de maîtrise. Québec : Université Laval, 2000. Despite Lemieux’ rather unnuanced comprehension of Anglophone Canada (not surprising given the fact that this particular examination of Anglo-Canadian culture was conducted in the very heart of Francophone Québec), many interesting examples of Anglophone alarmism are to be found in this study. Sadly, Lemieux is unable to resist the temptation to play the very same game of cultural demonization that his thesis so articularly condemns.

\textsuperscript{165} Lisée, Le tricheur, p.44
“English Canada’s” fundamental hatred of francophones. Pierre Fournier assures his readers that “les principales raisons invoquées au Canada anglais pour rejeter l’Accord...n’ont été que des prétextes visant à camoufler des sentiments et des attitudes profondément anti-francophones et anti-Québec.”

Several Crisis writings also point to a book co-authored by the Montreal-born, Alberta historian David Bercuson and political scientist Barry Cooper as a manifestation of the hatred around which Anglophone identity is structured. In their fiercely hostile and intellectually bankrupt polemic, Deconfederation: Canada without Quebec, the two academics judge, among other things, that bilingualism is a waste of money and that Québec’s liberalism is so backward that it must leave Canada, but not without first being partitioned into a tiny Laurentian state and amputated of its non-Francophone communities as well as the Grand nord. Dufour, Josée Legault and Claude-V. Marsolais have pointed to this book as a defining text of English identity, but none with as much insistence as Guy Laforest, who argues that it is representative of both contemporary Anglo-Canadian intellectual thinking about Québec and the Trudeau-generated political culture of 1982. Whereas Brockville and Sault Saint-Marie may be theoretically dismissed as the ravings of unschooled crazies, Bercuson and Cooper are summoned to stand as examples of the erudite and scholarly hatred to be found in the Anglo-Canadian intellectual tradition. Yet Brockville and Bercuson-Cooper essentially serve the same function in the Meech Sagas, that of developing the character of the “English Canadian” Other as primordially hostile to Québec’s specificity. Grouping Deconfederation in with the work of Trudeau’samsayCook167 and Lord Durham a pologist Janet Azjenstat, Laforest concludes that the very liberal doctrines that led “Radical Jack” to propose the cultural and linguistic assimilation of the French Canadians are enjoying an

166 Fournier, Autopsie, p.10
167 We should perhaps note the conceptual problem of grouping a Trudeau-style federalist intellectual in with the anti-bilingual, deconfederalist judgements of Bercuson and Cooper, but Laforest insists (convincingly) that both share in the individualist liberal orthodoxy of Lord Durham.
intellectual rebirth in post-Trudeau Canada anglais. By contriving a supernatural, trans-historical situation in which “Lord Durham [est] toujours avec nous,” Laforest is charting an historical continuity for the Other that can only have disastrous consequences for Québec. Indeed, by transplanting Lord Durham’s catastrophic face onto that of Canada anglais, Laforest is bringing Québec towards knives that are even longer than those of 1981.

Indeed, the length of these longs couteaux extend as far back as the longue marche des Québécois itself, and Laforest is not alone to incite trans-historical dialogue between Meech and tragic antecedents within Québec memory. More specifically, Laforest is proposing something of a parallel anti-narrative for the Other that unfolds in adversarial dichotomy to the grand récit collectif. Numerous Crisis books identify Lord Durham and the Conquest of 1759 as major loci of identity for Canada anglais and they are invoked to explain and interpret both “English Canadian” political behaviour and nationalist ambition in the Meech era. In the House of Commons on June 26th, 1990, Louis Plamondon drew immediate connection between the unratified Meech Lake Accord and Lord Durham’s assimilationist designs. “Ce pays, nous l’avons bâti par nos sueurs et notre sang. Et toujours, o n no us a r emercié e n no us hum iliant, e n no us t raitant de p euple s ans histoire et sans littérature.” In this formulation, Plamondon fuses the meaning of English opposition to Meech with that of Durham’s most hurtful argument for nullifying French-speaking presence in North America. Elaborating a similar idea, Christian Dufour structures two books around the vaguely Freudian argument that the

168 Laforest, Trudeau, p.242 It should be duly noted that Laforest makes an effort at nuance. He argues that, in 1982, political scientist Donald Smiley was representative of Anglo-Canadian thinking about Québec. Smiley was receptive to the idea of Canadian dualism and objected to Trudeau’s “betrayal” (Smiley’s word) of this current in Québec federalist thought. Laforest argues however that 10 years later, in 1992, for reasons that even Laforest cannot fully explain, the intellectual landscape has completely changed and has been absorbed into the nouveau nationalisme of Trudeau. It is perhaps worthwhile to mention that, in his desire for his prognosis to be true, Laforest is required to forget the enduring existence of Kenneth McRoberts, Philip Resnick and even his own mentor, Charles Taylor, among many others, all of whom were still very active in the Anglophone intellectual landscape of 1992.

169 Lord Durham, perhaps more than any other figure in history is the fundamental Other within québecité.

“English Canadians” are compelled by a subconscious desire to repeatedly conquer Québec and absorb its collective identity. Dufour observes this particular phenomenon of the “English Canadian” identity to be perfectly manifest in the failure of the Meech Lake Accord. His conclusions about Anglophone identity are summarized as follows: “L’accord du Lac Meech...n’a pas été ratifié: le Canada anglais s’est révélé incapable de dépenser son statut historique de conquérant.”

What unites all of these fragments of “English Canadian” identity – the isolation of Lévesque in 1981, Brockville, Sault Saint-Marie, Bercuson-Cooper, Lord Durham, the Conquest, the rejection of distinct society – is not only the intolerance and hatred they transmit, but also the deathliness with which they are codified. Indeed, within the broader, shadow-presence discourse that Léon Dion has identified centreing upon an envisaged cultural/national disintegration in which Québec is anglicized or reduced to a powerless, folkloric rump, few texts could be more potently laced with images of Death than these. These deathly lieux de mémoire in which the “English Canadians” are continually recognized coalesce to explain the Death of Meech, a Death that was made inevitable because of the tragic laws that govern the very nature of Canada.

VI. The Tragic Order

Recalling the Léon Dion formula contending that if ever Québec should be brought before an impossible realm, independence would be the only rational option, much of the sovereigntist Crisis author identify Meech as the ultimate and final revelation of this very impossibility: 1982 + Meech = impossibility ergo sovereignty. Any doubts about the necessity of sovereignty are now to be laid to rest. Meech announces the arrival of an inevitably autumn, foretelling an endless winter as much as

171 Dufour, Rupture, p.20
172 Bouchard is particularly adept with this narrative strategy. His career in many respects incarnates this Cartesian narrative logic. He runs Lévesque’s beau risque in good faith within the Mulroney cabinet – in the belief and hope that Québec’s “honneur et enthousiasme” can be restored – and then embraces the nécessaire souveraineté when Meech breaks down. Bouchard’s narration is liberally peppered with sound bites that discursively recall and affirm that Léon Dion’s premonition has now become the reality. Affirmations of this nature are restated constantly: “La leçon du Lac Meech était transparente: la souveraineté se révélait pour le Québec la seule voie d’avenir.” Nouveau parti, p.63
an eventual spring upon the narrative horizon of the nation. Meech, as we have seen, is conceived as a test and its failure is thought to confirm that impossibility is the new monolith of the Other. The fact that these revelations should be drawn from the Constitution, a document of fundamental Laws which control and regulate the lives of all citizens, determining the possibilities and imposing limits on what they are able to freely accomplish, becomes a narrative archetype of tragic fatality. The Death of Meech reveals to us a Canadian universe in which tragedy is the ruling ordinance and intolerance is a permanent reality. Jacques Parizeau explains:

Meech a démontré que la Constitution de 1982 n’était pas un accident de parcours, n’était pas le résultat d’une obsession de Pierre Trudeau et de son ministre. Meech a démontré au contraire que la vision d’un Canada intolérant envers la différence québécoise, le refus de la reconnaissance et de l’égalité étaient maintenant bien ancrés dans l’opinion publique canadienne, qu’ils étaient désormais des principes moteurs du nationalisme pancanadien.173

The enunciation of “English Canada’s” failure to completely ratify Meech frequently takes textual form in the politically loaded word No(n). Christian Dufour: “À cette demande éminemment juste et raisonnable du Québec, le Canada a clairement dit non.”174 The Parti Québécois: “Le Non du Canada anglais s’est exprimé chaque fois un peu plus fort. Les autres Canadiens considèrent que, s’ils restent dans le Canada, les Québécois doivent se comporter exactement comme les autres.”175 Lucien Bouchard assimilates the No(n) rejection with the Non campaign during the referendum, “C’est un NON à tout changement, un NON à la notion de peuple du Québec, au fédéralisme renouvelé.” 176 The word No, to which Trudeau is discursively attached, is a totalizing, negating, fatalistic word and it is put on exhibit whenever the authors turn to the question of finding a “solution” to the national question.177 With the Death of Meech the word No is uttered before Eternity. It is a

174 Dufour, Rupture, p.53
175 Parti Québécois, Cœur à l’ouvrage, p.57
177 One of the most fascinating uses of the word NON was in a TV commercial for the OUI camp featuring various textual affirmations of Quebec identity such as « Nous voulons un Québec fort » and « Nous voulons un Québec français, » which are immediately followed by newsclip montages of various federalist politicians such as Jean Chrétien, Lucienne Robillard, Preston Manning and Daniel Johnson fils saying the
permanent No, a No that enshrines “la solution impossible,” a No that confirms that the troisième voie has been followed and that it has led to immovable, primordial impasse. It is a No that at last authenticates and confirms the « aspirations irréconciliables du Québec et du Canada anglais.» Georges Mathews writes, “À la veille de la Saint-Jean de 1990, comment apparaîtra le fédéralisme actuel aux Québécois? Trois mots suffisent: ni rentable, ni rationnel, ni réformable.” It is a No lodged in a tragic law of infinite return, entrapping Québeckers within Bouchard’s mortifying “jamais,” obliging them repeat it again and again forever.

The impossibility enshrined by the Meech Death brings Québec toward a final realization that it is subject to a seemingly omnipotent external fate, whose tragic laws were fatally concretised in the Charter of 1982. Québec’s tragedy is presented as the structural precondition of this established Natural Order, as the inevitable outcome of a system that Claude Morin terms, with morbid irony, “le Canadian Way.” For Christian Dufour, the Death of Meech was provoked by the Charter-based circuitry of the “système politique canadien” which has ins titutionalized “English Canada’s” reConquering of Québec. Conquest, Dufour explains fatalistically, is “une défaite permanente, une défaite institutionalisée.” Lucien Bouchard again observes the dichotomous interplay of opposites, arguing that Meech made efforts against the very Nature of Canada. “Dans ce système,” writes Bouchard, “‘distinct’ fait horreur. Le mot est anticanadien.” Pierre Bourgault invokes the tragic patterns of History, arguing that any effort to form some kind of partnership with “English Canada”,
constitutionally or otherwise, defies all established laws of Canada, which once more he reminds us have their intellectual genesis in Lord Durham and the Conquest:

L’histoire a beau démontrer à tous ceux qui ne sont pas aveugles ou sourds que les Anglais du Canada ne veulent pas d’un Québec différent, qu’ils ont tout fait, aussi bien au Québec que dans les autres provinces, pour assimiler les francophones, qu’ils ont triché, qu’ils ont menti, qu’ils ont maintes fois renié leur parole, qu’ils n’ont rien oublié de la victoire sur les Plaines d’Abraham ou du Rapport Durham.\footnote{Bourgault, \textit{Moi}, p.21}

Similarly, Pierre Falardeau, in an essay about Trudeau’s betrayal in 1980-82, qualifies Québec’s continual tragedy in Canada as “l’ordre des choses, tout simplement. Une logique de fer, d’un océan à l’autre. De la Conquête à la Rébellion des Patriotes.”\footnote{Falardeau, \textit{Liberté}, p.16} Pierre Falardeau and Guy Laforest make strange ideological bedfellows, yet in Laforest’s studies of Canadian liberalism and the 1982 Charter, he too identifies permanent \textit{ordre des choses} which by its very nature bespeaks tragedy for Québec national identity. To Laforest, as with Dufour, “English Canadian” political culture has become inextricably lodged in a Charter-based neo-nationalist Natural Order. He writes that the 1982 charter « a altéré la nature et la constitution même des citoyens canadiens. »\footnote{Laforest, \textit{Urgence}, p.46} To Laforest, this mythic Natural Order, however recently it has taken form in political culture, is nonetheless vested with not only the permanence and immortality of nations, but also the perceived moral legitimacy of an overarching formal legal structure.

La culture politique n’est rien de moins que la quatrième et la plus importante des sortes de lois, après les lois fondamentales, civiles et criminelles. C’est celle qui s’incruste dans les œuvres, qui régit les moeurs et les coutumes, qui substitue insensiblement la force de l’habitude à celle de l’autorité.\footnote{Laforest, \textit{Urgence}, p.46}

In his narration of the Meech Sagas, Laforest pinpoints this new political culture as an overarching \textit{ordre des choses} that negates Québec, creates the Bercuson-Cooper monolith and leads the Meech Lake Accord directly into its tragic demise. The Death of Meech confirms to Laforest that Canadian dualism permanently met with its death in the revisions of 1982. It is the fundamental permanence of this Tragic Order which
ordains *La fin d’un rêve canadien* and leaves federalist-nationalist Québeckers “en deuil d’une certaine idée du Canada,” now lost to the sepulchral ashes of time. The Death of 1982 is entrenched as a tested and permanent Death for Québec from which there can be no resuscitation, and upon which Life, identity and nation in Canada anglais now repose. With this fundamental awakening to the certainty and the immortality of Death in “English Canada,” the Québec Self now beholds a future thick with Death. Recalling l’Abbé Groulx, Laforest warns that continued submission to this tragic law “nous fera entrer dans l’univers du tragique,” where nations disappear. “Tel est le lot,” laments a fatalistic Georges Mathews, “de ceux qui sont minoritaires et juridiquement démunis.” Lodged in an externally dictated order of tragedy, Québec’s own Nature can only grow abnormal and weak, as the Parti Québécois explains. “Nous avons l’intime conviction que persister à l’intérieur du Canada signifierait s’étioler et dénaturer notre identité même.” Like the fatalistic archetype of the Mythos of Autumn, such is *l’ordre des choses*.

