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In Search of a National Identity: Hugh MacLennan Recounting the History of the Other Solitude.

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Résumé de Synthèse

Hugh MacLennan a certes été une figure dominante de la litérature Canadienne. Il a été l'un des premiers auteurs Canadiens Anglais de sa génération à prendre le Canada comme milieu principal dans ses oeuvres. Son premier roman, Barometer Rising prend place dans la ville d'Halifax durant la Première guerre mondiale et décrit les tragiques évènements entourant l'explosion du Mont-Blanc en 1917. Venant de l'auteur qui vécut lui-même ces moments tragiques, comme jeune garçon à l'époque, les images rendues dans ce récit sont certes très prenantes et réalistes. Cette histoire est la preuve que quand MacLennan parle de son environement il peut créér de bonnes oeuvres. Cependant au cours de ce mémoire je vais démontrer une autre facette de l'auteur. Quand Hugh MacLennan s'attaque au problème qui divise les deux peuples fondateurs de ce pays, en tentant d'explorer les tensions et divergences entre les deux races il est très loin de la réalité.

Au cours de ce mémoire, je vais analyser deux romans de MacLennan, Two Solitudes(1945) et Return of the Sphinx(1967). Ces romans gravitent autour de deux époques importantes du vingtième siècle. Soit la période de la Conscription durant la première Guerre Mondiale jusqu'à la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale pour Two Solitudes et les années de la Révolution Tranquille au Québec en ce qui concerne Return of the Sphinx. Je vais démontrer que Hugh MacLennan était trop éloigné de la réalité canadienne française de ces époques pour rendre une illustration juste et équitable de la société québécoise. Les

positions sociales, culturelles et politiques de l'auteur en ce qui concerne la société québécoise laissent perplexe.

Arrivé dans un nouvel environement au Québec en 1945 et possédant une connaissance du français très limitée, la tâche qu'il s'était fixée de représenter les deux solitudes de ce pays était immense. Même à l'époque de la Révolution Tranquille quand il écrivait Return of the Sphinx, faisant partie de l'élite Canadienne Anglaise, il était très étranger à son sujet et à l'environement qu'il tentait de décrire.

MacLennan avait été grandement influencé au cours de ses études par les théories Freudiennes, particulièrement par les pièces d'Oedipe des grands classiques grecs qu'il prenait comme base pour comprendre le monde qui l'entourait. Les relations père-fils sont des thèmes importants dans ces classiques grecs. Ces relations Père-Fils deviendraient aussi des thèmes importants dans les oeuvres de MacLennan. Un ouvrage important qui eut une très grande influence pour Hugh MacLennan et que j'ai choisi comme approche pour ce mémoire est une recherche de Rattray Taylor intitulée Sex In History.

Cet ouvrage de Taylor joint les principes théoriques Freudien à l'histoire. Sa théorie avance que l'histoire est faite d'une série de cycles répétitifs qu'il définit comme période "matrist" et "patrist". Il explique qu'à certaines époques de l'histoire, il y a eu des périodes où des individus s'identifiaient principalement au père qui produisait une société avec une attitude autoritaire et restrictive, et qu'à d'autre

époques, il y avait une majorité d'individus qui s'identifiaient plutôt à la mère, ce qui produisait une société plus progressive et moins restrictive.

Les théories de Rattray Taylor sont intéressantes et on peut remarquer par exemple dans l'histoire, l'époque Elizabethienne, une période romantique où il y avait une prédominance "matrist" et l'époque victorienne, une période restrictive et conservatrice qu'on peut définir comme "patrist". Ces exemples démontrent que les théories de Taylor sont certainement justifiables. Je rejette par contre la façon dont MacLennan interprète les théories de Taylor.

Comme je vais le démontré dans mon introduction, MacLennan omet de reconnaître que le mouvement nationaliste au Québec est le résultat de plus de deux-cents ans d'oppressions et de frustrations. Hugh MacLennan dépeint les séparatistes comme des individus dépourvus d'ambitions faisant partie d'un phénomène universel et psychologique. Dans son romans Two Solitudes comme dans Return of the Sphinx il s'emploit à diminuer tout personnage qui a une ferveur nationaliste. Il arrive jusqu'à les qualifier de facistes et d'anarchistes. Il est aussi très critique envers la religion catholique romaine. Je suis d'accord qu'au vingtième siècle le temps était venu pour les québécois de se soustraire à l'emprise de l'Église, mais je suis totalement en désaccord de la façon dont MacLennan semble prendre plaisir à ridiculiser la religion du peuple québécois, une religion qui n'est pas la sienne.

Les théories de ces phases cycliques prennent trop de place dans l'écriture de MacLennan ce qui en diminue considérablement la qualité. Dans Two Solitudes tout comme dans Return of the Sphinx il passe beaucoup trop de temps à faire de la philosophie sur des phénomènes universels, ce qui diminue grandement le dénouement de ses histoires et l'intérêt de ses lecteurs. MacLennan est un auteur didactique et dans ces romans il est constammant en train d'enseigner et commenter, qui en font deux ouvrages qui manquent de dévelopements. Le problème est que dans Two Solitudes autant que dans Return of the Sphinx on n'en vient à se demander si MacLennan est à écrire un roman de fiction où une étude philosophique.

En conclusion, je démontrerai qu'il ne réussit, aussi bien intentionné qu'il était, porté par son grand optimisme libéraliste, à présenter une solution tangible à la réunification des deux peuples fondateurs du Canada. Ces deux romans ne font que perpétuer les valeurs idéologiques de la culture dominatrice et majoritaire du Canada anglais.

Mots Clefs: Two Solitudes Patrist Matrist Historique Culturel

ABSTRACT

No one can dispute that Hugh MacLennan has played a major role on the Canadian literary scene. He was one of the first English Canadian writers of his generation to have used Canada as a background. His first novel, Barometer Rising has for its setting Halifax during the Second World War where we hear about the horrifying explosion of the Mont-Blanc in 1917. Coming from the hands of a writer who had personally experienced the events as a young boy, the renderings of the events are particularly interesting and vividly illustrated. This was a familiar setting for MacLennan, which shows that when he is on familiar ground he can create interesting work. However, in this thesis, I will show another side of the coin. When Hugh MacLennan decides to explore what has now become a symbol of our Canadian heritage, the tensions and relations between French and English Canadians, he is doomed from the start.

In this mémoire, I will examine two of his works in that regard Two Solitudes(1945), and Return of the Sphinx(1967). These novels are set around two important periods in Canada, the Conscription era of World War I to the beginning of World War II for Two Solitudes, and the *Revolution Tranquille* of the 60's for Return of the Sphinx. I will demonstrate that MacLennan was too far removed from the reality of the French Canadians of the time which makes for an unjust portrayal of

the society in Quebec. I am troubled by the cultural, social and political positions MacLennan presents in these two novels.

Because of his lack of first hand experience, being relatively new to the province of Quebec, in 1945 and never having take up the French language, having instead elected to study German as a secondary language, during his studies in Europe, the task he set for himself was gigantic. Even at the period he was writing Return of the Sphinx , as a member of the English elite community he was truly an outsider to his subject and setting.

MacLennan had been greatly influenced throughout his studies by Freudian theories deriving particularly from the classical Oedipus plays which affected his understanding of the world around him. Relationships between fathers and sons are an important theme of these Greek tragedies and they would become also a major concern for MacLennan throughout his writing. One important work that particularly influenced MacLennan in his writings and which I decided to use as an approach for this mémoire was Rattray Taylor's Sex In History.

Taylor's book joins Freudian psychology to a study of history. His theory advances that history is made up of a series of alternate cycles which he identifies as patrist and matrist periods. He explains that at certain periods throughout the ages there was a predominance of individuals who identified with the father, producing a society that was

authoritarian and restrictive in attitude and at other times a predominance of individuals who tended to model themselves on the mother, which provided a progressive and less restrictive society.

I believe that Taylor's theories are interesting and that some intervening periods in history like the Elizabethan period, a romantic matrist era, and the Victorian age, a patrist era, indicates that his universal approach of world history is of significance. However, I reject the manner in which MacLennan interprets them to his own benefit. As I will point out in my introduction, MacLennan fails to understand that the nationalist movements in Quebec were the culmination of two hundred years of frustration; MacLennan portrays the separatists as insignificant losers and as part of a universal psychic phenomina, and here he is faulty. In both Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx he greatly undermines any character who has a separatist fervour and goes as far as describing them as fascist and anarchist. He is also very critical of the Roman Catholic Church. I do agree with MacLennan that in the middle of the twentieth century the time had come for the people of this province to move away from the stronghold that the Church exercised in Quebec, but I do not agree with the condescending and ridiculing manner of portraying the Catholic Church, especially coming from an outsider like MacLennan.

MacLennan's cyclical phase theory impends on his writing. In both Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx he gives in too much to

philosophizing about world events, which removes us from the denouement of the stories. He is a didactic writer and his continuous teaching and commenting in the end make for two poorly developed novels. The problem is that in Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx one never knows if in fact MacLennan is writing fiction or non-fiction.

In the end I will demonstrate, that even with his well intended liberal optimism MacLennan offers no real solutions to the subject matter in both novels, which examine the possibility of the two founding nations in Canada to come together. The novels perpetuate the ideological values of the dominant English majority culture.

Key Words: Two Solitudes Matrist Patrist Cyclical Historical

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAM: Refer to Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life

CAMERON: "MacLennan's Sphinx: Critical Reception & Oedipal Origins

H.D.Q. : Histoire Du Québec

L.N.D.N. : La Naissance D'une Nation

T. S. : Two Solitudes

R.S. : Return of the Sphinx

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Introduction

The achievements of Hugh MacLennan as a writer have long been recognized here in Canada as well as internationally. No one can dispute the important role he has played on the Canadian literary scene. His second novel, Two Solitudes which won him his first of three Governor General awards for fiction, established him as the first important English Canadian writer to attempt a portrayal of Canada's national character. In this 1945 novel MacLennan sets out to explore, what has now become a symbol of our Canadian heritage, the tensions and relations between English and French Canadians. This is where my reservations with MacLennan's works begin.