**VII. The Opposite of Québec**

This brings us back to Trudeau, who lies at the discursive centre of this tragic ecosystem. For Trudeau, as we have seen, is shown to be deeply inhabited and possessed by these hostile spaces of identity. Whether he is the generating mastermind of these tragic, death-laden meanings, or simply the passive creature that opens the floodgates of the proverbial Anglophone Sea, we are left with an image of Trudeau that is not only disloyal, but antithetical. He resides in an anti-Québec, in a negative image world; Trudeau is happy where Québec is sad. Where Québec is dying, he is most alive. Upon the Death of Meech, the television-watching Christian Dufour observed that “Pierre Trudeau et Clyde Wells eurent vraiment l’air de

---


188 *Ibid.* p.5 Similarly, consider the perfection of impossibility Laforest constructs in formulating this citation: “La mort de l’entente, le 23 juin 1990, a mine de façon irremédiable les résidus de confiance qu’esprouvaient encore le peuple québécois à l’égard du fédéralisme canadien. » Trudeau, p.75

189 *Ibid.* p.66

190 Mathews, *Accord*, p.115

s’amuser aux dépens du Québec.” Fournier isolates this antithetical image of the rejoicing traitor as a veritable *lieu de mémoire*, the profound indecency of which Québeckers must never forget. Such juxtaposition between the horrific celebrant and the grieving victim recalls Pierre Falardeau’s horrible vision of a modern “English Canadian” elite waxing nostalgic for the good old days of violating of the Québec people in *Le temps des bouffons*. Trudeau the traitor laughs at the sorrow he inflicts upon his people, measuring his success in the intensity of humiliation he is able to mete out upon the martyred Québec body: “Trudeau n’a toujours qu’un seul but: humilier le Québec et le remettre à sa vraie place au sein de la Fédération canadienne, c’est-à-dire à la dernière.” Beneath the illegitimate façade of *québécité* burns everything that is historically, morally and politically adverse to Québec’s existential being. “Allié objectif des éléments les plus réactionnaires et les plus anti-francophones de la société canadienne, Pierre Trudeau se sera en fin démasqué devant les Québécois maintenant prêts à se purger de l’influence de celui qui, plus que tout autre, avait retardé l’évolution normale du Québec.” More than any Other – here even more than the “English”! – Trudeau incarnates everything that is opposite and wrong. Trudeau is brought to personally incarnate the most hostile spaces of Otherness within the Québécois national imagination. As “détonateur idéologique,” Trudeau created a political culture and federal institutions fueled by a vengeful, anti-québécois ambition. The Death of Meech, Brockville, Bercuson-Cooper are all extensions of his antithetical creation, his entrenched ordinance of tragedy. “La saga du Lac Meech a fait ressortir ce qu’il y avait de vraiment terrible, de profondément inacceptable, dans l’esprit que monsieur Trudeau a insufflé aux institutions canadiennes en 1982.” The conclusion of Laforest’s analysis of the *Anglo intelligentsia* contends that Trudeau constitutes the modern incarnation of Lord Durham’s political thought and that the Trudeau-generated Charter of Rights

---

192 Dufour, *Rupture*, p.53 Bouchard conveys this same image of the Laughing Traitor in his use of the newspaper headline in his “Message à la nation.”
193 Fournier, *Autopsie*, p.104
194 Bourgault, *Moi*, p.20
195 Fournier, *Autopsie*, p.10
196 *Ibid*, p.93
197 Laforest, *Trudeau*, p.26
198 *Ibid*, p.245
amount to “des actualisations de la Conquête et la continuation de la politique de Lord Durham par d’autres moyens.” Positioned as the fundamental agent of tragedy in the Meech Sagas, assimilated with the most archetypal figures of sadness, destruction and adversity within Québec identity, the textual meaning of Trudeau is constructed as a veritable antithesis of Québec.

For whether he is the generator or conductor of the tragic meanings we have examined, Trudeau is isolated in the literature as the central mechanistic instrument of Crisis, the aggressing agent of the tragedy around which the Meech Sagas are structured. The use of the image of Trudeau as laughing traitor is particularly revealing of the extent to which Trudeau has been imaginatively expatriated. Intriguingly, the spectacle of antithesis that Dufour observed in Trudeau’s laughter at the climactic moment of the Meech Lake drama is precisely what Lucien Bouchard aimed to achieve in his use of the Journal de Québec in his televised 1982 narrative. Hoisting aloft an image of Trudeau and Chrétien, faces locked in catastrophic hilarity next to the words Lévesque trahi par ses allies, Bouchard eulogized with grave intonation, “tous se rappellent de ce triste épisode de l’histoire du Québec et du Canada.” This use of image enshrines the moment at which Trudeau’s double-triumph and Québec’s double tragedy become perfect and complete. It is where the two acts of the Meech Sagas reach their climactic apotheoses in an extreme interplay of chiaroscuro. Each image serves as a mythic centre for its respective betrayal, be it the revelation of Lévesque’s isolation or the Anglophone rejection of Meech Lake / distinct society. What is interesting is that Canada anglais, which is elaborately identified for its central mechanistic role in the Night of Knives and the Death of Meech, is visually marginalized in these images. In the first we see Newfoundland premier Clyde Wells, who is largely presented as a creature of Trudeau in the Crisis.

199 Ibid. p.244
200 Bouchard, Message à la nation, 25 octobre 1995. Interestingly, Michel Vastel uses this same image of the laughing Trudeau and Chrétien in his recent biography Chrétien : un Canadien pure laine. Montréal: Boréal, 2003. With characteristic disregard for factual precision, Vastel inaccurately claims that the Journal de Québec caption read “Le Québec est trahi!” While we may lament Vastel’s lack of journalistic and historical rigour, it is perhaps telling of the epistemological force of the Crisis narratives that he remembered it in this way.
books, and in the second Trudeau and Chrétien are alone. Yet, on a discursive level, the “English Canadians” are very present; they are not simply rumoured or implied, they are the imaginative centrepiece, anthropomorphized in the form of the two Québec ministers. The narrative system of argumentation privileged by the Crisis books have been ordered, as we have seen, to almost fully assimilate Trudeau’s meaning with that of the “English Canadians,” to the point that the image of this Québecker’s laughing visage alone is enough to convey the “English Canadian” triumph and to demarcate yet another defeat for Québec in the English-French dichotomy that has been mapped out in continuous, unilinear narrative motion from the Conquest to Meech Lake. In analyzing the mythology of la Conspiration within the political imagination of France, Raoul Girardet ponders, “L’ordre que l’Autre est accusé de vouloir instaurer ne peut-il être considéré comme l’équivalent antithétique de celui que l’on désire soi-même mettre en place?” Within this narrative configuration of Québec Self, Trudeau is made virtually indistinguishable from this opposing ordre de l’Autre.

XIII. Conclusion: The Wolfe in Montcalm’s Clothing

Trudeau is thus a contradictory figure and a figure that contradicts. He takes on contradictory forms as a means by which to contradict the established systems of national continuity, legitimacy and belonging in Québec. Within this traitor discourse, then, we are witnessing a betrayal that goes far beyond Trudeau’s retracted referendum promise in 1982. We are witnessing a totalizing betrayal, an organic, primordial betrayal – as immortal and as certain as the nation itself – in which Trudeau’s entire being is engulfed. His betrayal of Québec is not limited to any specific act or set of acts, but is borne in Trudeau’s very existence. Trudeau is not conceived as being in any way attached to, created from, or representative of cultural

201 Pierre Fournier argues, for example that Clyde Wells’ objections to Meech read like simple rewrites of Trudeau’s established discourse. Autopsie, p.93
202 The Journal de Québec is an excellent example of this kind of fusion of Trudeau and the English. For why else would they couple an image of Trudeau and Chrétien with the caption “Lèvesque trahi par ses alliés,” when everybody knows that Trudeau and Chrétien were never in any alliance with Lèvesque.
203 Girardet, Mythes et mythologies politiques, p.61
or political phenomenon rooted in Québec identity or the “Québec essence.” The artificial ruse of his québécité is unmasked and we behold a figure wrongfully assuming texts of insidership, legitimacy or continuity to which he is in fact antithetical. The motives for his behaviour go undisclosed as we are told repeatedly that his only ambition, his insatiable life force, is the destruction of Québec nationalism alone. Trudeau is shown to be a veritable anti-Québec lodged within an anti-narrative, or as Bouchard has said, an “anti-héros” within Québec narratives of Self. Bref, if we were to demarcate the tendences lourdes of the Crisis literature, it would be fair to say that it broadly constitutes a veritable refus global of Trudeau. Beyond a simple rejection of his politics, it is an active effort to narrate him out of the Québec Self, to imaginatively expatriate him as a political and cultural phenomenon produced by Québec society and to insert him into a continuité identitaire with the catastrophic English Other.

This elaborate process of imaginative expatriation, we must remember, serves a specific explicative utility. Trudeau le traître plays a functional role in maintaining tragic narrative order to the Crisis, especially within the sovereigntist discourse. In the paradigm of the double légitimité, for example, which is intellectually structured around the fact of betrayal and disloyalty, we see that the traitor is the central mechanism in Canada-Québec power relations, the structural element that guaranteed tragedy in 1982. Indeed, key tragic concepts in this narrative, such as Québec’s isolation, “double légitimité,” the “NO” of Canada anglais and even, to some extent, the certain readings of “Québec’s” traditional demands, can only maintain their narrative coherence by way of a rigourously and intricately configured exclusion of Trudeau (not to mention Marchand, Pelletier, Lalonde, Chrétien – within the immediate Crisis – and Lafontaine, Cartier, Laurier, Tarte, Lapointe, Saint-Laurent, Lamontagne – within the alluded grand récit collectif) from the imagined Québec essence.204 The necessity of this exclusion is, in a sense, part of what Anne Trépanier

---

204 Observing this very phenomenon in his readings of the Crisis literature, Ian McKay reminds us that this line of Québec political activity represents “a huge realm of cultural and political phenomena,” rendering the Crisis literature squarely unhelpful as an historical guide to the complexities of the history. “After Canada,” Acadiensis, p.89.
has termed the *grammaire argumentaire* of the sovereigntist discourse. This exclusion entails the complex revisioning and reordering of Trudeau’s meaning within the historical narrative, of which assigning him the role of traitor and identifying him as the central, antagonistic agent of Québec’s tragedy are essential operations. Beyond being represented as a simply extraneous or irrelevant expatriated foreign object, Trudeau is excluded by way of the argumentative and narrative processes of this satanization that imaginatively enshrine him as the polar opposite of Québec, along with Death, Lord Durham and the Conquest. Before reflecting on the implications of this discourse, let us take a comparative look at the other central traitor identified by the Crisis literature: *le p’tit gars de Shawinigan*, Jean Chrétien.
Chapter IV.

L’homme de 1982
A Comparative Glance at
Jean Chrétien

D’abord, laisse-moi te dire qu’on vous aime, vous et vos montagnes Rocheuses, et qu’on affectionne aussi Toronto et son argent, Calgary et son stampede. La preuve ? Nous avons appris l’anglais pour mieux vous comprendre!

- DANIEL LATOUCHE

ON OCTOBER 25th 1995, A FEW SHORT days before referendum vote, the Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chrétien, appeared live on television in a final effort to dissuade Québeckers from voting OUI. In anticipation of Chrétien’s telecast, which was to be immediately followed by Opposition leader Lucien Bouchard’s Message à la nation, the sovereigntist camp had organized an enormous rally in the Verdun auditorium. Before some 6000 partisans and more than 4000 more congregated outside, the OUI camp began the evening by projecting archival images of recent Québec history onto two enormous video screens. Significantly, the OUI supporters were shown an image of a jubilant Jean Chrétien giving Clyde Wells an affectionate bear-hug at the 1990 Liberal Convention. Premier Jacques Parizeau then reminded his audience of Chrétien’s role in the Nuit de s longs couteaux. “Jean Chrétien et ses alliés ont concocté le plus grand recul que l’État québécois ait jamais subi à Ottawa.” explained Parizeau, “[Q]uand un journaliste a de mandé à M. Chrétien pourquoi il a vait a gi ainsi, il a répondu: ‘Je n’était pas là pour défendre le Québec, j’étais là pour défendre le Canada.’ Souvenez-vous toujours de ça.” When at last Chrétien appeared en direct from Ottawa, flanked by maple leaves, his “je m’adresse en particulier à mes
d


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
compatriotes du Québec” was quickly muffled into obscurity by the word “Vendu,” chanted repeatedly back at him by the OUI partisans. Though Chrétien likes to pretend otherwise, it is not only the “séparatistes” who would denounce him as a sell-out. At the 1990 Federal Liberal convention, the same one at which he was found cuddling with Clyde Wells, youth delegates from his own party shouted “Vendu” when he entered the convention hall. Indeed, Chrétien’s identity as a sell-out has appeared so deeply entrenched within certain realms of the Québec political discourse that Lucien Bouchard could make the following pronouncement in 1990 without any fear of being misunderstood: “Un Québécois qui va à Ottawa, il faut qu’il fasse comme Jean Chrétien, sinon il est fini.”

Chrétien as vendu seems so obvious, so discursively self-evident, that we scarcely even require the complex metahistories and argumentation that the Trudeau text demands. Rather like Claude Morin once said, Chrétien - “c’est du Trudeau simplifié.”

I. Chrétien as Bargain Basement Trudeau.

Unlike Trudeau, Jean Chrétien did not win any convincing electoral majorities nor the popular vote in Québec as Prime Minister. Within the temporal framework of our pre-1995 Crisis Literature, Chrétien had been Prime Minister for two years at most and had all but lost Québec to Lucien Bouchard and the Bloc Québécois. Having begun his political career in Ottawa very young in 1962 after working briefly in obscurity as a lawyer, Chrétien is unable to claim any direct lineage within the intellectual and political movements during the Quiet Revolution. As such, Chrétien cannot, where Trudeau can, point to a strong personal legacy of democratic legitimacy or historical continuity as evidence of some kind of allegiance to Québec.

207 Chrétien likes to reduce the charges of betrayal laid against him to a simple dichotomy in which “separatists” are automatically against “federalists” because they are federalists. He writes in his autobiography, for example: “Qui pouvait encore les [séparatistes] croire quand ils traitent en martyrs d’une noble cause nos petits poseurs de bombes alors qu’ils n’avaient que mépris pour des hommes d’idées et de courage comme les Trudeau, les Marchand, les Pelletier, les Lalonde, les Pépin, dont le seul tort était d’être fédéralistes?” Dans la fosse aux lions. Montréal: Les Éditions de l’homme, 1994, p.152

208 Quoted in Godbout, Le Mouton noir, 1992

While Chrétien can – and he does – claim insiderness as a Franco-Québécois who held the riding of Saint-Maurice for a considerable number of decades, his political identity is far easier to textually undo than that of Trudeau. The Authors do not need to spend as much time narrating him out of Québec, for Chrétien is not vested with the same argumentative texts of interiority as Trudeau. *C’est du Trudeau simplifié*:

Trudeau *Light*.

While in reduced form, it is interesting to observe how the image of Chrétien is so intimately connected to that of Trudeau in the Meech narratives. He is not only seen as a loyal follower of the Trudeau doctrine, but is commonly presented as a sort of flying monkey or mentally deficient bull-dog dispatched by Trudeau to carry out the dirty work of “putting Québec in its place.” In narrating Trudeau’s constitutional manoeuvres of 1980-1982 and his systematic attacks against the Meech Lake Accord, the authors show Chrétien to be Trudeau’s creature. “C’est Chrétien qui exécutait les œuvres, mais c’est Trudeau qui commandait,” says Lucien Bouchard. Pierre Bourgault refers to Chrétien as Trudeau’s « fier-à-bras » and Vastel calls him Trudeau’s “éternel ‘lanceur de relève.’” Indeed, all the central spaces of identity in which Chrétien is imagined are in some way subordinate electrons ritualistically orbiting the Trudeau nucleus. Within the posture of *Roi nègre*, often attributed attributed to Chrétien, his collaborations with the English are often less valued by the Authors than his servility to Trudeau’s command. Indeed, depictions of Chrétien’s intercourse with the “English Canadians” are in most cases presented as being

—

210 Like Trudeau, Chrétien aims to insert himself into continuities of Francophone Self: “J’ai toujours été fier d’être Canadien français... je n’oublierai jamais l’émotion que j’ai connue en visitant la charmante petite ville de la vallée de la Loire d’où sont issus mes ancêtres. C’est pourquoi je m’indignais quand les séparatistes de Québec me traitaient de “vendu” parce que je défendais le Canada. Mais dans le reste du pays, j’ai toujours défendu le rôle historique joué par les nôtres et sans lequel le Canada n’existerait peut-être pas.” *Fosse aux lions* p.137 Chrétien also qualifies his federalist engagement as an extension of his identity as Francophone, modestly playing at Trudeau’s game of attempting to invert the loyalties Québec nationalism by suggesting that sovereigntists are more likely to compromise Francophone presence in North America than federalists: “Certaines personnes ont vu une contradiction entre mon patriotisme canadien et mon opposition à l’utranationalisme québécois... À bien y réfléchir, il n’y avait pas de contradiction: je m’opposais à l’indépendance du Québec parce que je croyais que la séparation compromettrait l’existence du fait français en Amérique du Nord au lieu de le protéger.” *Ibid.* p. 213


212 Bourgault, *Moi*, p.22
somehow transitively negotiated through the Trudeau text. The Crisis Literature positions him as a space possessed and inhabited by Trudeau and, by the transitive property, the antithetical texts of Otherness that Trudeau incarnates. There is no question of Chrétien being conceived as an intellectual mechanism or generating organ as we have seen in the case of Trudeau. Rather, Chrétien is normally depicted as a ridiculous and intellectually substandard fool character, occupying the more passive role of Vendu rather than the more active role of Traitor. Chrétien is not a conspirator, he is simply an obsequious servant who unquestioningly follows orders. He is a physical (and therefore base, vulgar, bodily), as opposed to intellectual, mechanism through which Trudeau, and therefore the English, carry out their ambitions upon Québec.

As such, Chrétien’s treason is one more of identity than action. In the case of Trudeau, as we have seen, the act of reneging on the meanings he was seen to appropriate in his Paul Sauvé promise serves as a structuring narrative metatext around which his disloyal identity is arranged within the Meech Sagas. The historical moment of Chrétien’s act of betrayal is more ambiguous to determine. In his Message à la nation, Lucien Bouchard’s Repatriation narrative attempts to sublimate Chrétien within Trudeau’s act by referring to “la promesse de Trudeau et Chrétien,” but we know that the historical genesis of this promise lies fundamentally within the Trudeau that uttered it and Bouchard is alone in the Crisis Literature to attempt to attribute it to Chrétien. Bouchard, Morin and Parizeau in particular point to his role in the Night of Knives, and yet they are unable to point to any clichés as charged with symbolism as Trudeau’s promise. As such, Chrétien’s behaviour is recounted not to exhibit a specific act of treason, but rather to the general constant of an expatriated identity belonging to the Other.

213 Vastel, Trudeau, p.308
II. *Chrétien and the Poms of Satan.*

If Chrétien is to be defined by one specific metatextual action, however, it is in the video image of his triumphant outpourings in the arms of Clyde Wells on the day of the Meech Death at the Liberal Party Convention in Calgary. Often coupled with Chrétien’s accompanying sound bite, *Thanks for everything you’ve done, Clyde,* the Authors almost unanimously invoke this image as a defining text in the Meech Sagas, often with considerable intensity. Pierre Fournier writes, « Les embrassades triumphantalistes de Wells, Trudeau et Chrétien, auront été profondément indécoutes, et devront rester à tout jamais ancrées dans la mémoire collective des Québécois. »214 Jacques Parizeau provides a rational for this *devoir de mémoire,* arguing that the moment at which Chrétien locked arms with Wells, Québec federalism was officially terminated.215 But again, this gesture is not an act of betrayal *per se* – for there is no breach to be coherently detected in giving Wells a hug. Rather it is a spectacle of foreignness, a manifestation of disloyalty by way of a vivid gesture of *bonhomnie* with a defined villain, all of which coalesce to form a veritable exhibit of Otherness. This mythic action does not mechanismistically advance the Meech narrative. Meech was not killed at the moment in which Chrétien took Wells in his arms, nor does this image reveal very much at all about Chrétien’s real functional involvement in the Meech debate. But the Wells-Chrétien embrace plays a structuring role in the mise en scène of Chrétien’s identity within the Meech universe. It is a coherent symbol of the general betrayal that *is* Chrétien, an essentialism of his true nature or “true essence.” Captured upon the very day of the Meech failure, it displays an antithetical Chrétien who celebrates as his people grieve in mourning. As with Trudeau, the authors are careful to insist upon this same dichotomy throughout the Meech Sagas. Just as the Meech betrayal climaxes with this supernatural embrace with the enemy, so too does Lucien Bouchard hold up the November 1981 image of Chrétien’s laughing face to

214 Fournier, *Autopsie,* p.104
his referendum audience: Lévesque trahi par ses alliés. At the climactic moment of injury, the traitor laughs at the suffering people before him.

Lucien Bouchard has in this way constructed a Chrétien that exhibits this sort of antithetical Québec identity. As both men were poised as central political rivals during the referendum campaign, it is comprehensible that Bouchard phrased his Canada-Québec dichotomies within a Chrétien-contre-le-Québec narrative configuration. Bouchard frequently designates Chrétien under the antithetical signifier of “l’homme de 1982” and defines him as the modern-day hier in a long “Canadien” lineage of “matraqueur[s] des aspirations du Québec.” In the following constructions we can observe the structural function of the Chrétien text within the Bouchard narratives:

Cet homme s’est dressé sur le chemin des Québécois chaque fois qu’ils ont voulu se comporter comme un peuple.217


Dire NON, c’est rejeter aux oubliettes les gens qui ont construit le Québec depuis 30 ans, les Jean Lesage, Daniel Johnson père, René Lévesque et même Robert Bourassa. Dire NON, c’est arracher les pages d’histoire du Québec depuis 30 ans, c’est dire à Jean Chrétien qu’il avait raison de diminuer les pouvoirs du Québec.219

Positioned squarely outside of Québec’s collective parcours – even in its federalist political forms – Chrétien is displayed as a roadblock to any normal evolution of Québec society, a creature that obstructs all progress and emerges as a triumphant

---

216 Lucien Bouchard, Le Soleil, 28 mai 1990, A3. Bouchard is forecasting Chrétien’s victory in the upcoming Liberal Party of Canada leadership race: “Nous savons tous que Jean Chrétien à déjà été de facto choisi comme le prochain matraqueur des aspirations du Québec.”

217 Bouchard, Lucien Bouchard: Mot-à-Mot, p.83

218 Bouchard, Mot-à-Mot, p.82, speech delivered at Trois Rivières, 26 mars 1993.

adversary at every moment of tragedy within the agonizing universe of Meech. The sole fragment of qu'ébécité Chrétien maintains is one of fallacy, a spurious, false image of a Québec identity that he assumes to befit the desires of the “English Canadian” onlooker. In the final citation Bouchard juxtaposes the forward-looking and progressive, industrious builders of modern Québec with an alien, backward and perversely destructive Chrétien who has pulled all of their dreams into the dust. Having identified Chrétien as a veritable anti-Québec — who is not only devoid of Québec identity but hostile to it — Bouchard relies on his audience to comprehend the severe existential danger he describes in this situation:

Ce que veut Jean Chrétien, ce n'est pas seulement extirper le projet souverainiste de la fibre québécoise, c'est également rompre avec la continuité et la fidélité du Parti libéral du Québec aux intérêts du Québec. Ce que veut Jean Chrétien, ce sont les pleins pouvoirs: “Je veux être le maître de l'avenir du Québec, nous dit Jean Chrétien. Je veux que vous me confiez le français, la culture et les emplois du Québec, toutes les politiques qui façonnent l'identité du Québec! C’est moi qui déciderais dorénavant pour vous!”

The impartial listener must assume from this formulation that while the French language, Québec culture, and policies affecting Québec identity might be safe in the hands of certain Québeckers, they are decidedly unsafe under the destructive guardianship of Jean Chrétien. Bouchard exhibits a Chrétien that is insatiable with Conquête ambition. Chrétien has become such an antithetical figure that all realms in which qu'ébécité may be recognized are in danger of extinction under the dominion of this perverse deformity. “Chrétien” is, in effect, a possible future for Québec — a dangerous memory of what might come after a NON vote.

Yet Bouchard’s all-out satanization of Chrétien is somewhat singular in the Crisis literature. Beyond Chrétien’s exhuberant jollies with Clyde Wells, the Crisis Authors generally reserve antithetical meanings for Trudeau, as we have seen. In his general role of attaché, Chrétien is a subsidiary antithesis and therefore an imperfect contradiction. Far more common are representations of Chrétien as an image of uprooted, alienated and expatriated Québec Self. Michel Vastel asserts this very
prognosis in his 2003 biographical essay, *Chrétien: un Canadien pure laine*: "Québécois de naissance, Ontarien d'adoption et Canadien par choix, Jean Chrétien est l'archétype du politicien du Québec qui s'est 'deraciné' pour mieux réussir à Ottawa." Chrétien typically inhabits precisely these representative forms within the Crisis books. He is presented as a Québécois who has either negated his québecité, or, as Bouchard suggests, has opportunistically reformulated it with the aim of fulfilling the desires of the "English Canadians" and succeed in the pays des autres. Chrétien's québecité is in this sense an "English-Canadian" possession, not a representation of Québec Self. Here we return to the posture of Roi-nègre in which a space of québecité is appropriated, inhabited and controlled by the Other. In his Défi québécois, Christian Dufour begins a chapter entitled "Un pays bâti sur la Conquête" by referencing a typographical error that appeared in the Toronto Star referring to Jean Chrétien as "John Chretien." To Dufour, an apparent believer in psychoanalysis, this was more than a simple typesetter's bungle in the printing room. Rather it was indicative of the enduring centrality of the Conquest in English-French power relations in Canada. "On ne tente pas d'intégrer le fait qu'il y eut la Conquête et que l'on ne pourra revenir là-dessus, afin que la Conquête cesse de produire de nouveaux effets pervers et que Jean Chrétien ne devienne pas en même temps premier ministre du Canada et John Chretien." Chrétien allows his québecité to become so perfectly sublimated into the "English-Canadian" desire to enslave Québec's identity that there is no fundamental distinction to be drawn between "Jean" and "John." But the implication is not so much that Chrétien is assimilated, but rather that he agrees to personally identify not with a Québec Self, but with the image of the Québec Other as constructed within the English (Canadian) gaze. *Ergo*

---

221 Michel Vastel, *Chrétien: un Canadien pure laine*. Montréal: Boréal, p.249
222 Dufour writes, "John Chretien? Jean Chrétien est très aimé au Canada anglais, où chacun sait que le "p'tit gars de Shawinigan" est un francophone originaire du Québec. Il excerce depuis quelques années sa profession d'avocat dans la capitale ontarienne; la loyauté canadienne d'un des Québécois qui a convaincu ses compatriotes de voter non au référendum de 1980 n'a jamais fait de doute [...] C'est suffisant pour que le Toronto Star appelle 'John Chretien' celui qui ambitionne de devenir le prochain premier ministre du Canada." In Dufour's representation, Chrétien's absorption into the realm of the Other is so complete as to be unrecognizable as a Québécois - the canadienité he has contrived has entailed such an extreme transfer of Self that he has apparently become English, even to the English!
223 Dufour, *Défi*, p.168
Bouchard: “Un Québécois à Ottawa, il faut qu’il fasse comme Jean Chrétien, sinon il est fini.”