Although I do share up to a certain extent some of the recognition as to the artistic style of the writer and acknowledge his contribution to the Canadian writing heritage, I am troubled by the cultural, social and political positions MacLennan presents in his writings. More specifically, I have difficulty with the didactic manner MacLennan utilizes to present his views on English-French and intra-French dissension in Quebec. I feel that he knew very little about French Quebec society at the time he was writing Two Solitudes. This mémoire will examine MacLennan's 1945 novel Two Solitudes in parallel to one of his later ones, Return of The Sphinx (1967). Both novels are set around two important periods for Quebec: the Conscription era of World War I, and the *Révolution tranquille* of the 60's. In respect to both of these periods, MacLennan fails to grasp many essential issues of the French Canadian reality in Quebec, as is evident in his dealing with sectors such as the Church, Business and Politics.

In these novels MacLennan continually tries to answer the question of what is wrong with the social order, in this case the growing sense of nationalism and socialism in Quebec. The problem here is not in the question posed but in the authoritarian manner in which MacLennan answers it:

> In Return of the Sphinx, MacLennan all but turns his back on the explanation that nationalism and socialism in Quebec are essentially political responses to two centuries of cultural oppression and economic exploitation. He chooses to dismiss the concrete "local origins" of Quebec's collective anger by attributing signs of social disorder to "a change in (the country's) personality" which is symptomatic of a "universal disease". (Macdonald 131)

Larry Macdonald presents here a general consensus among critics pertaining to MacLennan's understanding of world history. This is an interpretation, which many critics have argued, including Elspeth Cameron (MacLennan's biographer) one of the best-known authorities on the author, which reduces history to a simplistic form of psychological determinism. Before attempting a further analysis on the specifics of Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx in the second part of my mémoire, I will examine, as an approach, the manner in which MacLennan views history, as a series of cyclical psychological crises.

Introduction II: Oedipal origins: Neo-Freudian Perspectives

One aspect that is forever present throughout MacLennan's fiction and often appears as the central element of conflict in his novels, is the difficult relationship between fathers and sons. Elspeth Cameron has presented serious evidence in her writings (Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life) of the considerable impact that Freudian psychology had on the author. Many events from MacLennan's own Presbyterian upbringing in Nova Scotia under the influence of his authoritarian father had triggered at times some very strange behaviour:

> Although there is no direct evidence that MacLennan actually reread Freud after thinking over Taylor's book, there arose in his letters and essays at this time a fair number of references to Freudian psychology which suggests that at the very least, whatever MacLennan already knew about Freud was recalled. Almost at once, for example, he wrote the two versions of his leave-taking of his father when he went to Oxford, "On Living in a Cold Country" and "On Living with the Winter in the Country"(1961) in which he playfully "analysed" his own remarkable decision in Halifax between the ages of eleven and twenty-one to sleep outdoors in a tent, explaining it all as a manifestation of the Oedipus complex. (MacLennan's Sphinx 147-148)

Taylor's book referred to by Cameron here is G. Rattray Taylor's Sex in History "a work" she remarks "whose influence on MacLennan cannot be stressed too much"(146). This book, published in 1954, had a dramatic impact on MacLennan who had already assimilated many of the Neo-

Freudian theories advanced by Taylor during his classical studies at Oxford.

The book, as Cameron argues, revived MacLennan's enthusiasm for Freudian theories, which he had found in the great classics, Sophocles' Oedipus plays. These psychological plays denounce the rejection of patriarchal authority upon which the basis of our universe lies (150). Amongst his favourites, Oedipus at Colonus illustrates the process through the Oedipus complex, in which a child must reject his drive towards his mother to identify with the father. In Oedipus at Colonus the son must reject the obstacle he faces in this process, here the figure of Creon the brother of Jocasta, Oedipus' mother/wife. The child must resist aggression to restore Patriarchal forces (150). While Sophocles applies his Oedipal theories to a universal understanding of the world, Freud was later to apply them to the individual.

Taylor's Sex in History takes the Freudian perspectives back to a universal outlook on the world, in this case to a cyclical interpretation of history. I do not wish here to expound on these basic Freudian perspectives but rather to show the parallel between Taylor's Sex in History and the Oedipal theories. Taylor's study is where my interest is directed. This work I found useful in order to develop a critical approach for my thesis, because it was a work that led MacLennan to a reconsideration of Freud.

Part I - Psychological Determinism and the Cycles of History

Chapter I: G. Ratray Taylor: Sex in History.

Taylor's book applies Freudian psychology to a study of history. His theory advances that history is made up of a series of alternate cycles, which he identifies as patrist and matrist periods. He explains that at certain periods throughout the ages there was a predominance of individuals who identified with the father, producing a society that was authoritarian and restrictive in attitude, and, at other times, a predominance of individuals who tended to model themselves on the mother, which provided a progressive and less restrictive society. There are other periods that we could call "in between" where there is a more balanced form of child producing a moderate society, less rigid in its rules.

In his book Taylor also stresses the importance of not confusing his terms patrist and matrist with nineteenth-century theorists concerned with the existence of matriarchal and patriarchal periods (Taylor 312). In an appendix to the book entitled Theories of Matriarchy and Patriarchy, he presents Maine and Bachofen, two of those theorists, to show that his theories are not a repetitive re-examination of these phases. There are two main differences Taylor mentions between his theories and those of the nineteenth century. First, his theory is not one of social evolution like his predecessors:

> They sought to postulate a pattern of development which would be true for every society: they constituted attempts to set up a theory of "Social evolution" . . .Thus Sir Henry Maine maintained, in his Ancient Law (1861) that the patriarchal system of authority was the original and

> universal system of social organization, matriarchal societies being an unstable and degraded form occurring only where women outnumbered men. In contrast, Bachofen, in his Das Matterrecht, published in the same year, maintained that matriarchy was the original primitive stage of culture, everywhere preceding patriarchy. (312)

Taylor does not seek to promote the hierarchy of one period as opposed to the other. He shows societies moving freely between matrist and patrist phases at different times. Second, as he points out:

> The nineteenth-century theorists defined these concepts in terms of institutions: a patriarchy was a society where power was in the hands of men, property descended through the male line, the deity was served by priests, not priestesses, and so on. In contrast, matrism and patrism are defined in terms of attitudes (313).

Taylor's book takes us back to a series of alternating stages. For instance, the pre-Christian Celts are shown to be permissive about sex and to have accorded a high status to women. This period, of course, he understood as matrist. The medieval ages, a patrist era, had a strict moral system and lowered the status of women. Since father identifiers are generally authoritarian they have a stronger desire to impose their rule on others. Matrism promotes freedom of choice and more of a live and let live attitude. Taylor shows how Christianity imposed its high moral attitudes on a barbarous and permissive society:

> . . . these standards which they proclaimed were not in

> fact part of early Christian teaching, but were introduced into it some hundreds of years after the death of Christ; and the ecclesiastics who devised these codes were, for the most part, not dispassionate philosophers but rather haggard neurotics tormented by a quite obsessive horror of sex(72).

Moving on through the years in western history we continue to notice these alternating periods. For example, Elizabethan England a matrist period was followed by a patrist reaction, Calvinism. Romanticism was followed by the restrictive Victorian age. The sex in power does not constitute a rule for defining matrist or patrist periods. It is the attitude of an era that is the determining factor. As I will later show when I get back to MacLennan, in Canada the modern matrist reaction against the Victorian era came much later than in Europe. Taylor's list of characteristics between the two periods provides a better means of understanding the predominant attitudes and differences among them:

Patrist	**Matrist**
1. Restrictive attitude to sex.	1. Permissive attitude to sex.
2. Limitation of freedom for women.	2. Freedom for women.
3. Women seen as inferior, sinful.	3. Women accorded high status.
4. Chastity more valued than welfare.	4. Welfare more valued than chastity.
5. Politically authoritarian	5. Politically democratic.

6. Conservative against innovation.	6. Progressive: revolutionary.
7. Distrust of research, inquiry.	7. No distrust of research.
8. Inhibition, fear of spontaneity.	8. Spontaneity: exhibition.
9. Deep fear of homosexuality.	9. Deep fear of incest.
10. Sex differences maximized (dress).	10. Sex differences minimized.
11. Asceticism, fear of pleasure.	11. Hedonism, pleasure welcomed.
12. Father religion.	12. Mother religion(83).

As Taylor mentions: "It must be stressed that these two patterns are extremes: when society is changing from patrism to matrism, or vice versa, there will be an intervening period in which the patterns will become confused"(83).

Both Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx provide examples of these cycles of history. Although Taylor's book only appeared in 1953 and was not read by MacLennan until 1960, as he was beginning to set the pattern for Return of the Sphinx, it is evident that the theories advanced by Taylor also joined MacLennan's own understanding of the universe painted in Two Solitudes. Taylor's book reinforced concepts MacLennan had already assimilated. In these novels, MacLennan clearly shows his attachment to Taylor's theory and which phase he favors, the authoritarian patrist one. The problem is that he organizes the cycle to conform to his own personal views. While he rejects any

defiance towards paternal and political authority and severely portrays any characters in the two novels who do so, he approves without restraint the ones who criticize and oppose the authority of the church. In Quebec, of course, this authority was the Roman Catholic Church.

This severe rejection of a religious doctrine from an outsider like MacLennan demonstrates how limited is his understanding of the French Canadian society in Quebec. Since at the turn of the century, the Roman Catholic Church had a strong hold on all elements in the province, especially in the setting of Two Solitudes, this misinterpretation will also affect the political and economic aspects portrayed by the author. Perhaps, the problem originates from MacLennan's ambivalence towards his own puritan background.

Chapter II: MacLennan and the Victorian Myth.

In his perspective on Hugh MacLennan's Return of the Sphinx Joseph Zezulka presents Dave Godfrey's observations on a difference between American and Canadian writing: "Dave Godfrey has observed that for the American writer the holy city is the individual himself whereas for the Canadian writer it is still a holy city"(Zezulka 121). This is characteristic of MacLennan's liberal optimism that an individual or group of people could act on the universe positively, thus making our world better with progress, while Americans see the progress of the individual as the holy city itself. Godfrey presents Whitman, Thoreau and Mailer as examples of the American tradition and Hugh MacLennan as the Canadian one(121).

This tendency is evident from MacLennan's earliest fiction. His characters often exert a very high degree of national pride and see their country (Canada) as playing a vital role in the history of the world. In Two Solitudes Heather and Paul are representatives of this Victorian naiveté, which parallels MacLennan's liberal optimistic beliefs. This premise that views man as basically good and getting better had considerably died down in Europe after two World Wars fought on their soil; however, here in Canada, the liberal myth was still going strong until the end of the Second World War. Writers such as MacLennan were still promoting this mythical hope for civilization.

I have already mentioned how much MacLennan's Presbyterian upbringing had affected him in his relationship with his father. Sleeping outside in a tent year round in the harsh Nova Scotian weather suggests deeper motivations other then simply to prove his male

endurance to his father. It shows the stronghold that Puritanism exerted on him. Although it is important to distinguish the Presbyterian faith from the harsh guilt-ridden conscience of extreme Calvinism, the doctrine did develop from the same roots. The Lutheran approach, which is closer to MacLennan's view, is unlike Calvinism, in that it believes in man's ability to redeem himself through his actions. Patricia A. Morley in a section of The Immoral Moralists reflects on MacLennan's ambivalence towards Puritanism: "MacLennan has the Puritan intensity with regard to moral problems. He has retained the Puritan idealism and moral earnestness without the Christian dogma"(35). The Puritan idealism Morley refers to here is the "strong intellectual emphasis" characterizing historic Puritanism: "MacLennan shares this humanist tradition with the seventeenth-century Puritan. The humanist tradition of the Puritan scholars encouraged individualism as well as rationalism, and this too is one of MacLennan's ideals"(34).

Throughout his writing MacLennan rejects the ultra conservative aspects of Puritanism. This is noticeable in his satirical portrayal of Huntley McQueen or Sir Rupert Irons, the two Presbyterian business financiers of Two Solitudes. MacLennan in this novel attacks all forms of strict Puritanism, whether on the Protestant or Catholic side. The conflict of Two Solitudes set in the small parish of Saint-Marc-des-Érables opposes those two forms of old puritan religion, Catholic Jansenism and Protestant Calvinism, which MacLennan understands to be the central problem of division amongst Canadians. It is important to remark that while Calvinism values positively the accumulation of

materialistic wealth and glorifies financiers and businessmen like McQueen and Irons, the Roman Catholics completely reject those economic aspects.

Irons and McQueen are stereotypical portrayals of the English Puritan side of the solitude. In Two Solitudes MacLennan establishes early on through McQueen the condescending attitude of the Montreal Presbyterian businessman: "Being an Ontario Presbyterian, he had been reared with the notion that French-Canadians were an inferior people, first because they were Roman Catholic, second because they were French"(T.S.14). This stereotypical attitude denounced by MacLennan brings nothing new to the Canadian debate, but the author continues to supply them even through minor characters, as in the conversation Athanase Tallard overhears on the train back to St-Marc des Érables between two rednecks from Ontario: "This whole province is hopeless,' one of them was saying as he swept the scene through the windows with his hand. 'They can't think for themselves and never could and never will"(T.S. 77).

Athanase Tallard is the French Canadian protagonist in the first part of Two Solitudes, landowner and member of the Parliament who wants to bring St-Marc des Érables into the modern world by uniting with McQueen to establish a textile industry in the small parish. He represents the middleman between the two opposing forces to this enterprise. On one side, there is Father Beaubien the authoritarian Catholic priest who wants to maintain control over his parish, and, on the other side, the Anglo-Canadian businessman McQueen.

In her theological critique of MacLennan's fiction Barbara Pell remarks how Athanase Tallard's character parallels the author's own existential crisis: "For MacLennan, Athanase clearly represents the human condition searching for meaning and purpose to counteract the terrifying meaninglessness of man's existential plight" (Pell 27). Tallard's greatest opposition in bringing his small parish into the modern times comes from Father Beaubien, the patriarchal figure depicted as one of the villains in Two Solitudes. MacLennan's antipathy towards the Roman Catholic priest is evident from the beginning through his ridicule and again conventional stereotypical portrayal:

> The Priest passed over the rustling leaves onto the brown, packed-gravel area before the church. He stood still with his powerful hands folded under his pendant cross, his eyes lifted to the twin spires. He could not look at his church often enough. Sometimes at night during the past week he had wakened after a few hours' sleep and dressed himself and gone out of the presbytery, to cross to the new building(T.S. 4).

The physical description of Father Beaubien by MacLennan is also condescending. Their is little respect in the eye of the writer for the priest, whom he depicts as having attributes more befitting a poor land worker than a servant of God:

> The cheekbones and nose were very large, the mouth wide and straight, the eyes seemingly magnified by the thick lenses of the glasses he wore. Two deep lines, like a pair of

> dividers, cut the firm flesh of his face above the flanges of the nose to the corners of the lips. His hair was black and closely cropped, somewhat like a monk's cap. His face was brown; his hands too were brown, and big-boned, and his posture gave the suggestion that under the 'soutane' the bones were all big, the shoulders strong as a ploughman's (T.S. 3).

As we understand in those years brown complexion was associated with agricultural workers who were constantly outdoors in the sun and wind. It was a skin complexion associated with the lower rural class. MacLennan is quick to ridicule the adoritive principles of the Roman Catholic religion by showing the priest's extravagant love of saintly objects:

> But he also required a new bell. The one he had was adequate when there was no wind, but when the wind blew against the sound the angelus was almost inaudible at the fringes of the parish. He also wanted more images for the chapel, and he wanted particularly an image for the gravelled area in front of the church. He saw clearly in his mind what it should be: a bronze figure of Christ with outstretched arms, about twenty-five feet high, with a halo of coloured lights above the head (T.S.5).

After establishing the rough physical attributes of Father Beaubien MacLennan introduces us to an unpatriotic, self centered individual:

> Thinking about the war, Father Beaubien's dark face set into a heavy frown. So far Saint-Marc had kept fairly clear

> of it. Only one member of the parish had volunteered, and he was on a spree in Trois Rivieres when the recruiting agents got him. He was no good anyway, always missing masses (T.S. 5).

MacLennan is quick to establish where the priest stands on the conscription issue. As we will later see with the characterization of Athanase's eldest son Marius, those who defy authority are seriously condemned by the writer: "He thought of the war and the English with the same bitterness. How could French-Canadians—the only real Canadians—feel loyalty to a people who had conquered and humiliated them, and were Protestant anyway?"(T.S. 6). I will further discuss this use of a type of colonizing language on the part of MacLennan in the third chapter entitled "Language of the Other." Maclennan's stereotypical characterizations often seem from another era than the modern period he is writing in.

When Two Solitudes was published in 1945, Modernism and the Bloomsbury group were more than a vast ocean away for MacLennan still trying to find Bunyan's holy city. Two decades later in regards to Return of the Sphinx Zezulka remarks:

> It is true that by the time MacLennan came to write Return of the Sphinx, his vision of Canada as "the central arch which united the new order" had lost some of its lustre, but even in this novel, which not a few critics regard as the dying flame of the earlier vision, the vision does not entirely fade away (121).

In this novel the protagonist Daniel Ainslie is writing a book entitled "Death of a Victorian" a parallel to this dying flame in MacLennan Zezulka is pointing out. At the turn of the seventies MacLennan's Victorian liberal optimism is also in its last stage.

Zezulka in his perspective also discusses MacLennan's cyclical views of understanding world history as he quotes the author from one of his essays at the close of the sixties: "we are now in the last stages of a dramatic fin de siècle, and . . . the cycle that is ending is the matrist-permissive one, together with its archaic faith in politics based not upon biological science, but upon the naive rationalism we inherited from the eighteenth century"(125). From this same essay MacLennan's following remark certainly clears up any doubt as to which side of the phase he stands on:

> The matrist triumph has been purchased at a price which has only recently become apparent. The price has been something mankind has never been able to endure for even a short length of time without becoming hysterical if not destructively insane. That something is the validity of the father, the idea accepted throughout human history that the word 'father' implies trust, reliability, a certain valiancy, a deserved authority and continued respect when he is old (126).

In Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx this rejection of paternal authority is viewed very negatively through the eyes of MacLennan. Both novels explore this clash between generations as we move from a repressive to a permissive era.

Chapter III: From Patrist to Matrist

When Two Solitudes opens in 1917, Canada is still under the authoritarian forces of the Victorian age. Well embarked in the First World War the country is under tremendous stress, being caught in the middle of one of its most memorable confrontations between French and English Canadians, the conscription crisis. As a Member of Parliament Athanase Tallard is trying to convince the province of Quebec to agree to the war effort rather than have a Conscription law imposed on them. As MacLennan sets the scene: "Canadian troops under a British Commander-in-Chief were dying like flies in the mud before Passchendaele"(T.S.20), and the French Canadian press rejected any involvement in what was then perceived as a British War. A vote on the Canadian involvement, with the English side much in favour of supporting the mother country, would become a no contest. Tallard's peculiar position in the conflict is accentuated when his eldest son Marius, a French Canadian nationalist activist opposed to his compromising views, runs away to free himself from his military duties:

> Now Marius felt he had absolute proof that his father was also a liar. He lacked the courage to say openly what he believed, escaping the consequences of his heresy by rendering lip service and going to church occasionally and keeping a pew. His political actions proved him a traitor to his race (T.S. 35).

It is clear that MacLennan holds little sympathy for the dissident son and, as is customary in his fiction, characters who defy authority are often portrayed in a very negative fashion:

> His face carried a strained, tense expression, and his hair kept falling over his narrow forehead every time he bent his head forward. His face was thin and pale, with high cheekbones underlined by shadows. His body was slender and still pliable with adolescence. His eyes were large, like his father's, but without any humour, and as he strained to read in the bad light a sharp line formed between his brows and shot up to his forehead where a single vein was visible under the skin (T.S. 34).

Of all the characters encountered in MacLennan's works none of them seem to have been more severely depicted than Marius Tallard, Athanase's dissident son. He is the symbol of a defiance of authority that drives MacLennan mad. He is the dangerous sort of individual who will shift an orderly patrist society into a state of insecurity and disorder which is the writer's worst fear. In the eyes of MacLennan, Marius at the turn of the century is an early breed Nationalist, a crazed separatist similar to the revolutionary characters of the sixties we will encounter in Return of the Sphinx, Daniel Ainslie and Latendresse. Marius is labelled early on by MacLennan as a deranged young man with no sense of respect for his father or his country. Also, like all good old French Canadian villains, his anti-English sentiments are brought forward without nuance:

> Emilie's stupidity hurt Marius, but it also proved where his own future lay. There were so many of his people who couldn't understand what was obvious to him. Plenty of

> English and French-Canadians worked together in stores and in factories and got on with each other. He didn't like it; he would teach his people to hate the English the way he hated them. The fact that he knew no English-Canadians well except his stepmother didn't enter his thoughts (T.S.53).