The Crisis Authors repeatedly explain to us that Jean Chrétien is the “genre de Québécois que les anglophones affectionnent”224. We are told the “English Canadians” like Chrétien because of his unconditional loyalty to (English) Canada and his gratifying presence as a Québécois de service that will apparently keep the animal of Québec nationalism in a reassuring straightjacket. But above all, as we have seen Dufour and Bouchard suggest, Chrétien plays the Québec role that the English desire him to play. Chrétien is shown to befit a fetishized Anglophone stereotype of the infantile Francophone Other. Vancouver historian Daniel Francis has traced the evolution of what he calls the “infantilization” of Québec within the Anglo-Canadian imagination.225 Examining the condescending poetry of W.H. Drummond, Cornelius Krieghoff’s jolly habitant portraits, the folklore of Marius Barbeau as well as derogatory depictions of French Canadians in mid-20th Century Anglo-Canadian history manuals, Francis very convincingly concludes that Anglo Canada has nurtured a disdainful, child-like archetype for the French Canadian. The Francophone is represented either as a nostalgic, folk-dancing peasant or as a backward, obsessively Catholic, illiberal fanatic. This infantilized image has allowed Anglo Canada to dismiss Québec nationalism as irrational and unimportant and maintain a clichéd, reassuring myth of Canadian unity and the superiority of an essentially Anglophone Canadian federalist nationalism. Indeed, there is no shortage of evidence to substantiate Francis’ claim. Many works in the parallel English-language Crisis Literature produced during the Meech breakdown were intellectually structured around these very same infantilist images; Bercuson-Cooper’s

224 Bouchard, La Presse, 28 juin 1990. Bourgault underlines the dangerousness of Québecker who are well-liked by the English: “Jean Chrétien ? Il peut nous faire encore beaucoup de mal. On le dit fini et impuissant. C’est faux. Il est toujours l’homme politique le plus populaire au Canada anglais […] On sait qu’il est habité aux jobs de bras et son sait qu’il n’a jamais craint de cracher sur le Québec pour sauver sa mise au Canada.” Maintenant! p.99
Deconfe
deration being perhaps the most extreme example. While certainly Chrétien would object to the deconferative proposals of Ber
cuson-Cooper, he is seen in the Francophone Crisis Literature as the complacent incarnation of this
disdainful Anglo fetish. “Pour le Canada anglais, c’est le Canadien français idéal,”
writes Claude Morin, “il fait rire avec ses allures de pea-soup et il ne dérange
rien.” Chrétien has habitually referred to himself as being a proud “Frog” and a
“French Peasouper” in his political discourse in Anglo Canada, and for a number of
Authors his decided willingness to play the role of the Francophone Other represents
a complacent absorption of Anglophone intolerance. This is surely the idea that
Pierre Fournier had in mind in referring to Chrétien, as he does with Trudeau, as a
“Frog’ à la rescousse du Canada anglais.” Chrétien is presented as one who has
opportunistically structured himself to better accommodate and reinforce the
disdainful gaze of Canada anglais. As Michel Vastel claims, this selling out of his
Québécois Self was the key to Chrétien’s success in “English Canada.” Such
representations of Chrétien recall Guy Bouthillier’s image of the folkloric and
essentially English construct of l’identité French Canadian, an identity whose
loyalties are dictated and controlled by the Other.

III. Les Rocheuses.

Chrétien as sell-out, as an exhibit of willfully expatriated québécité, is
frequently designated as a locus of absurdity within the Crisis Literature. His
immortal “flags su’ l’ hood” are invoked, his “finesse habituelle” is mocked, his
intelligence is ridiculed and his “English-Canadian” nationalism is derided for its

---

226 In any discussion of books that attempt to denigrate Francophone Québec, we should not forget Diane Francis’ hallucinatory Fighting for Canada, surely the chef d’oeuvre in this unfortunate literature.
227 Morin, La Presse, 28 juin 1990
228 Bouthillier defines this servile fixture of the Anglo-British imagination in recounting his school
days at McGill University in the early 1960s: “Au coeur du golden square mile, dans cet ancien hôtel
particulier aux allures m ajestueusement victoriennes et au nom du Chancellor Day, au sein d’une
faculté qui était d’autant plus sûre d’elle-même et de ses arrivages de French-Canadians qu’elle savait
qu’elle les transformait en bons et loyaux sujets, selon une tradition qui remonte à Laurier. » A armes
egales. p.24 L’identité French-Canadian is that of the parvenu, essentially, through which Bouthillier
dismisses an enormous amount of political and cultural phenomena in Québec.
229 Bouchard, Visage, p.194
artificiality, perversity and emptiness. One of the central texts of Chrétien’s ridiculousness is situated in the federalist symbol of Les Rocheuses. Once again, Trudeau is the generating organism behind this idea. Les Rocheuses are discursively attached to the Trudeauvian political ideal of a completely bilingual pan-Canadian utopia in which French Canada, as Trudeau said himself, would stretch from the Acadian Atlantic Coast to the small Francophone community of Maillardville, nestled in the Rocheuses of British Columbia. “Once you’ve done that,” said Trudeau in 1968, “Quebec cannot say it alone speaks for French Canadians.” As such les Rocheuses are not only perceived in Québécois nationalist narratives as an object of Trudeau-style canadiennité, but also as a strategic device used to defy Québécois nationalism and special status in particular. It is certainly no coincidence that a photograph of les Rocheuses is featured on the front cover of Guy Laforest’s fatalistically entitled Trudeau et la fin d’un rêve canadien, like bold monoliths of Death. To his opponents, Trudeau’s Rocheuses are encoded with images of the negated Québécois Self. They are seen firstly as a political artifact used to spuriously (absurdly) generate a referent of Francophone Self out from what is manifestly a foreign object, and secondly as a Trudeauist cliché used to confront the dualist readings of Canada of which Laforest is a clear partisan. This Trudeau-derived use of les Rocheuses as a symbol of an imagined French Canada uprooted from its Québec homeland is one that is intimately associated with Chrétien’s political rhetoric. Chrétien himself repeatedly makes the point to explain his opposition to Québec sovereignty: “Je me suis laissé facilement emporter en pensant qu’on enlèverait, à moi et à mes descendants le Grand Nord et les montagnes Rocheuses.” Chrétien’s defense of Québec’s heritage with les Rocheuses, if only because they are nice to look at, wins much ridicule in the Crisis Literature. The Authors refer to les Rocheuses, often with comic intonations, to underline the artificiality of pan-Canadian bilingualism and the superficiality of Chrétien’s Canadian nationalism.

230 Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Speech to Quebec Liberal Convention, quoted in Ottawa Citizen, 28 January 1968.
231 Chrétien, Fosse aux lions, p.136 It is interesting to note that this very same quote was included in a small compilation of quotes which were gathered together in a single volume which aims very explicitly to ridicule Chrétien’s presumed stupidity. See Pascal Beausoleil Chrétienneries. Montréal : les intouchables, 2000. p.75.
Pierre Bourgault, for example, jokes that the artificial and Québec-negating referent of *les Rocheuses* demarcate the intellectual cornerstone of Chrétien’s federalist thought. “Jean Chrétien, pour sa part,” writes Bourgault in the sovereigntist reawakening of 1990, “n’imagine une conjoncture favorable pour son option – son idée fixe – que le jour tous les Québécois auront visité les Rocheuses.”

The most complete undoing of *les Rocheuses* in the Crisis Literature is carried out by Québec filmmaker and novelist, Jacques Godbout. In his mammoth, three-hour documentary *Le Mouton noir*, the cinéaste examines Québec politics, society and culture in the immediate aftermath of the Meech collapse in 1990. Godbout’s depiction of Chrétien follows the general mould of ridiculousness. Diligently following Crisis literature conventions, Godbout introduces Chrétien at the beginning of the film rejoicing in the supernatural arms of Clyde Wells. He then follows the newly-dubbed Liberal leader through his by-election campaign in the Acadian riding of Beauséjour-Shédiac (on the eastern edge of Trudeau’s bilingual utopia), which he visually establishes to us with a long panning shot of a graveyard, hinting at the omnipresence of Death. Godbout edits together a tongue-in-cheek montage of a ridiculous Chrétien repeating the same bad joke to nearly everyone he meets in Beauséjour. Godbout adds in his voice-over narration that Chrétien’s words and accent “make my skin crawl.” It is perhaps too perfect that Godbout’s camera would capture Chrétien explaining to his Acadian audience that his vision of Canada is a bilingual one in which the resilience and the determination of the French fact extends far beyond Québec alone. Already the image of *les Rocheuses* is implied and it is not

---

232 Bourgault, Maintenant, p. 18 Another fine example would be Lucien Bouchard, « Comme Jean Chrétien, je suis allé aux Rocheuses, et je les ai trouvées belles. » Visage, p.290. A more intense example would be Pierre Falardeau who equates Chrétien’s *Rocheuses* with the obscene excesses of capitalist overconsumption that have thwarted Québec independence: « La langue de bois, c’est celle de Jean Chrétien...et tous les prétextes sont bons pour rester assis dans sa mare : ‘J’veux pas perdre mes montagnes Rocheuses, ma télévision couleurs pis mon chèque de pension. » La liberté n’est pas une marque de yogourt, p.17. Similarly : «Et l’autre est là. Le grand. L’un de nos deux génies qui pleure ses montagnes Rocheuses dans la publicité de Canada 125, comme un vulgaire Elvis Gratton, comme un sous-Jean Chrétien, comme la colombe de Barcelone. » Ibid. p.23. Fournier similarly ridicules Chrétien’s use of the meaningless *nationalisme des Rocheuses*, arguing that economic fear-mongering is the only argumentative strategy that remains open to federalists: “Les appels à la mère-patrie, aux Rocheuses, à la Reine et la sanctité des institutions dites nationales ne fonctionneront plus.” Autopsie, p.202
long before Godbout follows up this discursive teaser with an explicit, graphic examination. "Je me suis décidé de quitter le Québec pour voir l’autre bout du pays constitutionnel," Godbout narrates, "derrière les Rocheuses." And behind these fetishized Rocheuses, Godbout finds what we might expect him to find: Death and Jean Chrétien.

After a visual montage of the mountains themselves, Godbout descends upon the small French-speaking community of Maillardville - the westernmost edge of Trudeau’s rhetorical francophonie - which he finds in the midst of a festival celebrating its francophone heritage. From the get-go, Godbout informs us that this "festival francophone est aussi folklorique que l’aventure de Maillardville." A woman dressed in the frilly garbs of Nouvelle France is shown explaining to Godbout the francophone legacy in les Rocheuses. "Ici, en Colombie, il y a quarante ans passés on nous disait ‘speak white’," she says, "aujourd’hui, on nous envie parce qu’on a deux langues." But the woman’s Trudeauist triumph quickly turns dark, "si le Québec sépare," she warns, "on est foutu ici, on est fini." Godbout explores the authenticity of this woman’s claims of bilingual pride by asking a random middle-aged man why he is wearing a derogatory frog-shaped tuque on his head. "C’est la fête français [sic], fait qu’on porte nos grenouilles," responds the man. Perhaps most crushing of all, Godbout interrogates a young girl of about 12 years of age on her thoughts about the sovereignty reawakening in far away Québec:

    GODBOUT: Le projet de l’indépendence du Québec, qu’est-ce que ça vous faire, vous ?

    GIRL: Je pense que le Québec doit reste [sic] au Canada

    GODBOUT: [interpreting] Vous aimeriez que le Québec reste au Canada.

    GIRL: Oui.

    GODBOUT: Comment vous appellez, vous ?

    GIRL: Michèle.