MacLennan is quick in putting Quebec nationalism in binary opposition to English Canadians. The old French versus English. For the author there cannot be a middle ground. MacLennan does not hesitate to add cowardliness to the already well depicted Marius in a scene were he describes his father:

> "He thinks the war's wonderful. Why not? He's safe. He's too old to be killed. Anyway, he sold out to the English long ago' . . . Proud! My God! I have to apologize to everyone I know every time I see his name in the papers! I have to say, "sure, I know my father sells us down the river to the English, but I'm not like him. I'm not fooled by him." Me—having to say that to my friends about my own father!"(T.S.39).

It is surprising to notice that defiance towards paternal authority seems to be strictly prohibited in the eyes of MacLennan. This is evident especially after reading Cameron's biographical work on the writer as she presents his own difficulties in dealing with his authoritarian father: "Calvinism . . . was bad with me when I was young.' His 'rebellions' against his father's strictness and perfectionism—the invention of Bo-Clee-Clee, his plans to become a miner—were early signs that all would

not be smooth sailing"(Cam 7). Cameron stresses the traumatic effects on the young Hugh in dealing with his paternalistic authoritarian figure and how he managed to eliminate some of his built in frustrations through sports: "In fact, as he later realized, he could act out on the tennis court all his pent-up anger against his father for working him so hard and expecting so much of him"(Cam 17).

Perhaps MacLennan's guilty Calvinistic conscience explains in some form the rejection of characters such as Marius. As he had himself endured his early years under the influence of his severe paternalistic father and made something good out of it, he dismisses characters who do not succumb to authority.

Marius is an activist, a French Canadian nationalist who is determined to fight the imperialist dominant class. He is against conscription and against the establishment of a textile industry in his small community of St-Marc des Érables. He joins an activist movement alongside an old politician named Marchand in which he will make his oratorical skills contribute to denounce the elite English decision makers. He is the one chosen by the University debating team to deliver a speech at an anti-conscription rally:

> Marius was now launched on his peroration. 'Here in Quebec,' he was saying, 'beside our own great river, we French-Canadians are at home. We say it once. We say it twice. We will always say it. Perhaps if we say it enough the English will understand us. We are at home here with our families and our faith. We don't ask much. All we have ever

> asked is to be let alone. When we say 'Down with Conscription' we do not say we fear to fight. We say 'Down with foreign tyranny and interference!' (T.S. 46).

Marius could have been an interesting character in the development of Two Solitudes. Although he surely did not represent the perfect and orderly individual in a sound patrist society, which MacLennan champions, it would have certainly been interesting to hear more from that side of the fence. Instead MacLennan chooses to dismiss him as a schizophrenic insignificant loser. In the latter part of the novel Marius ends up poor and broken somewhere in Montreal:

> Marius managed to work in the evenings. Newspapers, periodicals, religious tracts, political pamphlets and notes for political speeches were stacked on the window-sill. It was easy to see that Marius had a poor law practice. But with him, it was just another cause for grievance and he seemed quite unable to understand the reason. He was confident that he understood French-Canada better than anyone else, without ever having accepted the fact that at least up to the present its basic characteristic had been common sense. Nowhere on earth was a bad lawyer spotted more quickly than in Quebec (T.S. 373).

MacLennan uses Marius Tallard only to present a negative side of the nationalistic fervour in Quebec. If you follow the writer's position you can only lose by swimming against the current. Be a good boy, respect authority and walk straight—this is MacLennan's way, the only way! Marius finally becomes nothing other in Two Solitudes than an obvious

example of literary character assassination. In dismissing an important character such as Marius, relegated to the French side of the equation in the story, MacLennan is going against the current of his own earlier objectives for his novel: "Thus to write of the French-English split, so evident around him, was to strike at the heart of the nation's deepest problem"(Cam 167). Unfortunately the old liberal views of the writer surface and take control of what might have been an interesting debate had he not rejected so categorically a character such as Marius: "Presumably he was attempting to realize in the novel now under way the theory he had earlier expressed that Canada's 'national schizophrenia' might well symbolize the 'international breakdown' in the world at large"(Cam167). By disregarding a potential primary character like the nationalist Marius and failing to give him more depth, MacLennan only manages to display his own bias.

Contrary to MacLennan's portrayal, Marius is not a simple-minded separatist. He is a university student, which at the turn of the century is not common in French-Canada, to say the least. Like every young man who came of age at that period he is reacting to environmental forces around him. For him, French Canadians should not be forced to fight the British war and although he reacts perhaps exuberantly against his father's opposing views, and although MacLennan downplays him, he remains very credible.

Marius has inherited the puritanical Catholic dimension from his mother, Athanase's very pious first wife Marie-Adèle. It is with no surprise that we find him in agreement with Father Beaubien's views

and opposed to the establishment of a textile industry by a Scots-Canadian businessman in the parish:

> Every muscle in Marius' body was tense, waiting and listening. A new wave of anger was mounting through him. Turn a perfect old parish like Saint-Marc into a factory town! His imagination began to construct a finished picture, the deed accomplished. He saw chimneys spilling black smoke over the fields, the village cluttered with new, raw cheap houses and cheap people imported for labour. The row of freshly-painted cottages where the English managers lived like lords of creation would be set apart from the rest of the village. A second conquest! First the English took over the government of your country. Then they used you for cheap labour in their factories (T.S. 44).

Here MacLennan is genuine in letting his character take life. Unfortunnately he does not let the novel run 'organically' as he had previously planned before embarking on Two Solitudes. His concept of "organic growth" is shown here in a passage from an article by the writer entitled, 'How Do I Write':

> Somehow, the novelist must turn his mind into a seminary where organic growth may occur; then he must distinguish the tendencies of the growth and ultimately provide a proper form to hold it. He must therefore be prepared to throw aside any of his preconceived ideas of plot, character and general views of life if the growth of his book runs contrary to them'(Cam168).

It is very obvious that MacLennan did not respect his own rule. MacLennan's great nationalistic endeavour disqualified him from remaining objective towards a character such as Marius and he finally relegates him to a secondary role in the novel. MacLennan sets the scene properly at the beginning with many potential conflicts on the horizon. Tallard versus Beaubien, Tallard versus Marius, McQueen versus Parish. But finally, after the death of Athanase in the first part, MacLennan chooses to embark on a long, never-ending odyssey of Paul Tallard's quest to become a writer. Paul Tallard, born of an Irish-born mother and educated in English schools, becomes the symbol of French Canada.

In Return of the Sphinx, Alan Ainslie, the Minister of Natural Affairs, is also caught between his liberal ideals for his country and the separatist crisis in Quebec of the late 60's, a crisis in which his son Daniel is an activist. This novel is MacLennan's sequel to Each Man's Son, where we encounter Alan as a child being moulded by the intellectual liberal ideology of his adoptive father Dr Ainslie. In this earlier novel set in Cape Breton, a part of Nova Scotia settled by Scottish Highlanders, the inhabitants are still living under the curse of Calvinism. The action is set in the small town of Broughton where the men are working in mines, exploited physically and spiritually. They

release their guilty consciences in drunken violent brawls on Saturday nights and crawl back to church on Sunday in repentance. Archie MacNeil, who is actually Alan Ainslie's natural father, manages to escape this life in the mines by becoming a professional boxer. He returns home after two years destroyed by an unsuccessful career, only to find his wife in the arms of another man, which results in a violent outburst in which his wife, the lover, and he himself will find death. Dr Daniel Ainslie will adopt Alan and transmit to him his guilty conscience. Daniel Ainslie prides himself on believing he has escaped the ancient curse of Calvinism but can only resolve to work to escape his own fears of love and sexuality. Raised in this narrow-minded community, Alan has inherited his father's humanistic view that the individual rather than the masses can change the world.

In Return of The Sphinx Alan is on a search to find that "holy city" Zezulka is referring to in his article. He has devoted his entire political career to finding a coherent solution to the Canadian cultural problem in order to bring his divided country into the modern age. For Ainslie, the crisis facing his country just prior to the celebration of its centennial year is quite similar to the one afflicting Athanase Tallard in Two Solitudes. As in the case of Tallard, Ainslie's son is directly involved in the crisis. Ainslie's positive views towards science and technology, reflecting those of MacLennan, have been severely shaken by

the violent outburst of two World Wars and the involvement of his own son in the destructive revolutionary movement of the sixties:

> The Time he was living in was too fantastic for anyone to look it square in the eye. Hurricane weather but no hurricanes. Nuclear confrontations with serious-minded men seriously wondering whether there would be even a blade of grass left on the planet inside a few years, but so far no bombs. Full employment but no security. Knowledge in unknowable quantities but never so many people telling each other they could not understand. All the ideas that had guided and inspired Ainslie's life—socialism, education, the faith that science and prosperity would improve man's life, even the new psychology which everyone so glibly talked—the best he could say now of any of these hopes was that they had foundered in the ancient ocean of human nature (R.S. 74-75).

This self introspection from Ainslie the day after an important riot in Montreal by separatist partisans is another blow to the cultural minister who feels he has been let down by his parliamentary colleagues. He had already presented his views on the situation in Quebec in trying, unsuccessfully, to get Prime Minister Bulstrode (based on Diefenbaker) and Ottawa to agree to a bill declaring bilingual civil rights:

> They talked, they debated, they planned, they went electioneering, they docketed, classified and appointed commissions of inquiry. So far as he himself was concerned, he knew he was never seriously listened to by any of his colleagues when he repeated his storm warnings

> and implored them to do something before the storm broke (R.S.75).

MacLennan's allusion to the storm facing the country directly reflects Taylor's views: A matrist reaction to the overly aggressive patrist world which had resulted in two world wars. As Cameron has shown throughout her biography, MacLennan often blamed the outburst of the sixties on a reaction against science and technology. MacLennan is trying to explain the events in Quebec as a universal phenomena:

> By 1960 he had turned once again to his old complaint about the misuse of modern technology as an explanation for the dissolution of humanist principles in education and for the psychological changes now becoming apparent (CAM 313).

In the novel Ainslie compares the storm he is facing to a hurricane experience he encountered in the Caribbean while working on a freight ship during his college years:

> Dawn came finally and revealed a sea like the Rocky Mountains in delirium tremens with spume blowing through the twisted valleys like snow . . . This had been years ago and it was perhaps fanciful to compare his sensations here in Ottawa to his sensations before that storm broke (R.S. 74).

The storm Ainslie is referring to is the violent outbursts in Montréal during the sixties, such as the FLQ (Front de Libération du Québec) bombings. As I will explore in the next chapter, MacLennan's treatment

of Quebec's growing sense of nationalism in Two Solitudes, and particularly during the sixties in Return of the Sphinx, is biased and authoritarian.

He severely dismisses any character who goes against the current and has strong nationalistic feelings for Quebec. In Two Solitudes it is Marius, Athanase's eldest son, and, in Return of the Sphinx, it is Latendresse, a political activist who influences Alan Ainslie's son Daniel.

In Return of The Sphinx Alan's son Daniel may not have received the same hostile treatment from the writer, but he certainly generates no great sympathies towards him either. MacLennan explains the actions of young men like Daniel, who involved themselves in underground separatist cells, through his omni present, universal psychic theories: "This 'psychic crisis,' as he called it, was taking place primarily among the young and was becoming evident in one university after another (CAM 312). As Cameron demonstrates in a letter to John Gray, a publisher friend, MacLennan was unable to acknowledge the legitimacy of the events in Quebec other than through Taylor's theory of social evolution: "The world has become very queer to me lately, as I suppose it has to everyone our age. The change--in rapidity and degree--seems akin to the change in England between 1850 and 1870, though this is of a different kind . . .(CAM 317).

MacLennan downplays the revolutionary role of Ainslie's son Daniel in the story, by constantly bringing the reader back to universal and psychological phenomena. We hear about Daniel's difficulty in dealing with the death of his mother killed in a futile accident by an

overloaded, out-of-control truck in Westmount. We see him in a mother-child affair with Marielle, his girlfriend's mother. The oedipal theories are very clearly set in motion by MacLennan to explain the boy's actions.

In her very introspective biographical study, Cameron presents a letter MacLennan had written to Gray during the course of writing the Sphinx in which he explains the concept of Daniel: "The tragedy of the western world today can be expressed pretty simply—the inability of the young men to identify with a father" (CAM 326). Alan Ainslie blames the gap between him and his son Daniel on his frequent absences from home:

> He's always lived a lot inside of himself. Then there were all those years I was in New York with the U.N. That's no city for a growing boy, so I arranged for him to go to the same classical college his grandfather had gone to. They give a fine education but it's also a religious education and for a time Daniel was very religious and that was another thing (R.S 95-96).

This is also a parallel to the conflict between Athanase and his son Marius, who in the absence of his father, has been raised by pious Marie-Adèle and received a very religious education. Only this time MacLennan does not use the religious Jansenism doctrine to work against Daniel. In this case, he uses Daniel as a demonstration of how the young people of Quebec are turning away from religion in the sixties and on that matter he is quite realistic. Also, in contrast to Marius, Daniel is depicted as physically attractive and appealing to women. His

communication skills can also be compared in some manner to the oratorical skills of Marius in Two Solitudes.

In Return of The Sphinx Daniel is the moderator of a weekly youth television show on Radio-Canada called 'La Jeunesse Parle,' where he interviews personalities, mostly concerning the problems in Quebec. Although MacLennan is pretty easy on Daniel he does make him seem a little naive and inexperienced. The writer however, is not quite so easy with Latendresse, the leader of the movement that calls itself le 'Ralliement a Mort,' portraying him as a spoiled priest.

Latendresse is certainly a character who could have provided more vivacity to this superficial novel. MacLennan had the possibility of developing certain characters; however, he always falls short of doing so. Instead of using a character like Latendresse to go into the underground circles of the separatist's militant movement, he chooses to present him simply as a lunatic schizophrenic of no great importance. The insignificant interview he gives on Daniel's television show is a direct attempt by MacLennan to undermine the revolutionary. During the interview, every time that Latendresse uses the word separatist, MacLennan stops to give a lame physical description of the character: "There is only one way to heal the wound in our race and that is by becoming independent. (A slow, grim, grudging smile appeared for an instant on Latendresse's pinched face.)"(R.S.129). Towards the end of an interview when Daniel poses a question asking if independence can be achieved without bloodshed, the response again is dramatized in a very ominous fashion by MacLennan: "(A long pause, then the glacially

expressionless eyes stared out from the screen.) In the entire history of the human race, has that ever happened? Now—have I made myself clear, or not?"(R.S. 131).

Both in Two Solitudes and here in Return of The Sphinx, MacLennan physically describes separatists as weak and fragile individuals almost to the point of sickness; this he did with Marius and he also does it for his villain Latendresse: "Daniel watched Latendresse moving away and thought how thin he was, how meagre his physique, how narrow his shoulders, how heroic he was to have endured with so few advantages"(R.S.132).

MacLennan is at great fault to downplay the separatist characters. He makes them all look, act, and talk like dummies. He never really gets inside the characters; he remains too superficial. The climax of the story is greatly undermined when he elects to have Daniel caught like a foolish little boy before the bomb he is carrying in his car is set off. Unfortunately, by characterizing Daniel and Marius as insignificant 'voyous', MacLennan misses a chance to develop two characters who could have greatly contributed to his novels.

MacLennan is denouncing the events from his high seat as a member of the English elite class. Ironically, he is actually part of the problem the French Canadians were dealing with at the time. Since MacLennan is attempting a portrayal of Quebec in the two novels in his dealings with church, culture, and business, it is important to set the record straight. MacLennan, in portraying the society of Quebec, notably the growing sense of nationalism in French Canada from World

War 1 to the sixties, omits a number of important issues when discarding the nationalism simply as social disorder.

When discussing specific events of a period you can no longer hide behind the word fiction in order to advance false pretences. MacLennan is taking certain events like the F.L.Q. bombings in the sixties and turning them to his advantage to advance his theory of historical cycles. I can appreciate Taylor's theories and I believe in some ways they can be applied to certain events in Quebec during the twentieth century; however, I do not agree with the manner in which MacLennan interprets the events. My next chapter, before getting back to the contents of the two novels, will be dealing with that reality, the reasons behind this growing sense of nationalism in Quebec from World War 1 to the end of the sixties, the time setting of the two novels.

Part II- History and Nationalism in Quebec

Chapter IV: Quebec a Colonial State

André d'Allemagne, one of the founders of the RIN (Rassemblement pour l'indépendence nationale), published in 1966 Le Colonialisme au Québec. He writes that the source of the colonial state is the defeat of 1760 on the Plains of Abraham (H.D.Q. 143). In 1964 in La revue Parti pris, Paul Chamberland had written: " la société canadiennne-française fut toujours une société mineure, infériorisée; une société coloniale ou le rôle du colonisateur fut joué d'abord par L'Angleterre, puis par le Canada anglais"(H.D.Q. 143). Although I am mostly concerned with the period in Quebec of World War 1 from Two Solitudes to the end of the sixties of Return of the Sphinx, I believe a brief look at certain historical events from the past is of significance.

In the introductory page of my thesis I quoted Larry Macdonald who describes how MacLennan dismisses the events of the sixties in Quebec as psychological disorder, forgetting more than two hundred years of oppression of the conquered French state. As defenders of New Historicism would argue (an approach I find particularly interesting), a look into the past often helps to paint a clearer picture of our present state. It is with this intention that I allow myself to indulge in a brief, but I believe, important historical survey.

i) The Conquest

After the Treaty of Paris, London, taking control of the territory of what is now known as Quebec, instituted an extensive policy of assimilation designed, on one hand, to anglicize, through language, the

institutions and customs of French Canadians, and, on the other hand to convert them to Protestantism. This assimilation was going to be rendered possible through a campaign of vast immigration to the Quebec territory. However, few British subjects chose the new territory. In fact between 1760 and 1776, less than two thousand British subjects moved to the territory of Quebec. The extensive birth rate of the French Canadian population, who had retreated to the values of the land under a dominant Roman Catholic clergy, seconded by intellectuals who pursued a politic of "resistance de la langue," brought the British government to face reality and soften its position by proclaiming a series of measures. The Quebec Act of 1774 reinstituted French civil rights and especially the seigniorial regime governing the French Canadians in the rural areas; through this Act of 1774, the French Canadians were able to conserve their integrity.

ii) The Rebellion of 1837

The politics of assimilation promoted by the British government were still very much present and had led to conceding parliamentary institutions to Lower Canada (Quebec). In the eyes of the leaders from London, this would become a means of integration into the superior values of the British institutional system. Thus, dividing Upper Canada (Ontario) from Lower Canada (Quebec), gave a chance to French Canadians to become a majority in their parliament. It permitted an elite bourgeois class formed of doctors, lawyers, and notaries to practise

their parliamentary games.

By 1820 however, a certain group under Louis Joseph Papineau, very much aware of the minimal extent of their power in the Lower Canada assembly, moved towards a separation of Church and State based on the American republic; they formed a new political party, les Patriotes. Protest also mounted among merchants at the time against the extensive dominance of the economic activities in the hands of the English by opposing the construction of the St Lawrence seaway. In fact they viewed the British government as the bully preventing the emancipation of Quebec. A call to arms totally opposed by the church failed to ignite the general population, and the small group of revolutionaries was easily defeated. The threat was taken seriously, however, and Lord Durham was sent by London to re-establish peace. He described the world of Lower Canada as a people without history and retrograde; he felt it needed to be saved through assimilation, and he recommended the union of both Canadas.

iii) An Autarchian Society 1840-1940

The clergy, who had stood by the British government during the insurrection by condemning its participants, was viewed positively by London, which acknowledged the significant role it had played in maintaining order in Lower Canada. With the hopes of nationalism fading, the church maintained a strong grip on French Canadians much to the liking of the British for almost a century. The Constitution of

1867, in view of an American invasion, confirmed the Church's power over a rural French Roman Catholic world and the French nationalist elites now forming a majority in the province of Quebec concentrated on the perseveration and promotion of the French language. With the economic and business aspect controlled by the dominating Empire, the church in Quebec has to be recognized for the immense role it played to keep a defeated people alive. Without the church, there would be no French Canadian state in North America today.