---

233 Which is, of course: "Soyez des bon Chrétiens!"
234 Or is it "Michelle"? - a common name for Anglophones in Anglo Canada. Do we even know if this girl is francophone? Godbout’s cinema seems to hope so, or at least that she is a degraded remnant of one. What is the criteria anyway? The malice of Godbout’s polemical offensive upon this young child is strange to say the least, rather like John Ralston Saul’s curious attack on Lucien Bouchard’s mother in Reflections of a Siamese Twin. pp.448-449
Interspersed among this pointed undoing of Maillardville’s brittle triumph, Godbout’s camera reveals other Francophone deformities that fester behind these increasingly perverse and abnormal Rocheuses. In particular, he exhibits two very banal entertainers dressed in the folkloric costume of the Habitant. Equipped with the folksy red tuque and delightful ceinture fléchée, these nostalgic bûcherons constitute the very archetype of the folkloric, servile Canadien français de service that Daniel Francis has observed in the Anglo-Canadian imagination. Playing the fiddle and spoons and singing badly, these two infantilized objects climax with a patriotic rendition of Ô Canada, performed on the saw. Godbout does not fail to remind us that Ô Canada, written by Calixa Lavallée in 1880 for the Saint-Jean-Baptiste parade, is no longer sung in Québec on the 24 of June. It is an embarrassing spectacle to watch and Godbout’s disdainful cinema renders these people veritably monstrous in their folkloric disintegration. Godbout’s message appears to be that these people are degraded, sub-Francophones – French Canadians – so overwhelmed by the absurdity of their adventure in les Rocheuses that they have become existentially possessed by its perversity.

This depiction of the lowsly and ridiculous Rocheuses is thick with the discursive presence of Chrétien. Indeed, all of the texts in which the Crisis literature habitually identifies Chrétien’s betrayal are put on exhibit in this exploration of the fetishized rhetorical object with which he is so closely associated. The inarticulate French beleaguered with anglicisms, the complacency with the omnipresent dangers of minority status, the anti-separatism in favour of a compromised and severely handicapped Francophone civilization, the curiously patriotic appropriation of the hateful “Frog” epithet and the ridiculous and folkloric mise-en-scène of an infantilized and nostalgic French-Canadian ethnic cliché all circulate back to the Chrétien textual organism. That these degraded abstractions of Francophone Self should inhabit the foreign absurdity of les Rocheuses completes the association. For just like the assimilated monsters of Maillardville, Chrétien is a curious breed of foreign object. His is an image of Québec Self that belongs either to the memory of a subjugated past that might have been before the Quiet Revolution or to a tragic and
apocalyptic Québec future in which Québec is reduced to a powerless, folkloric rump. As an ominous memory of “folklorisation” – whether in the past or in the future beyond 1982 – Chrétien is an image of Death, or at least a life that would not be worth living. In essence, he belongs to a Québec that does not exist – that should never have existed to begin with and that must never exist in the future. And it is in this way that Chrétien is fundamentally situated outside the texts of Québec interiority. For Chrétien is an image of the negated Québecker, the useless, dying Québecker who has fallen off the collective parcours. Willfully conquered, Chrétien agrees to play the Other for the derogatory applause of the English in exchange for modest asylum in the dehumanizing and arbitrary Rocheuses. Rather than taking on the stance of a Québécois de force, Chrétien is shown to prefer to be the servile p’tit gars de Shawinigan, an infantile archetype from the Duplessiste backwoods. Il fait rire avec ses allures de peasoup et il ne dérange rien.

Conclusion: Chrétien as Evidence of Tragedy.

Whereas Trudeau is an assertive, aggressive leader who commits antithetical acts of treason against his own people, Chrétien is a passive, sell-out follower. He is the creature first and foremost of Trudeau, and through Trudeau, the English. In the Nuit des longs couteaux of 1981, in the antithetical embrace of Clyde Wells during the Meech collapse of 1990, and again within the ideological framework of les Rocheuses, Chrétien is shown to be obediently following the Trudeau-established ordre des choses, carrying out Trudeau’s desires, and thereby defending le pays des autres. The imaginative expatriation that the Crisis authors enact upon Chrétien does

---

235 This was the very hypothesis of a mémoire submitted to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission by the anthropologist, Pierre Patenaude: De la folklorisation graduelle du Québec dans le cadre du fédéralisme canadien. Texte soumis et présenté à la Commission le 17 janvier 1991. Arguing in favour of independence, Patenaude contends that the Trudeau-derived status quo federalism, the 1982 Charter and bilingualism in particular, which created “un État unitaire contrôlé par les Canadiens anglophones,”[p.825] are hastening Québec’s advancement into a folkloric sub-reality, and points to the assimilation of Francophones outside of Québec as a model of what this folklorisation might eventually look like. Dufour also points to “folklorisation” as the principal danger of the 1982 Charter. 236 Chrétien’s self-proclaimed epithet which is appropriated with extraordinary frequency by his detractors. Vastel’s biography in particular manages to invoke it with unbelievably tireless disdain on virtually every second page.
not appear to be as explicit or as pointed as is frequently the case with Trudeau. Indeed, as a manipulated deformity of Québec Self so intimately attached to Trudeau, Chrétien might be better conceived as an image of the Trudeau-conquered, fully Canadianized Québecker who stands proudly among Yves Beauchemin’s pre-modern “cadavres encore chauds” of les Rocheuses. Chrétien is the collectively rejected identity of the Canadien français (l’identité French-Canadian). He is put on display as a Québécois of Trudeau’s design. Within the neo-nationalism that has taken root in the bitter soil of “English Canada” and there germinated into the murderous, man-eating plant that vengefully gobbled up the Meech Lake Accord, Chrétien represents a Québec that has been put in its place. He is a Québec that agrees to be une province comme les autres, a Québec that capitulates all its power and leaves its language, culture and identity to be uprooted and controlled by Clyde Wells. Chrétien is a Québec for whom the year 1982 has no end and whose difference is consigned to the folkloric curiosity of the Maillardville heritage festival – a beleaguered Trudeauvian hiccup in the multicultural ecosystem. Such are the meanings descend upon the Chrétien text in the Crisis literature. In this sense, “Chrétien” is held up as something of a memory of the future, a foreboding image of what a Trudeauized Québec might look like and what the effects of 1982 might be. Chrétien is situated as a fragment of what Léon Dion terms the hantise d’un destin tragique, a possible terminus to the collective adventure through time. C’est moi, l’homme de 1982, qui déciderait dorénavant pour vous.
Chapter V.

On Betrayal, the Crisis
and Mythistory:
Une conclusion exploratoire

_The truth about stories is that that's all we are._

-Thomas King

IN THE TEN YEARS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE 1995 REFERENDUM, the stories of Crisis have gradually dissipated from public forums into something of a discursive stalemate. While one must be careful with the game of “historical might-have-beens,” it is tempting to reflect on how “Meech” would have been memorialized if the referendum had passed into sovereignty. Given the veritably mathematical use of history in Crisis narratives (1982 + Meech = sovereignty), it would seem that the authors were pre-emptively prepping Meech to serve as one of the founding myths of the soon-to-be-sovereign country of Québec. The Meech betrayal of the binational compact was clearly being designated as the mechanistic altar upon which the sovereign Québec would at last be born. That the referendum did not pass served definitively to deprive Meech of the status of founding narrative for which the Crisis authors had been so carefully grooming it. Since 1995, it has instead been consigned to fester within the mists of time. It must be affirmed, of course, that the political questions inherent within the Meech debate and the national question remain very actual and important within Québec national politics. Even if the political élites have, for the moment, largely relegated their constitutional first-aide kits to the political back-burner, these debates necessarily remain integral Québec political science, policy analysis and development and partisan politics. But again, the “Meech” that

---


238 One must savour the cool malice of Pierre Fournier’s decision to dedicate his violently hostile _Autopsie du lac Meech_ to Clyde Wells and Elijah Harper, whom he thanks for having “accelerated History.”
we have been studying is not a political question or a constitutional debate. It is "Meech" as a narrative discourse.

What is interesting is that when the post-1995 narrators call on us to revisit the Meech Universe as a narrative, the very same repertoire of sound-bites, images, metatexts, emplotments, systems of argumentation and narrative mise-en-scène that we have witnessed are almost always summoned to the textual surface. For example, in his Livre noir du Canada anglais series – a belligerent polemic about Anglophone violence against humanity and Québec in particular – Normand Lester qualifies 1990, the year of the Meech Death, as "l’année des longs couteaux."\textsuperscript{239} Despite the admittedly non-scientific nature of his démarche, Lester appraises Trudeau’s legacy in much the same way as Guy Laforest: "Pierre Elliott Trudeau, ce soi-disant ennemi de tous les nationalismes, a suscité la naissance dans le reste du Canada d’un nationalisme chauvin et intolérant."\textsuperscript{240} A recent Radio-Canada documentary about the life and career of René Lévesque brought the metatextual image of the Laughing Traitor out from Bouchard’s newspaper-grasping fingertips and into a cinematic form. At the climax of the film’s Repatriation drama, we hear sombre music coupled with the anguished voice of Lévesque lamenting Québec’s isolation whilst a visual montage simultaneously unfolds revealing Premiers Bill Davis, Bill Bennett and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau laughing in a fit of hilarity and Otherness around the negotiation table.\textsuperscript{241} The exact historic context of their laughing faces is, as per usual, unknown, but we are strongly advised by the filmmaker that these Others are laughing at Lévesque’s defeat. With Trudeau’s death in September 2000, the treason discourse also re-emerged in public assessments of his career. An extreme example of this would be a letter submitted and published in the sovereigntist forum Vigile by Jacques Larue-Langlois, in which Trudeau’s legacy is thusly depicted:

\textsuperscript{239} Normand Lester, Le Livre noir du Canada anglais 2. Montréal : Les intouchables, 2002. It is a sad (or perhaps hilarious) example of the intellectual bankruptcy of the Crisis debate when we must acknowledge that Lester, who rightly condemns Anglo-Canadian comparisons between Jacques Parizeau and Hitler, is to be simultaneously caught comparing the Meech collapse with political murders in Nazi Germany. Perfectly employing the structures of the treason discourse, Lester explains the presence of Trudeau and Chrétien by referring to them as « Québécois de service » who facilitate and implement the racist and hate-filled discourse of Anglo-Canadian cultural media.

\textsuperscript{240} Normand Lester, Le Livre noir du Canada anglais 3. Montréal : Les intouchables, 2003 p.10
PET ne fut jamais l’ami des siens et s’il faut le comparer à un autre personnage de notre histoire, c’est à Lord Durham qu’on doit penser. Les deux hommes ont partagé le désir d’éraser toute velléité de liberté culturelle chez ce que tous deux considéraient comme un peuple de simples porteurs d’eau. La différence, c’est que si Lord Durham représentait le colonialisme étranger, PET, lui, était issu de ce peuple qu’il s’est efforcé d’humilier au profit du colon, en bon roi nègre qu’il fut.242

Likewise, when Jean Chrétien retired from politics in December, 2003, Le Devoir columnist Michel Venne summarized Chrétien’s career as follows: «Jean Chrétien a joué à fond le rôle du roi nègre, celui d’homme de paille qui, certes, a fini par «passer en tête», mais au prix de se mouler dans les habits des puissants.» 243 This structural role of the traitor continues to mutate and shift and find itself incarnated within new textual forms. A quick glance through certain newspaper columns would suggest that Chrétien’s Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Stéphane Dion, has inherited the metatexts of the traitor. To take but one example, we can see immediately in the title of Claude G. Charron’s book, La Partition du Québec: de Lord Durham à Stéphane Dion,244 that the author is employing the very same the tragic and

---


242 Jacques Larue-Langlois, « Pleurons en cœur la mort du roi nègre. » www.vigile.net, 1 octobre 2000, (29 avril 2004). It is important to recall that Larue-Langlois was imprisoned in October 1970 upon Trudeau’s invocation of the War Measures Act, an event that would certainly influence his animosity towards the former Prime Minister. We note, of course, the parallel between Larue-Langlois’ assessment of Trudeau and the conclusions of Laforest’s Trudeau et l’âge n d’un r e éve canadien. Another interesting example of this nature would be Raymond Savard, “La mort du sinistre Troadow” who wrote in the same journal on October 25, 2000, « Je ne m’étendrais pas sur la carrière d’un traitre qui a craché sur le Québec et sur les Québécois pendant la plus grande partie de sa vie et qui a tout fait pour leur nuire. Sa triste carrière d’arriviste et de dandy est connue de tous. Mais que notre gouvernement tombe dans l’abjection en ordonnant de faire mettre en berne les drapeaux du Québec pour un salaud de cette espèce, voilà qui dépasse les bornes! Comme si ce n’était pas assez, Monsieur Bouchard en personne s’est présenté devant le cercueil, la tête basse et la main sur le cœur! Quelle honte! Quel abaissement! » In this example, Bouchard’s expression of solemnity for the deceased Traitor is enough for Bouchard himself to be seen as a traitor of Québec. Writings such as these must be understood as extreme examples, which are not the work, of course, of social scientists. They do indicate, however, the extent to which the traitor discourse may be absorbed, interpreted and expounded upon within certain corners of public opinion.