When Hugh MacLennan fails to understand this by ridiculing Father Beaubien in Two Solitudes, he very much insults the basis of French Canadian roots. I agree that at the turn of the twentieth century the time had come to separate state and church, because the latter hindered the economic growth of Quebec, but the Autarchic regime established and controlled by the Roman Catholic church, a self sufficient society dominated by the virtues of land and family, had contributed greatly to establishing the basis for a nation. Gérard Filteau in his historical study, La Naissance d'une Nation, wrote in 1755:

> C'est la nature souvent hostile—le Canada est une forêt perpétuelle, . . . le long hiver qui peuvent
> expliquer l'isolement du monde rural québécois.
> Isolement générateur de vie au ralenti durant la période de poudrerie mais aussi protecteur face aux influences étrangère(L.N.D.N. 135)

In due time, evolution and the time for change would come, a time for French Canadiens to play a greater role in this country.

iiii) Towards an industrial society

There are certain economic realities that explain in part the difficulty Quebec experienced in embarking on the industrial revolution. The absence of coal on it's territory, federal duties, and the immense technical support rendered from the British government to English Canada can be regarded as some of the reasons, but it is L'abbé Lionel Groulx who perhaps gave the best one of all when he wrote in an article in "L'action francaise" in 1920: "que la vraie cause des difficultés économiques des francophones réside dans un manque de confiance en nous-mêmes;" a mentality of defeated people that tend toward abdication and resignation(Quoted in H.D.Q. p.78).

At the turn of the century a federal poll showed a total of 609,925 illiterates in the province, thus 40.98% compared to 454,353 or 18.13% in Ontario. In his work L'Indépendance économique du Canada francais (1906), Eroll Bouchette mentions that the low degree of education was the main obstruction to the evolution of the province. Instead of constantly imputing the blame on the other, the English, for their difficulties, French Canadian intellectuals such as Bouchette, praised English Canadian institutions: "Admirons ces grandes universités où, comme à McGill et à Toronto, l'on enseigne avec tant de soin et de succès les sciences appliquées à l'industrie"(Quoted in H.D.Q.p.83). Works such as Bouchette did not go unnoticed when, in 1907, L'École des Hautes Études Commerciales was founded. Along with Bouchette

other intellectuals, Henri Bourassa and Etienne Parent, also denounced the Liberal government of the periods policies of "laissez faire," giving away the resources of the province to major American companies for next to nothing. A popular slogan, "Emparons nous du sol," was beginning to sound throughout Quebec.

Although there was a lot of work to be done there were signs that things were slowly changing, such as the founding of the first "Caisse Populaire" in Lévis in 1900. Already, in the latter part of the 19th century, the textile industries owned by French Canadians were flourishing in the Valleyfield and Coaticook regions. By 1909, the shoe industry employed more than eight thousand workers in the province. At the turn of the century, there was hope for a new beginning for the people of Quebec.

Chapter V: Oedipus and Nationalists in Quebec

When Hugh MacLennan's Two Solitudes opens in 1917, just prior to the end of World War 1, Quebec is slowly changing its mentality and moving towards an industrial society:

> McQueen was right. Unless they developed their own resources they would soon have none left to develop. The English were taking them over one by one. If the process continued indefinitely the time would arrive when the French in Canada would become a race of employees. Perhaps because they were a minority, perhaps because their education was not technical, they had no real share in the country's industry (T.S. 18).

MacLennan here is close to the truth when describing the economic situation in Quebec. The author is also realistic when he brings up Father Beaubien's attitude; he is trying to keep a strong grip on his parishioners by preaching the insanities of industrialization and capitalism: "Priests like Father Beaubien preached ceaselessly against the evils of factory towns. It was their intention to keep their people on the land as long as they could"(T.S.18). There is a problem in his caricatural treatment of Father Beaubien, a certain lack of respect that is difficult to understand from an outsider, but I admit that in general MacLennan is pretty close to the reality on this point. We can draw a significant parallel here to Taylor's theory in view of Father Beaubien's authority. In this case, unlike the usual figurative attribute, we have to speak of Father church.

The character of Aimé Latendresse in Return of The Sphinx is also

a representative of the Catholic Church. MacLennan depicts him as a false priest. We learn that a priest had taken him out of the orphanage at thirteen and raised him in his own presbytery. What could be worse for MacLennan than a youngster raised by a Catholic priest? Nothing good could come out of such a childhood, and the character development of Latendresse by the writer is pretty clear on that point. When we learn that the old priest had finally vanished during Latendresse's studies and travels in Europe, there is something left unexplained that leaves the reader puzzled. Perhaps out of self-censorship, MacLennan did not want to develop that avenue, but an allusion to child abuse is certainly perceptible:

> It was only a year ago that he had reappeared in Quebec, but he made no effort to visit the priest who had befriended him, though the old man was still alive. From occasional things he said, the young men who came under his influence believed that he had left the Church for good, but they knew very little about him. He lived in solitude and supported himself by working at an electrical-appliance shop(R.S. 125).

In view of what has been common knowledge in recent times about the treatment of the Duplessis orphans, it is perhaps easier to read through MacLennan's lines today, more than it could have been for a reader of the sixties; however, the allusion is surely present. MacLennan's illustration of Latendresse's embittered and fanatical personality after presenting his twisted childhood leaves little doubt:

> You weren't brought up as I was, mon ami. You never lived in an orphanage. You never saw what I see every day—poverty that makes children ashamed of their parents. You never saw your father dragged off to fight for foreigners. You never had to say "Yes, sir' to an English boss. The politeness of a subject people has always been the trump card of a ruling class. Who have been the politest people in the United States? The Negroes." (R.S. 249).

It is from such a background that MacLennan views the separatist. individuals who are ready for any kind of action to prove their point: "We've got to make the English so enraged they'll go crazy and want to fight us. Otherwise we'll be sold out again. There's got to be an open split—one there will be no chance of healing—and I know exactly what you can do to start it"(R.S. 248).

In both novels, the dissident nationalists are treated with biased generalizations by MacLennan, and the characters identified as separatist are depicted as having serious psychological problems. They are easily categorized by MacLennan through the process of his psychological theories and labelled with the famous Oedipus complex. Both Tallard and Ainslie see their nationalist sons threatening their efforts to unite Canada. As we learn, both Marius and Daniel have suffered from the loss of their mothers.

In Two Solitudes Marius has to deal with the death of his mother Marie Adèle at an early age, and the remarriage of his father to an Irish women is unacceptable to him. He views it as a betrayal of his mother

and his own race. This triggers antipathy towards his father that we can recognize as an obvious example of the Oedipus complex.

In Return of the Sphinx, Daniel also suffers the loss of his mother, which degenerates into a conflict with the father. There are also evident signs of the Oedipal complex in Daniel, as his sister Chantal points out here: "Dad and she were such lovers" . . . but more than once I noticed Daniel watching them like a fox watching his shadow(53). Tallard and Ainslie, while devoting their energy to solving the problems of a divided country, are unable to close the communication gap with their own sons. They are trying to solve universal problems which seems to blind them to their immediate surroundings. Here Ainslie, MacLennan's spokesman in Return of the Sphinx, presents this crisis in Quebec as a universal phenomenon:

> I believe the real cause of the world crisis-for that is what it is—no more respects frontiers than an influenza epidemic respects them. I believe the crisis came when humanity lost its faith in man's ability to improve his own nature. . . When people no longer can believe in personal immortality, when society at large has abandoned philosophy, many men grow desperate without knowing why. They crack up and don't know they have. Some of them will do anything-no matter how hopeless, criminal or idiotic—merely to have people mention their names and recognise that they exist (R.S.267).

Daniel Ainslie is "the some of them"; he represents the other side of the generational conflict: "They've given us everything except the chance to

be ourselves. They're so generous they make me vomit"(R.S.147). MacLennan's sentiments in regard to the matrist triumph of the sixties is best presented here by Zezulka:

> Undoubtedly the most salient feature of the matrist society of this century was "the fond parents who were determined that their children should not suffer the privations and inhibitions which had afflicted themselves," and the consequence of this lavishness was "the trauma of little children who had been cheated of a balanced childhood." The relaxation of parental authority, MacLennan is arguing, invites disregard for all authority and, as a consequence, invites anarchy (Zezulka 126).

The same conflict between generations also takes place in Two Solitudes. In this novel, the children coming of age during the depression, like Heather Methuen and Tallard's youngest son Paul, have to rebel against the prejudices and stereotypes of their parents. For the writer, they represent the two racial victims of Canada. Here MacLennan's views are brought forward through the good old Yardley, Heather's grandpa, who had lived happily, as "L'anglais du village," in Saint-Marc des Érables. Yardley is another of MacLennan's stereotypes; he is a demonstration of the capability of the two races to coexist. Yardley also acts as a middleman between the generations:

> Thinking of Heather and Paul, he reflected with wonder and some indignation that each was the victim of the two racial legends within the country. It was as though the two sides

> of organized society had ganged up on them both to prevent them from becoming themselves. Neither had much respect for their elders, but they were quiet about it . . . On both sides, French and English, the older generation was trying to freeze the country and make it static (T.S 301).

This feeling of repression will motivate Paul Tallard in his schizophrenic wanderings in the second part of Two Solitudes as he sets the stage for his all national novel.

MacLennan's disillusionment with science and technology as a replacement for God is presented in both novels as a direct cause for the movement from an authoritarian patrist society to a revolutionary permissive one. In Two Solitudes Paul reflects on the machine after experiencing the disintegration of Europe; he enlists as a marine on the eve of the Second World War:

> And behind Hitler, what? The machine. The magic worthy of every worship, mankind reborn for the service of efficiency, the still small voice of God the Father no longer audible through the stroke of the connecting rod, the suave omnipotent gesture of the hydraulic press, the planetary rumble of the conveyor belt, the visions of things to come—whole cities abolished in single nights, populations uplifted according to plan, cloudy blueprints of engineers, millions calling for help and millions for war, millions for peace and millions for suicide, and the grandeur and the efficiency and the solitude(T.S.339).

In Return of the Sphinx, in view of Quebec nationalist threats, Gabriel recalls the atrocities he experienced in World War II: "Two world

wars, more revolutions than he had ever heard of, H-bombs and moon shots and still people were saying, thinking and doing exactly the same things"(R.S.254). MacLennan here, through Gabriel, simplifies the situation in Quebec as another revolutionary phase.

Although he was living in Montreal at the time, MacLennan was light years away from the reality in Quebec during the sixties, preferring to hide his inability to understand the language, as well as the real reasons behind the growing sense of French nationalistic sentiments, behind a series of old cyclical historical theories.

He was surely a pioneer in his nationalistic endeavour. Before him few English-Canadian writers had dared to present a portrayal of Canada. To have Canada as a primary setting at the time Two Solitudes was published(1945) was one thing, but the utopian endeavour of MacLennan's attempt to explore and provide a solution to the divisional problems between the two founding nations was doomed from the start. First, MacLennan, the Oxford graduate, was too far removed from the French-Canadian language and culture in Quebec. Second, MacLennan is trying to present a picture of Quebec by writing exclusively in the language of the dominating English culture. Here I am not criticizing the fact that MacLennan is after all an English Canadian writer. However, the addition of nuance through the use of French vernacular language and expressions would have been important for the vivacity of the setting which is, after all, taking place in Quebec. Renderings in English of French terms lose the connotational meaning.

Language plays an essential role in both Two Solitudes and Return

of the Sphinx, where MacLennan attempts to explore and present a solution for the cultural and political divisions between the two founding nations in Canada. The simplistic use of language in these novels sacrifices an important dimension.

MacLennan fails to present the atmosphere prevailing in Quebec during the war periods of Two Solitudes and the *Révolution Tranquille* era of the 60's in Return of the Sphinx. As I have said throughout the first chapter, the author prefers to present his psychological theories as an explanation for all the problems in Quebec and Canada by reducing everything to universal and historical phenomena. The final part of my mémoire will explore this problem of the colonizer writing about the colonized.

Part III- The Language of the Other

Chapter VI: The Response

When Two Solitudes was published near the end of the Second World War, Canada had high hopes, like all Western countries, for a new beginning. The country had finally managed to emerge from the domination of Great Britain and had affirmed itself as a nation standing on its own. Although there had been again another conscription dispute, William Lyon Mackenzie King had managed to avoid the conscription crisis of the First World War. This crisis of 1917-1918 had greatly divided the country, and French-Canadians, being forced to participate in "what they saw as" the British War, had felt a second conquest had been imposed over them.

For MacLennan the time had come for a novel that would promote a uniting vision of Canada. Being familiar with the liberal aspirations of MacLennan, one can certainly appreciate the efforts of the well-intentioned author for his Utopian epic. The problem is that MacLennan, too close to the Anglo-Scottish Protestant dominating class of Montréal, was far removed from the reality of French-Canadians of Quebec. Cameron in her biography had written how on numerous occasions the author had mentioned his regret at never taking up the French language. At the time of his studies, he had preferred German to the second official language of Canada.

MacLennan is writing from the perspective of the unilingual English community, and it is not surprising that the novel was generally received with great enthusiasm in English Canada. It contributed to reinforce the stereotyped perception of English-Canada towards Quebec: the poor little Roman Catholics against the powerful Protestant Anglo

Businessman. Linda Leith in her critical work on Two Solitudes presents some of those positive critiques:

> Two Solitudes, Prescott concluded, "is superbly vital." A few days later the Canadian poet Leo Kennedy hailed Two Solitudes in the Chicago Sun Book Week as "the Great Canadian Novel." No less extravagant praise was lavished on the novel in many Canadian publications. The Gazette (Montreal) reviewer described it as the outstanding Canadian novel of this and other years, "and William Deacons said in The Globe and Mail (Toronto), "Considering style, theme, character, craftsmanship, significance and integrity, Two Solitudes may well be considered the best and most important Canadian novel ever published."(Leith 17).

In general, however, quite in opposition to the Globe and Mail review, the critics seem to favour the subject matter more than the way it is presented. "Diana Trilling, writing for The Nation in 1945, says the novel is "pedagogically inspired;" it has very little true drama, and it lacks skill in narrative, characterization, and style. . . . "And the Queen's Quarterly reviewer--"I.M.S."--finds the novel "disappointing" because " the author is too aloof from the characters. Their problems are an academic study" (Leith 17-18).

As for the French reception, the fact that the novel was not translated into French before 1963 and that the first edition in Quebec did not appear in the province before 1978 certainly tells a lot about the lack of enthusiasm it generated. The few French-Canadian reviewers in 1945 had mixed feelings. Some, like those on the English side, praised

the content, the French-Canadian Catholic (Tallard) fighting the English Protestant businessman. Others, like Albert Alain from le Devoir "damned Two Solitudes for a poorly developed thesis and for a false and misleading depiction of French Canada". . . "Le grand malheur, "wrote Alain, "c'est qu'un tel livre donnera une très fausse idée du Canada francais et catholique à des lecteurs de langue anglaise et non-catholiques au Canada et aux Etats-Unis." (Leith 25).

These responses presented by Linda Leith in her re-reading of Two Solitudes, demonstrate a reality about the novel. It attracts a lot of ambivalence and mixed sentiments. By the time the translation was introduced in French in the seventies the subject matter, highly praised at the beginning, had become outdated and irrelevant. The separatist ferver in Quebec, which MacLennan had severely denounced through his condescending description of characters such as Marius Tallard and Daniel Ainslie, had taken control of the province, and the Parti Québecois had taken command of the government.

Similarly, as Elspeth Cameron shows in her critical reception article on Return of The Sphinx, the first reviews were encouraging for MacLennan, but, as a famous French saying has it, "après les fleurs viennent le pot." The first criticism the author read after its publication was positive and came from Edmund Wilson, an American critic who had become a good friend: "I thought that your dramatization of the Canadian situation was masterly" . . . " It seemed to me a much better book than Two Solitudes, that you were hitting all the nails on the head, with no *longueurs* of boring episodes"(Cameron 141). Wilson was surely

referring here to the second part of Two Solitudes which Leith describes as the "Bildungsroman." MacLennan's novel, written in the epic genre in the first, most interesting part, after the death of Athanase Tallard turns into a series of boring psychological introspections of Paul Tallard in his quest to write an all Canadian novel.

Despite this first encouraging review, Cameron remarks how, in a letter to John Gray his editor, MacLennan had apprehensions about negative receptions for Return of The Sphinx: "The book is so contemporary, and I'm afraid it's so right in depth, that it cannot fail to create a lot of critical hostility here as it will not do . . . in the States"(142). As Cameron writes, "MacLennan's worst fears were realized"(142). She presents the reviews of Robert Fulford of the Toronto Star, Barry Callaghan of the Toronto Telegram and Peter Gzowski of Maclean's magazine. Fulford wrote quite in opposition to Wilson: "an essentially superficial and possibly harmful book . . . The book is the saddest of our centennial summer . . . It contributes nothing to politics and less than nothing to literature"(142-3). Callaghan, the son of Morley Callaghan, wrote that "the book was "an old-fashioned novel, and a second-rate old-fashioned novel at that . . . too abstract, too artificial"(143). Peter Gzowski, as Cameron observes, probably best illustrates what is most troubling in Return of The Sphinx: the outsider MacLennan looking in: "It is as if he has been looking at the events of recent years through a stained glass window in Westmount" in "this dull, impossible-to-believe book"(143).

MacLennan in Return of The Sphinx had set out to present his

theory of "Psychic crisis," as I have explained in the first chapter. The crisis here is the growing sense of nationalistic feelings in Quebec, which he viewed as evident signs of deterioration of the stable decade of the fifties. He saw it as a movement from a patrist to a matrist phase.

Gowski's visual imagery when he mentions MacLennan looking in from a stained glass window in Westmount is quite adequate. MacLennan in his unilingual surroundings was very much removed from the French reality in Quebec. The choice of location for writing the novel in Grenoble, France almost makes Gowski's stained Westmount window imagery seem like an euphemism. As Cameron writes: "In selecting the Savoie Hotel in Grenoble, France, as his headquarters, he immersed himself (or attempted to do so) in a culture almost as alien to the realities of French Canada as Westmount"(145). MacLennan would have been more able, had he decided to immerse himself in a French Canadian sector of Montréal or any rural region of Quebec, to grasp essential aspects of the French community. The "Universal phenomena" are far removed for a family of ten children living in a two room apartment in St-Henri or trying to feed off an isolated rocky land during the harsh winter of Quebec. No parallel to daily afternoon strolls in Grenoble here. The language of French aristocrats has also nothing in common with the joual québecois spoken in Quebec. As was the case for Two Solitudes where he relied mostly on Ringuet's Trente Arpents and a teaching colleague for his research, Return of the Sphinx renders a tone and atmosphere far removed from the reality of the 60's.

Similarly, Linda Leith remarks how, in Two Solitudes, the lack of

vernacular language in a setting in rural Quebec lack versimilitude: "MacLennan's characters, whether English or French, speak as though they were educated at Oxford"(Leith 37). Although, in the Foreword to the novel, MacLennan mentions, "that some of the characters in the book are presumed to speak only English, others only French, while many are bilingual," the vevacity of the characters in the story is greatly undermined. It can be accepted for some of the major characters like Athanase Tallard, who is a bilingual government official married to an Irish woman. However, the absence of French vernacular becomes a problem for the minor characters of Saint-Marc, such as Frenette and Drouin. Even today, in those rural French communities, a fluent English speaking individual is certainly an exception to the rule.

Another aspect of Two Solitudes that has troubled me from the very beginning is the family name of the main character "Tallard." The names of Drouin and Frenette, the minor characters, are surely common in many parts of Quebec but I have lived in this province for the major part of my life and I have yet to come across a person with a name such as "Tallard." In a province where common denomination is easily perceptible as Tremblay, Gagnon, or Bouchard, I am puzzled by such a weird choice by the author for his central character. Perhaps he used "Tallard" to ensure that the work would be regarded as total fiction as he mentions in his Foreword: "I should like to emphasize as emphatically as I can that this book is a story, and in no sense whatever documentary. All the characters are purely imaginary". By wanting to stay away from critical reactions, which is apparent in his foreword, he

has also greatly undermined the reality of his story. Why is MacLennan being so careful in his foreword and in his choice of names? For an author who always agreed that he was attempting to write the great Canadian novel, with Two Solitudes he seems overly cautious.