243 Michel Venne, « Le Parvenu. » Le Devoir, 17 novembre 2003. Venne meticulously constructs the conceptual framework of the traitor, writing « La réussite de Jean Chrétien se mesure à son parcours personnel. Celui d’un petit Canadien français gravissant les échelons jusqu’à diriger le pays des autres. Mais au prix de s’y assimiler, de se fondre parmi les puissants, de devenir leur pote, leur complice. Dans d’autres contextes, on appelle cela un parvenu. »

244 Claude G. Charron. La Partition du Québec : de Lord Durham à Stéphane Dion. Montréal : VLB, 1996. One must also acknowledge the historical problem of speaking of « Québec » in the context of
antithetical continuities we have observed. The Meech Death also continues to be pondered over for its mechanistic, argumentative function and its enduring potential as a founding myth. In a recent article, Université de Montréal philosopher Michel Seymour has argued that the Québec government must reopen the constitutional dossier. Seymour argues that the beau risque be taken once again essentially because it will fail, hence provoking a second Meech, from which the sovereignty movement will gain renewed vigour by way of once again affirming the Law of infinite return to the argumentative situation of impasse and impossibility.\textsuperscript{245}

* * *

This investigation into the figure of betrayal has mapped out the discursive systems of argumentation, the narrative conventions, the images and lieu de mémoire in which the actions and identity of the traitor are recognized, defined, constructed, remembered and anticipated. This reading of the narrative and argumentative operations of this Crisis Literature permits us to delineate three major realms of betrayal within the treason discourse. The first and most central of these realms takes its root more in the idea of “breech” rather than the antithetical archetype of “traitor.” This is the figure of the Breaker of Faith, the betrayer of trust; one who, having made a promise and pledged the loyalty required to uphold it, then reneges on this engagement by way of a disloyal act. This Betrayer of Trust is the central core – the mythistoric action of 1982 – around which all other images of Trudeau as traitor are generally structured and narrated. We find this discursive realm throughout the grand récit de la spécificité, regardless of political persuasion. Stemming from this realm is that of the Traitor as Foreign Object. By “foreign” I am referring to an intellectual state, not a civic or ethnic construction. The Foreign Object is a curiosity who,

though an acknowledged insider claiming to represent the group, exhibits identities, actions and myth-systems that do not coherently fit into any established narrative of Self. As such the Foreign Object is intellectually situated outside of the defined community. The Foreign Object appears to be an implicit assumption throughout most of the Crisis writing in representations of both Trudeau’s character and, in particular, his democratic rapport with Québeccers themselves. The third discursive realm, which is more marginal than the previous two, is the Traitor as an Antithetical Creature. This discursive extremity appears mainly in more radical independentist writings but also in the Lucien Bouchard canon. This form of traitor is a perverse, satanized aberration, the conspiratorial reaper of tragedy who embodies all that is opposite and wrong, including the hatred and intolerance that is normally associated with the English Other. Within the intertextual ecosystem of the Meech Sagas, Trudeau, as we have seen, is the outstanding citizen in all of these realms of identity.

What does all of this mean? Why are these structures in place? What are the imaginative conditions that brought the Crisis narratives into these patterns of thought? What are the implications of this discourse for the way we think about the Québec and Canadian pasts? I will devote the remainder of this concluding chapter to exploring these questions. I will attempt to show that the conceptual problem of Québec’s political ambiguity, combined with the moral function of the historian’s practice as well as the historical context of “crisis” are all central factors in the use and function of the figure of betrayal. The chapter will end with some hypothetical reflections on strategies and paradigms for narrating Trudeau into Québec mythstories of nation.

*   *   *

What leads the authors to tell the story of Meech in the way they do? The creation of these narrative shapes depends not so much on Meech as an historical process, but rather the moral prism of the author’s imaginative standpoint. For the fundamental
conclusions of the Meech Sagas — betrayal, impossibility, tragedy, unity — do not have any stable empirical form independent of human imagination and repose solely on the author's interpretive prognosis for collective response. Certainly the Meech Sagas are rationally structured by a series of facts that can be readily and scientifically demonstrated: Premier Lévesque is excluded in 1981, the Assemblée nationale overwhelmingly objects to the 1981 entente, Meech goes unratiﬁed in 1990, statistics suggest a majority of Anglophones opposed the Accord, etc. And yet the signiﬁcance of these facts and the mise en narration of the causal, mechanistic elements that brought them to eventuation differ so dramatically from author to author that any authoritative version of Meech — even in its most inert, molecular state — becomes exceedingly problematic. The Meech Sagas have been subject to such vastly different readings that it is verily impossible to deﬁnitively determine the meaning of what actually occurred. The absolutist certainty of the authors' conclusions does not fundamentally depend on "facts," but rather on events that may never have occurred in the past, and might never occur in the future, despite of our heavily historicized projections of hope and/or fear. We can never deﬁnitively prove how Québécois interpreted Trudeau's Paul Sauvé promise or precisely what he intended by it. Nor can we accurately demonstrate the effects of the Meech Lake Accord on Québec and Canadian society had it been ratiﬁed, even in a purely juridical sense. And we cannot factually determine either the necessity or the illegitimacy of either federalism or sovereignty. The undeniable "facts" around which a Meech narrative is organized therefore remain necessarily interpretive entities, whose meaning, importance and mechanistic function are fundamentally deﬁned by the moral preference of the narrator. At the very core of these narratives, regardless of their political persuasion, there are no facts, no evidence, no certainty. There is simply a moral choice.

John Ralston Saul argues that there is a difference between morality and ethics. Ethics, he says, is a concern for the public good whereas morality is a sort of
religious-style righteousness. I would say this is a question of degree. If we reduce any narrative down to it very core, we arrive at a moral foundation from which an idea of the public good, and a concern for it, is produced. An ethical concern rooted in a moral position is not necessarily, as Saul suggests, a negative phenomenon. Ian McKay writes that, “Historians are largely trained to treat ethical discussions as embarrassing outbreaks, like acne, to be remedied with the refreshing balm of empiricism and common sense.” Indeed, social science is often compelled to dismiss ethical concerns as “irrational” or “mythological” or “righteous” and yet, as McKay argues, ethical concerns lay at the very foundation of our historical reconstructions. Concern for the good of humanity is ultimately the very reason for which we tell and retell stories. It is what compels our interest. There can be no doubt that the Crisis Authors tell the Meech narratives that they do, in the way that they do, out of concern for the good of their society, in the sincere belief that these stories will help build and advance the liberty and happiness of their Crisis-beleaguered fellow citizens. In this sense, it is unimportant if their mythstories are “true” in any fundamental sense, because they contain an inherent and “real” value. They aim to motivate collective action and to make things tangibly better for their co-citizens. Many of these authors, such as Bouchard, Chrétien, Trudeau, Parizeau and Morin have worked actively from within the political process, while others, such as Laforest, Fournier, Dufour and Léon Dion, are certainly politically engaged social scientists. Such is the ethical enterprise of their historical readings and, while we may of course critique and reject, all of the narratives they construct obviously reveal the many different legitimate and rational political propositions for Québec and Canadian societies. But the underlying question that demarcates the intellectual point of departure in every Crisis narrative is also an ethical one: which stories do we need to tell? What information must we retain, remember and affirm for the betterment of all, and what information must we discard, forget and negate? As Thomas King reminds

---


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
us, stories are like medicine. A story told one way can cure, while the same story told another way can injure.\textsuperscript{248}

Let us take, for example, Guy Laforest's discussion of contemporary intellectual production in Anglophone Canada. His conclusion that Lord Durham's liberalism dominates the Anglophone perception of the Québec national question is argumentatively inserted into his broader narrative conclusion that Trudeau killed political dualism, thereby making Canada impossible and unworkable for modern Québec. As we have seen, Laforest reinforces this narrative reading by pointing to the work of Bercuson-Cooper, Janet Ajzenstat and Ramsay Cook as definitive texts of Anglo-Canadian political thought. In fact, Laforest is certainly under no obligation to limit his analysis to these three case studies alone. He could have named many other Anglo-Canadian intellectuals, such as Michael Bliss, Thomas Flanagan, Reed Scowen or Michael Behiels, who are certainly far from sympathetic, and even hostile, to Québec nationalism and Québec liberal culture. The list of such people is not short. Yet, at the same time Laforest could have easily pointed to the many other intellectuals in Anglophone Canada whose relationship with Québec nationalism is quite different and whose political thought, in general terms, largely resembles that of Laforest himself. Why is it, for example, that in his study of Anglo-Canadian political thinking about Québec Laforest chooses to ignore Charles Taylor and Kenneth McRoberts? All of whom he cites favourably at various critical points throughout 	extit{Trudeau et la fin d'une rêve canadien}?.\textsuperscript{249} For that matter, why did he choose to forget about Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, George Grant, John Meisel, Richard Simeon, Philip Resnick, Graham Fraser, Ray Conlogue, John F. Conway, Patricia Smart, Neil Bissoondath, John Ralston Saul, Arthur Silver, Cornelius Jaenen, Desmond Morton, Brian Young, John Dickinson, Daniel Francis, Stanley Ryerson, and Richard Jones, to name just a few, not to mention a host of politicians from Joe Clark to John Robarts to Brian Mulroney and David Peterson. The list of such people

\textsuperscript{248} King, \textit{The Truth About Stories}, p.94
\textsuperscript{249} Laforest also devotes considerable attention to Frank Scott, whom he constructs favourably as a Canadian nationalist in mid-century Canada with whom fruitful dialogue with Québec was (at least
— among whom we can even name a number of supporters of Québec sovereignty — is not a short one either. But perhaps these people do not matter. Maybe what these "English Canadians" think about Québec is not important. Laforest had little choice but to exclude them because his narrative would lose much of its coherence if the searchlights of collective memory were shined in the direction of this particular realm of Canadian political culture. For to remember these people would be to weaken the otherwise perfectly constructed certainty of the Death of the dualist dream upon which Laforest’s entire narrative depends. To remember these people would perhaps suggest possibility (an idea that allows for imperfection) in a narrative universe that cannot argumentatively allow for any. But this calculated amnesia obviously aims to serve much more than simply the structural demands of argumentative or narrative strategy. In writing his chapter, Laforest evidently believed that it was more valuable for Québec society to forget about these people, or dismiss them as isolated “exceptions,” and concentrate exclusively on what Bercuson and Cooper have to say about Québec. And that is Laforest’s moral choice.

My point here is not to negate Laforest’s argument, which is perfectly defendable and important. I would never attempt to lessen the gravity of the Bercuson-Cooper style strain in Anglo-Canadian political culture, which no serious student of Québec’s political situation in Canada should ignore or dismiss. What I’m hoping to get across is that within this multiform entity that we may metaphorically designate as “English Canada,” vastly contradictory interpretations of Québec may simultaneously exist. My point is to illustrate Laforest’s decision to reduce this complex entity down to one apparently fundamental realm of its being as a way of paving the collective path of Québec Self in the hour of Crisis. In his gaze upon “English Canada”, he has sequestered one element of its identity: its political thinking about Québec. Within this fragment, Laforest has concentrated solely upon a single intellectual tendency, which exists along side many others. Laforest then presents this fragment of the Anglo-Canadian Self as the true “essence” of Canadian nationalism, as the

initially) possible. Laforest paradoxically goes on to attribute to Scott’s intellectual genius the very political culture that, through Trudeau, would eventually kill dualism and negate Québec.
foundation of the singular, permanent and non-evolving identity of the whole society, which, he calculates, was unveiled before eternity with the Meech Death. From this now-established Canadian “nature,” Laforest draws his historical conclusions about the impossibility that this “nature” poses for Québec. Perhaps Laforest was absolutely right, but because his analysis concerns vast populations of different individuals and collectivities who are capable of multiple, contradictory forms of political behaviour, paths of evolution, images of Self and visions of nationhood, how can we ever know for sure? The information Laforest chooses to retain in constructing his image of Canadian “nature,” then, cannot be reduced to a foundation of factual knowledge. Rather, at its very core we are beholding a moral position. Laforest chooses the narrative that he feels will best serve his society. Indeed, there is a moral foundation behind every Crisis narrative. As Kenneth McRoberts has brilliantly shown, Pierre Trudeau’s argumentation — though always phrased in the frigid rhetoric of rationality and “reason before passion” — reposes on a fundamentally moral foundation. Trudeau’s claim that the breakup of Canada would be “une péché contre l’humanité” coupled with his trademark demonization of Québec nationalism and separatism make for a discourse which — far from dispassionate, scientific reason — is purely moral. These moral positions are informed no doubt by author’s desire to bring order to the chaos of Crisis, explain its cause and propose a safe way out of it. But in the process, both Québec and Anglophone Canada begin to look like monoliths.

Indeed, monolith, dichotomy, certainty and the assumed (or desired) singularity of collective identity are often the moral currency of the Crisis writing in both Québec and Anglophone Canada. The mythstories of Crisis frequently propose an extremely un-nuanced prototype of Self — which bears the never-fully-explained-but-always-fully-presumed obviousness of a true “essence” or nature — in antithetical

---

251 Trudeau regularly peppered his discourse with this kind of affirmation throughout his career. See, for example, his official address in response to the 1976 Parti Québécois victory, 24 novembre 1976.
252 To borrow Ian McKay’s term for this mysterious, existential je-ne-sais-quoi upon which Québec and Canadian societies are so precariously but fundamentally hinged in the Crisis narratives. “After Canada.” Acadiensis.
conflict with a correspondingly unnuanced prototype of Other. As I say, Laforest, writing in 1992, would not have had to look very far in the Anglophone populations of Canada (which at that time, it would perhaps be kindly nuanced to remember, were also agonizing in existential panic above and beyond the Meech crisis, namely the Free Trade debate) to find many examples of strange, caricatured, ignorant, ungenerous or even frankly racist representations of Québec coupled with gratuitous, hypocritical affirmations of the superiority of Canadian federalism and nationalism. Similarly, we find exactly the same unfair, slanderous phenomena in much of the Crisis writing in Franco-Québec. In reading through the Crisis literature in both languages, one easily gets the impression that, between 1990 and 1995, both societies were interpreting each other by listening only to the most totalizing and dichotomous voices to be found in each of their respective communities and then returning back to the image of Self and claiming moral superiority. In all cases the authors are prepping their readers for the violence of an essentially violent Other. Some would say, and have, that much of this literature is ridiculous and that its many insistent claims are overly shrill, reductive, simplistic and fundamentally unhelpful as guides to the complexities of Québécoo-Canadian relations. Among such critics is Queen’s University historian Ian McKay who, in an angry review of the Crisis books, indulges in a heavily sardonic rant about the sacrosanct nationalist dictates that inform much of this writing. His sarcasm nonetheless accurately maps out many of the unnuanced, uncritical moral foundations of much of this literature and it merits a lengthy quote:

Do not question this “Canada” and this “Québec”, so effortlessly and flawlessly produced, so immensely well-documented, with their birth certificates, evolutionary narratives, heroes and villains, these magical structures which deliver us from our mortality and inconsequence. Do not doubt, if you are a loyal Canadian...the humane and generous values upon which we all agree (and which from time before memory have distinguished us from the Americans), our almost infinite flexibility, tolerance and love of the honourable compromise. Do not doubt, if you are a loyal Québécois, that Québec, a nation from time immemorial, has been characterized by the pursuit of collective dreams rather than individualist liberalism, and that the Québécois have always and everywhere defended their identity against the “English” (or perhaps Canadian?) oppessor. And above all do not, on
either side — and this is quite difficult — find hilarious the endless
dichotomization of the trivial, the ceaseless visual confrontations of
the maple leaf and the fleur-de-lys, and the transformation of politics
into a low-grade soap opera or junior league hockey game. 253

McKay’s seething rampage is something of a global denunciation of the entire corpus
of Crisis Literature in both languages and of the absolutist patriotic constructions
these writings so insistently assume. To McKay, an historical literature founded upon
such assumptions generates a profound intellectual paralysis that renders the
historical problem of the “Canada-Québec Crisis” virtually untouchable from a non-
nationalist standpoint. While McKay’s critique of this totalizing discourse is certainly
just — he is not the only one in Canada or in Québec to profess a severe frustration
with these jarring binaries of “national crisis” — he is perhaps being somewhat
insensitive to the deeper context of the historical situation in which this literature was
produced. That situation, of course, was one of crisis. McKay cholerically denounces
the Crisis Authors for being irresponsible and seeking to instill panic, fear and
loathing in their Canadian and Québec readers. But to my mind, the Crisis books do
not so much directly aim to generate fear as much as they reflect the panic that has
already ensconced their authors. Panic is in this sense an historical artifact.

The Crisis Literature is an extraordinary repository for Canadian and Québec
political thought in an hour of panic and how our intellectuals have navigated a
situation of political chaos. I do not think we can rightly understand and appreciate
this literature, and the moral decisions that are made therein, without paying due
attention to the intense imaginative problem of crisis and its intellectual
consequences. I am not explicitly referring to the tangible political forms in which
the crisis was attached such as “Free Trade” or “Meech” or “Oka” or
“Charlottetown” or the “Referendum,” or to the narrative ensemble of all of these.
Rather, I am referring to the more general situation of crisis that may emerge in any
society when a multiplicity of meanings, identities, agendas and understandings
collide into incomprehensible rubble of fragmented humanity. In the volatile context

253 McKay, “After Canada,” *Acadiensis*, p.80
of national panic, we search for pillars of coherence and structures of fidelity – monoliths that may serve (if only temporarily) as guideposts, leading us out of confusion. In essence, we need to recover the narrative thread that makes sense of us. The intellectual plays a particularly central role in the hour of panic. As Gérard Bouchard argues, the primary social duty of the historian is to reduce the opacité of the past.\footnote{Gérard Bouchard. La nation québécoise au futur et au passé. Montréal: VLB éditeur, 1999. p.96} When the chaos of disaster strikes and smothers the past, the present and the future in opacity and disorder, those who, by profession, organize and clarify the collective story are charged with the responsibility of lighting the lanterns and charting intellectual passageways for their fellow citizens. Consider, for example, the veritable Niagara of books about Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Ladin, Islam, terrorism and America at war that followed the September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks, all of which aimed, in some way, to restore lucidity and shape collective response in an hour of panic.\footnote{Or, perhaps more ignobly (and this is possible for the Canadian crisis literature as well) – to make money.} Likewise, the literature surrounding the Meech Sagas was generated with precisely this moral imperative of intellectually orienting, channelling and navigating collective action. These mythhistories of Crisis are constructed to preserve us from disintegrating into an incomprehensible maelstrom of inarticulate pieces, and to bolster our resolve and our ability to act together. The authors present us with parallel scenarios of both collective hope (for the nation to affirm its true “essence” once and for all) and fear (of the nation’s Other pulling our dreams into the dirt) in which the possible futures lying in wait on the other side of the present crisis may be imagined and beheld almost as if they were historical events. This ordering of history is not principally motivated by the necessity of remembering or understanding the complexities of the past, but rather by the necessity of remembering the future. Like paramedics fraught with emergency, our intellectuals waste no time with “frivolous” details as they labour simply to save their rapidly expiring patient from the jaws of Death. Dichotomies are set up, organizing the political rubble of “Canada” into rival unanimities of good and evil, heroes and villains, legitimacy and illegitimacy, OUI and NO. Through this use of dichotomy, we attempt to form emergency solidarities
and common fidelities around a single, self-validating passageway – “sovereignty,” “Canadian unity” – to hopefully deliver us from misery.

As such, the figure of the traitor is also an imaginative artefact of crisis. When we consider the fact that Trudeau’s status as betrayer is generally argumentatively substantiated by accounts of his historical behaviour during the October Crisis, the Repatriation Crisis and the Meech Crisis, we might conclude that “crisis” is a necessary precondition for the traitor figure to emerge. The traitor construct is a method of ordering the Crisis by making perscriptions for fidelity. The figure of the traitor is intellectually conceivable when a society is asked (or assumed) to be unanimous, to have a “true” (and therefore also a “false”) essence. The traitor emerges when complex elements with a society become seen as a menace, as a destabilizing element of chaos that will weaken collective resolve and aggravate the intensity of crisis. The traitor becomes thinkable when the idea of rejecting solidarity around a single ideal or a single realm of belonging is believed to be morally unthinkable. We see traitors when we have internalized the idea that we can have but one loyalty, one “essence”. It is no doubt for this reason that the image of the traitor is most vivid in the writings of Trudeau and and independentist authors, for whom can be but one fundamental realm of belonging for Québécois. In a framework that conceives of the Québec nation and “English Canada” as two rival unanimities, configured within an irreconcilable and impossible OUI-NO dichotomy, elements that would contradict the “true essence” of national identity are inevitably consigned to the realm of treason. In Trudeau’s narratives, for example, there is no discursive space in which to conceive of René Lévesque or Lucien Bouchard as anything but illegitimate traitors to both Canada and Québec. Much of the logic and credibility of Trudeau’s Repatriation saga can be sustained only if we accept the idea that Lévesque and all the Québécois who supported him were fundamental enemies who aimed to destroy Canada and with whom no compromise could ever be attained. In exactly the same fashion, the claim that “Québec” was rejected and excluded in 1982 and 1990 can only maintain its perfection if we totally evacuate Trudeau from all forms québécité, dismiss him and all the Québécois who voted for him as creations
(or victims) of a foreign society and consign them all to an antonymous, disloyal or misguided (or perverted) space of identity that runs contrary to all Québec continuity, legitimacy and insiderness. In his memoires Trudeau produced an interesting rebufk to his detractors by saying, "Certsains nationalistes, se prenant pour les porte-paroles des Canadiens français, se gargarisent d'affirmations gratuites: 'le Québec' veut plus d'autonomie, et 'les Québécois' se sentent humiliés par le gouvernement fédéral. Mon oeil! Ces nationalistes ne parlent que pour eux-mêmes : ils ne sont pas 'le Québec.'" Superficially we might see Trudeau's protestation as an interesting critique of the unanimist discourse of his political opponents. However, Trudeau's own discourse is just as equally unanimist, for as we have seen in Chapter II, Trudeau continually represents himself as the sole legitimate representative agent of Franco-Québec's "true essence," casting his opponents as misguided and rapacious pretenders and perverts. These mutual adversaries insist that they alone have understood the "true essence" of Québec which (O)thers (including even, at certain key moments, the Québec electorate) have misunderstood, perverted or have loved imperfectly. So we see the intensity of the dichotomies that are put in place within the Meech universe. It is this dichotomous paradigm that allows for absolutist ideas of "Québec" and "Canada" to attain conceptual perfection. It is this dichotomous paradigm that turns our opponents from complex extensions of our collective Self into treasonous agitators who, in their most extreme configuration, can represent the very opposite of our unanimously-sanctioned existential being.

But the traitor is also an imaginative response to the overlap that nonetheless exists between the dichotomies that the Authors establish, notwithstanding their rigourous efforts to segregate them. The political scientist Alan C. Cairns discusses the complex and important phenomenon of "insiders" and "outsiders" in constitution making in Canada. "Insiders," Cairns writes, "are members of the group being examined or making claims; outsiders by contrast, are not part of the culture of emotional ties, affinities, and understandings that come from introspection and lived

---

256 Trudeau, Mémoires politiques, p.98
experience."\textsuperscript{257} The thesis is that those who do not possess the understanding that is derived from membership within the defined group cannot credibly represent or speak for that group. Cairns gives a number of examples of how ethnicity can play into this question, but really the insider-outsider dynamic is an intellectual interplay and lays at the very foundation of democratic society. This is why, in Canada, people understandably get annoyed when the Prime Minister appears to be obsequiously following orders from Washington, or when, in the case of Meech, the Premier of Newfoundland explains to Québeccers that their identity is in some way flawed and that they should be "Canadians" first and foremost. It is never tremendously pleasant to be told what to do, and what to be, by people who can't possibly understand you, and in a nonexistent debate such as constitution making, which aims to formally enshrine the profound meanings of collective Self within the juridical and political apparatus of the state, the blunderings of an intruder can be dangerous. The insider then, the emissary of collective Self, one who is both a representative and a representation of his collectivity, is part of what endows the democratic process with its legitimacy. In the Québec-Canada context, in which the identities, allegiances and sovereignties of two collectivities are intertwined and entangled, the insider-outsider dynamic is not always simple. All Québeccers are Québeccers and, even if only by citizenship, Canadian. But not all Canadians are Québeccers. The Canadian \textit{Nous}, then, necessarily contains an outside element – a \textit{We}, if you like – that is not representative of, and can of course even be contradictory to, central elements within the Québec Self. What we are witnessing in the insider-outsider dynamic is a complex intercourse between overlapping constructs of Self and Other projected upon the political stage. It is in the authors’ negotiation of this interplay between Self and Other, insider and outsider, legitimacy and illegitimacy, continuity and rupture that the traitor construct is apprehended and employed. Though this archetypal construct may be a dogmatic caricature associated with flagrant epistemological certainty and dichotomous antithesis, the traitor is really made possible because of an

ambiguïté identitaire, a point of entanglement between realities. For as a discursive text, the one who betrays is — to recall the contradictory image system of the piège — at once an image of Self and an image of the Other. The problem that the authors are facing when they construct their narratives is the ambiguous collision of belongings between Québec and Canada. These are not simple to sort out. One even senses a certain discomfort in the Crisis authors’ prose as they labour to convince us that Trudeau in no way represented the people who voted for him or, from Trudeau’s perspective, that the people voted for Lévesque without supporting his national agenda. It is the presence of this ambiguity, this misty frontier zone, that the authors are trying to negotiate when they employ the traitor construct. The traitor is constructed as something of a landmark; a monolith erected in this ambiguous terrain to chart out the frontiers of identity and of culture, impose limits on the definition of Self and to demarcate the territory in which the “true essence” of nationhood definitively resides.

In effect, the traitor can be thought of as a way of thinking about Québec identity in historical synthesis. Stemming once more from the moral imperative upon the historian to reduce the opacity of the past, the traitor is a method of rejecting the defiantly opaque ambiguïté identitaire and arguing instead for simplicity. Because of this ambiguous condition of identity, Trudeau as Franco-Québécois Prime Minister of Canada is an historic figure that eludes all easy classification within the grand récit de la spécificité. This is because he embodies the overlapping nature of two different realms belonging. He is at once an insider and an outsider. He is seen to be and to not be a Québecker at the same time. He belongs to Québec and yet he

---

258 Hence Bouchard lamentations of the “double légitimité.”
259 Some authors have attempted to deal with the conceptual problem of the ambiguïté identitaire by reducing this problem of ambiguity to Trudeau’s bicultural ethnic heritage. Kenneth McRoberts in particular has argued that Trudeau’s mother, Grace Elliott, (who was half French-Canadian, half Scottish) bestowed upon him a biculturalism that would lead him to deviate from Franco-Québec’s true essence (See Misconceiving Canada.) It would be misleading (if not somewhat odd), however, to try to reduce Trudeau’s (mis)use of power to the mixed blood of Trudeau’s personal métissage. Furthermore, it would not explain such figures as Marchand or Pelletier or Lalonde, who did not have half-Scottish mothers. It would be more precise to say that ambiguity is the result of the fact that in northern North America, there exist two great national belongings which, because of the federal structure they share, overlap into each other.
belongs to the Other. He is a Québécois who is at once the master and the slave of Canada (the authors are often unable to decide), its establishment and its Anglophone population. He represents to the Crisis Authors a state of permanent frustration because, as much as Trudeau may be antithetical, he cannot be easily expelled from the grand récit collectif. Despite his own rigid discourse of dichotomy, Trudeau’s presence represents to his opponents the state of ambiguity and ambivalence of Québec national politics. And as Jocelyn Létourneau has observed, the idea of a Québec that is ambivalent, in which there are multiple, complementary and contradictory spaces of belonging that overlap in a kind of “interdépendance contrainte” with Anglophone Canada, is unthinkable from the perspective of the traditional, oppositional paradigm of nation. This ambivalence is unthinkable essentially because of many of our underlying assumptions of what nations are supposed to be. Lucien Bouchard laments, at the end of his autobiography, “les Québécois doivent cesser de voter pour une chose et son contraire. Rouge à Ottawa, bleu à Québec […] notre ambivalence nous aura fait bien du tort.” Bouchard’s hope, much like Trudeau’s, is that this ambivalence may be overcome, because however ethnically or linguistically diverse they may be, collectively or individually, the inhabitants of real nations – normal nations – are united in a common ideal and a common belonging which make for a “true essence.” In effect, the traitor figure is a structuring element within the broader récit identitaire, that Jocelyn Maclure has observed, which seeks to make of Québec a “normal” nation. To Maclure, this normalizing lust is centred upon the perceived necessity to expel from Québec’s collective being a number of discursive “abnormalities” such as ambivalence and the Hubert-Aquinien “fatigue culturelle du Canada français.” The traitor construct,

261 Bouchard, Visage, p.336
262 The following citation, from Trudeau’s 1998 introduction to the “On Quebec Nationalism” section in the Ron-Graham-compiled Essential Trudeau, is veritably the negative image of Bouchard: “At some point we will have to get out of the uncertainty caused by the threat of separation […] Quebeckers simply can’t go on demanding federalism and separation, independence and association, at the same time. We will have to make a clear decision based on a clear choice.” Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Ron Graham (ed.) The Essential Trudeau. Toronto: McCelland & Stewart, 1998. p.108
then, is a mythistorical tool of combat against ambiguity, a way of negating the unthinkable prospect of ambivalence. It is a way of trying to narrate ambiguity out of history in order to unveil the underlying certainty – the soon-to-be-attained normalcy – of one country. The presence of the traitor within myhistory presumes that the singularity of a political society is a fundamental prerequisite for being a nation and that the absence of unanimity would somehow disqualify that society from nationhood.264 Again, in the emergency context of Crisis, such rigid concern for unity can be more accurately understood.

Jocelyn Maclure has written that neither the traditional sovereigntist discourse of the normal nation, nor the anticolonialist tragedy of l’hiver de la survie, nor Trudeau’s Canadianist paradigm of “une grande nation crypto-bilingue” can adequately reflect or account for the complexities of contemporary Francophone

264 In his seminal La nation québécoise au futur et au passé. Montréal: VLB éditeur, 1998. written in the aftermath of the 1995 referendum as a something of a guide to thinking about the Québec nation and the writing of Québec’s national history, Gérard Bouchard explains that the precondition of Québec sovereignty stems in part from Canada’s inability to be a national monolith: Ce pays n’est jamais parvenu à accommoder les deux grandes communautés linguistiques anglophone et francophone, à les fondre dans un même idéal et une même appartenance. Le Canada n’a pas réussi non plus à aménager en son sein les conditions qui auraient permis au Québec de se développer pleinement comme nation et comme société francophone responsable. Préconiser la souveraineté du Québec, c’est simplement prendre acte de cette incapacité prolongée, plusieurs fois démontrée. (Bouchard, La nation québécoise, p.76)

Gérard Bouchard’s critique is on two fronts. Firstly, Canada has been incapable of producing the requisite unanimity for nationhood, and secondly, it has shown itself inept in rightly addressing the singularity of Québec national identity. Bouchard’s assessment is quite just: Canada has certainly not been able to contrive itself into a monolithic singularity of common belonging, and its efforts to do just that have in many ways ignored or attempted to negate the national heterogeneity of its core (John Ralston Saul elaborates this argument, albeit with an explicitly federalist agenda, in Reflections of a Siamese Twin). But we must note Bouchard’s assumption – which is in fact shared by many observers within Anglo Canada – that forging a unanimous national identity is not only desirable but necessary in the effort to form a national reality. Indeed, those of the G. Bouchard and Trudeau schools of “one nation” appear unconscious of the paradox inherent in the fact that one of the central pillars of this “meme idéal” is that everyone is supposed to homogenously share a spirit of diversity and a heterogeneity of being. Is there not something contradictory about the notions of “shared values,” “meme idéal,” “meme appartenance” being employed to celebrate the concept of “plurality”? For ultimately, this leads simply to a banal, de facto plurality in which “nobody’s special,” instead of a far more meaningful, ‘deep diversity,’ of the kind Charles Taylor has laboured to defend, in which equality is maintained by different groups enjoying different rights. Gérard Bouchard must surely be aware that the federalist discourse of “plurality” in Canada is one that is commonly, even maliciously, employed to negate Québec’s national specificity. Yet, he is essentially proposing the much the same idea from a Québec perspective, for this, apparently, is what ‘real’ nations are all about.
Québec identity, because “ces trois conceptions nient tous l’un ou l’autre de ses fragments d’identité.” In essence, Maclure is arguing that the Québécois nation is composed of all of these identities, among others, but not one of them principally or exclusively. Maclure’s critique is that the récit identitaire national must be able to contemplate multiple realms of Québécois belonging. Jocelyn Létourneau has argued in his Passer à l’avenir that the central vector of Québécois identity, throughout its historical experience, has repeatedly demonstrated such a desire for the complementary situation that may arise out of a careful navigation between contradictory elements. In essence, the equilibrium that stems from balancing the plurality of an ambivalent position is one that makes for a complex, truly heterogenous, but nonetheless coherent récit identitaire. Létourneau has even argued that this ambivalence may in fact be a strength in Québécois society, a collective wisdom that, far from being abnormal, unnatural or confused, reflects both the souvenir and the devenir of the Québécois experience. Indeed, we can see an appreciation for this ambiguity in the work of Léon Dion, Claude Ryan, Daniel Latouche and René Lévesque. From the vantage point of the ambivalence thesis, the fact that Québeckers voted massively for both Trudeau and Lévesque and simultaneously supported and negated both the OUI and the NON camps in 1980 and


266 Indeed, Lévesque's career, in many respects (his autonomist-federalism within the Lesage government, his endorsement of the beau risque in 1984, as well as his forming a political movement around the complex idea of sovereignty-association) demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to such complexity. Charles Taylor has made the observation that the repeated affirmation in Québécois public discourse that Lévesque was a great democrat stems in part from Lévesque's profound belief in the legitimacy of multiple options. See Reconciling the Solitudes p.131 The idea of duality, it would seem, is the very essence of the ambivalence thesis. As such, we should include Christian Dufour and Guy Laforest in this grouping, whose thinking on duality have proposed interesting critiques of the normal nation récit. In his essay entitled "Cheminement," for example, Laforest argues against the Fournier-style thesis of the “inevitability” and “necessity” of Québécois sovereignty. Laforest argues that History is open to Québécois and that the Québécois nation is not “destined” to separate any more than it is “destined” to remain part of Canada. Yet Laforest, much like Dufour in his Conquérantist paradigm, does not afford this same complexity to the Other with whom he once dreamt of a dualist union. While Laforest can affirm in the Québécois context that “on se trompe quand on enferme un peuple dans un destin particulier,” (Urgence, p.13) he does not hesitate to insist that “English Canada” is permanently and irrevocably lodged in a Trudeauist destiny that is squarely anti-québécois. Indeed, certain elements in Laforest's narratives appear markedly “normalist.” Nonetheless, Maclure has carried out a valuable reading of Laforest's critique of normality, “Vers une nouvelle représentation de nous-mêmes: Guy Laforest, Jocelyn Létourneau et la critique du discours sur la normalité nationale.” Récits identitaires. pp.99-119
1995 would not be indicative of an confused, fragmented, seduced or betrayed society, but rather one that, in its ensemble, in its uniqueness, is perfectly coherent.\textsuperscript{267}

What if we were to contemplate the unthinkable mythistory of ambiguity in the context of the Meech Sagas? How might a grand récit national de l'ambiguïté conceive of Trudeau? Indeed, it is not by accident that Trudeau is often conceived as the alter ego of Lévesque, or that the Trudeau-Lévesque dynamic should be described by the late political scientist Gérard Bergeron as Notre miroir à deux faces.\textsuperscript{268} In an ambivalent mythistory, Trudeau would have to be understood as an extremity of Québec identity. Trudeau and Lévesque, like Claude Ryan, André Laurendeau, Jean Marchand, Pierre Bourgault, Michel Chartrand and Pierre Vallières, among many other central actors within the Quiet Revolution were all, in their way, compelled by the question of how best to develop a francophone society in the modern North American context. As eccentric a thinker Trudeau may have in many respects been within this intellectual landscape, the ambivalence paradigm would accept that Trudeau's political career was born of and sustained primarily by Québec society, not Saskatchewan or Newfoundland or New Brunswick, let alone "English Canada." The ambivalence paradigm would also view Trudeau's response to the Quiet Revolution, which led him to Ottawa and into the office of Prime Minister, as unable to account for the complexity and plurality of Québec society and the various internal tensions and ambiguities that form Québec in its ensemble. Trudeau's Québec, as we see so plainly in his unambivalent, normalist, Canadianist narratives, allows very little conceptual space to accomodate the récits identitaires of Lévesque and Bouchard, or even Ryan and Bourassa. And yet at the same time

\textsuperscript{267} An important problem that must be addressed by those who advocate the ambivalence thesis is the fact that it essentially ends up being federalist by default. After all, it necessarily involves maintaining Canada as a realm of Québec belonging. I would suggest, however, that sovereignty-association could represent the very nadir of the ambivalence narratives. I am thinking in particular of Lévesque's affirmation that "la souveraineté-association, ce n'est...ni du statu quo, ni du séparatisme. C'est une formule réaliste qui permettra des changements véritables sans devoir tout bouleverser ni recommencer à zéro. Nous disons...qu'au lieu de ce régime...donc tout le monde admet que tel quel il est dépassé...et sans renier pour autant une longue tradition de coexistence qui a créé tout un réseau d'échanges, une nouvelle entente d'égal à égal. » Assemblée nationale, Journal des Débats, 4\textsuperscript{e} session, 31 législature 4 mars 1980, 4964.


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Trudeau would have to be seen as a constituent element of this complexity. Trudeau, and his political movement, could be conceived as one of the extreme extensions of the Franco-Québécois Self, an unambivalent federalist extremity aimed at reconquering Canadian nationalism. From this vantage point, Trudeau would not be a creature of the Other, but a prolongation of Self.

If we were to accept this hypothesis — which would implicate a certain **rapatriement** of Trudeau — our historical perspective of the Crisis must necessarily shift. If Trudeau can be seen as an extremity of Québec identity then the Crisis cannot be exclusively reduced to a simple dichotomy between Franco Québec and English Canada. The Crisis would also have to be perceived, simultaneously, as a complex intercourse within Québec identity itself. This would imply that in 1982, it was one extremity of Québec political identity that managed to structurally (but only structurally) straightjacket all others. It would also imply that with the Meech failure of 1990, those who would advocate a single, fundamental realm of belonging for Québeackers (both the Trudeauiste periphery as well as the sovereigntist-independentist camp) were the real winners, overcoming the dualists. Bref, it would implicate the projection — the overlap — of internal Québec tensions into the sphere of Canadian federal debate. It would also implicate the **rapatriement** of an enormous realm of collective memory into whose continuities Trudeau is quite coherent. It would pave discursive space in which Pelletier, Marchand, Lalonde, Lamontagne, Favreau, Lapointe, Saint-Laurent, Tarte, and Laurier, to name just a few, would be remembered of as agents within the complex, ambiguous ensemble that makes Québec, rather than dismissed and forgotten as perverse gratifiers of the Other. It would also imply that the individualist, procedural liberal culture of Trudeau and the social conditions that produce it are not as perfectly foreign or “alien” to Québec political society as many authors would hope it to be. Ambiguity would also force us to rethink the conceptions of continuity, legitimacy and insidership that construct our discourse of Self and it would require us to consider the ambiguities and realms of

---

269 See Létourneau’s discussion of Trudeau in the essay “Quoi transmettre?” in Passer à l’avenir. Pp.141-167
ambivalence that exist within the identity of the "English" Other. Essentially, it would require a complete revision of the mythistories of Meech Lake.

Would such a reimagining of Trudeau be right? Maybe it is idealistic (or maybe just irritating) to think of Québec in terms of ambivalence and ambiguity. Maybe in the end it is more concrete, more prudent, to search history for the terms of normality. Maybe Trudeau was truly an English glad-hander who betrayed the Québecker who trusted him. Maybe not. Maybe some of what his political activity accomplished may be retained and adapted for the public good in Québec. Or maybe he is verily the enemy of everything that would bring meaning to Québec and his enduring presence must be rejected. One can never know for sure either way. We can continue to generate mythistories about Trudeau. We can get angry about him. Redeem his memory. Forget him. But when the mythistory is deconstructed to its very foundation we find ourselves before the moral choice of the author. The story we choose to tell is not harmless and it will not be fiction. It will be the truth about us. For, as Thomas King reminds us, the truth about stories is that that’s all we are.
Bibliographie

French-Language Crisis Monographs


**French-Language Crisis Articles and Speeches**


   Mont-Royal. 9 octobre 1995.
   Montréal. 11 octobre 1995.
   Châteauguay. 10 octobre 1995.
   Cégep de Limoilou. 11 octobre 1995.
   St-Justin de Rosemont. 14 octobre 1995.
   Montréal. 15 octobre 1995.
   Québec. 22 octobre 1995.
   Verdun. 25 octobre 1995.
   Centre St-Pierre. 27 octobre 1995.
Bouchard, Lucien. « Quinze ans n’ont pas suffi à réparer le tort que Trudeau a fait au Québec! » La Presse, 10 février 1996. B3.


Seymour, Michel. « Que faire maintenant? Le Québec peut faire la promotion de la souveraineté tout en proposant la réforme du fédéralisme. » Le Devoir, 18 février 1999


English-Language Crisis Monographs


**Corpus Critique**