In some of his other works, such as Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son, the authenticity of the Nova Scotian setting constitutes one of the major strengths of the novels. The only explanation that we can finally conclude here again is that MacLennan attempted an illustration of a people and a culture he knew too little about.

Chapter VII: Decolonization Literature in Quebec

Elspeth Cameron has pointed out that, for Two Solitudes, MacLennan had relied mostly on an old colleague and Ringuet's Trente Arpents, a retrograde work in the romantic mode which recalls the purity and the eternal benefits of the land. If for Two Solitudes we have to agree that French Canadian writers was still reminiscing about the romantic past, and, like English Canadian writers, were much dependent on the mother countries of Europe for approval, this is certainly not the case by the sixties. In the sixties, Quebec was very much influenced by such anti-colonial writings as Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth or Albert Memmi's Le Portrait d'un colonisé. MacLennan, had he decided at the time to seek influence in the world he was describing, would have realized that there was a lot more going on in the province then a few bomb threats from minor left wing anarchists.

In Histoire du Québec, Marc Durand presents many important Quebec writers who had decided to leave the past romantic values behind and bring forth the reality of the present in hope of a new beginning. Gaston Miron, presenting himself as the colonized individual, writes in L'Homme rapaillé(1963):

> Longtemps je n'ai su mon nom, et qui j'étais, que de l'extérieur. Mon nom est pea soup. Mon nom est pepsi. Mon nom est marmelade. Mon nom est frog. Mon nom est dam canuck. Mon nom est floor sweeper. Mon nom est bastard. Mon nom est cheap. Mon nom est sheep. Mon nom . . . mon nom
> En ceci le poème n'est pas normal
> l'humiliation de ma poésie est ici

une humiliation ethnique.(Durand p.137).

In order to achieve decolonization one must accept one's colonized status. To denounce injustices of the past is then only a starting point. Jean Guy Pilon writes in 1963:

> Nous sommes frères dans l'humiliation
> (...)
> Dans la peur
> Dans la détresse(Durand 136).

Perhaps one of the phrases that best summarizes the period of turmoil that was the sixties in Quebec, along with the realization that the time had come for French Canadians to take control of their economics, education, and culture, comes from Jacques Brault's Mémoires, (1964): *"Voici qu'un peuple apprend a se metre debout"* (Durand 137).

Even at the time MacLennan was writing Two Solitudes, there were French Canadian writers who were breaking with the past romantic tradition, such as Roger Lemelin in Au pied de la pente douce(1944) and Gabrielle Roy in Bonheur d'occasion(1945). If MacLennan had missed them at the time, being relatively new to the province, he could have certainly made use of them in Return of the Sphinx(1967).

Bonheur d'Occasion illustrates the life of a family in St Henri during La Grande Noirceur in Quebec (the Duplessis era). The life of low-paid workers in factories, unemployment, and unsanitary living conditions had replaced the beauty of the land. During the reign of Maurice Duplessis as Prime Minister of Quebec from the Second World War until his death in 1959, church and state worked hand in hand to

control the province. Duplessis was selling the land and resources to American-based companies for next to nothing, leaving full power to the church for education and all other services.

During those years, a vast immigration to the city had taken place in French Canada, with the arrival of World War II, to take factory jobs in munitions and machinery plants. When the war ended, a lot of workers, uneducated and without technical training, found themselves with next to nothing. Duplessis, in order to attract investors, was giving companies unlimited power over employees. This is why women like those Gabrielle Roy portrays in Bonheur d'Occasion often had to take control of the family when the fathers of the house, often without work, lost themselves in alcohol and despair. The image of a strong woman then took its place in Quebec. This is why Quebec was moving towards a matrist society, not because it had a major psychological problem.

Chapter VIII: La Révolution Tranquille (1960-66)

Perhaps the reason why I am writing this thesis in the first place is the period I am about to describe, the time setting of MacLennan's Return of The Sphinx. This was a period when the French people of Quebec started asserting themselves as individuals and as a society, and when they stopped blaming the world around them, mostly the English, for all their troubles.

In general, historians situate the *Révolution Tranquille* during the years from 1960 up to 1967, although there has been a continual process of reform since then in the province. When MacLennan speaks about the psychological problem of the sixties, he shows little respect for the people of this province. At first glance, the *révolution tranquille* in Quebec was very simple. It was the taking back of the economic controls of the province. What was incredible was the rapidity of the changes that took place. Quebec had taken a three hundred and sixty degree turn after the death of Duplessis and L'Union National (the Conservative party in Quebec). With the arrival of Jean Lesage and the Liberal party slogan, "Maître chez nous!," a government of corruption and laissez-faire was replaced by one which promoted intervention.

The first step consisted of taking control of the resources by adopting a series of measures against foreign control. The nationalization of electricity with the founding of Hydro-Québec is an example in that sense. Another major area that was attended to was education, with the formation of the Parent commission. The commission, with the help of such influential people as David Munroe of McGill, Guy Rocher de l'Université de Montréal, and, of course,

Alphonse-Marie Parent, vice-recteur de l'Université Laval, after long studies proposed the founding of a Ministry of Education in Quebec, taking the control out of the hands of the clergy. The creation of the welfare state also took place in those years and the list goes on.

In the mere ten years between 1960 and 1970, forty-nine new institutions were created, compared to thirty-two for a period of almost one hundred years from 1867-1960. Creation of active economic institutions such as La Caisse de Dépôt et La Société Générale de Financement had a dramatic impact on the new entrepreneurship.

The cultural aspect was also coming of age, with the emergence of a new *Québecoise* Literature featuring writers such as Michel Tremblay and Marcel Dubé, who wrote plays with local settings and language, a generation of singers and songwriters moving away from traditional French domination. A great many people were involved, and they do not seem to have had anything to do with a severe psychological deficiency. This is what *La Révolution Tranquille* was and still is today.

Yes, there were extremists like the F.LQ. to whom MacLennan likes to give a major role, but they were condemned for their actions by Jean Lesage, the Prime Minister in Quebec at the time, who charracterized them as "Rêveurs dangereux and infantile." Leaders such as René Levesque, whether as a member of the Liberal government as Minister of Resources or later as leader of the Parti-Québecois, and, more recently, Prime Minister Bouchard upon his resignation, have always denounced extremists and violence that render a very false image of independence. Levesque, like many others associated with

independence, have always unanimously condemned any violent measures to achieve it. Democracy is the only manner in which Quebec will ever achieve its independence if it ever arrives, even if for some it is a hard and painful process.

It is in the realization of its condition that Quebec was able to make such a turn for itself in so short a time. This is something I believe that some English Canadians have trouble understanding. Instead of assuming a double identity as a part of something, such as the term French Canadian given to the French population of this province by the English, which is a manner of classifying the other, a minority in a vast country, the term Québecois to designate the people of the province of Quebec was adopted. Here, Durand in Histoire du Québec quotes Paul Chamberland in "La revue Partis pris"(1964):

> Désormais, dans le cours de cet article, nous utiliserons les termes "Québec" et "Québecois" de préférence à ceux de Canada français et de Canadien français . . . Il y aura recouvrement, coïncidence entre le territoire, la nation, la patrie et la culture. La suppression du Canada français, du canadien français signifie clairement celle de l'être minoritaire, de cet homme ou de cette communauté écartelés entre deux mondes, deux ordres de valeurs(scission qui était la négation de son être, de son identité, de sa santé, de son existence). La dissolution, la liquidation du Canada est à l'heure actuelle rudement amorcée, et cela à cause d'un nouveau Québec en voie de gestation"(Durand 141).

Conclusion: Didactic works of Fiction

A general consensus seems to appear amongst reviewers of MacLennan's Two Solitudes. As Linda Leith pointed out, many critics would agree on one aspect. His "matter" is much more important than his "manner": "All in all MacLennan gets an "A", as it were, for content; and anything(depending on the critic) ranging from a "C" to and "F" for form"(Leith 22). Is it normal to have between content and form, such a contrasted evaluation of a work? This is what Leith has attempted to answer in her rereading of Two Solitudes. She demonstrates that in the end "MacLennan's "matter" far from being more important than his "manner', is deeply problematical on several counts"(82). This is a response that challenges the general consensus among reviewers of the 1945 novel. She concludes her excellent rereading by inviting us to do the same: "Two Solitudes has been taken for granted for too long. We need to keep an eye on it, and every once in a while we need to reconsider it in the light of our own day"(83).

This is what I have attempted in part with Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx. I have attempted to reread the novels with two objectives in mind. First, to evaluate the works in the light of MacLennan's own cyclical psychological theories of world history based on Taylor's Sex in History, which I have used as an approach. I do not totally reject the theories advanced by Taylor, and, in certain respects, I find the concept interesting. However, my conclusion is that MacLennan organizes the cycles to his own benefit. For example, I do not particularly agree with his interpretation of the matrist phase in the first part of the twentieth century, nor do I agree with his account of the

events that, in his view, triggered it. Mostly however, I have written this thesis to correct the many misleading interpretations of MacLennan's understanding of Quebec.

I have great difficulty in understanding this excessive antipathy against Quebec nationalists coming from a writer who has made nationalism his trademark. MacLennan suggests that it is great to be a Canadian nationalist but dismisses anyone who possesses the same sentiments for Quebec as revolutionary and destructive. Marius in Two Solitudes, and Latendresse and Daniel Ainslie in Return of the Sphinx are all characters who are greatly undermined in MacLennan's work because of their militant nationalist sentiments. He goes as far to describe them as fascists by comparing Marius' militant spirit to Nazism and Adolf Hitler, and by linking Daniel Ainslie to the F.L.Q. revolutionary cells of the sixties. Perhaps Latendresse holds some of the traits of the minority of violent fanatics that gave a bad name to the independant movement but to put him on the same level as Hitler and other fascist leaders is surely exaggerated. This is not a first for MacLennan. In The Watch That Ends the Night (1958), recalling the life of Jerome Martell and other idealists in the thirties, at many times the author draws a parallel between certain underground French circles and Bolshevists.

In the end, both in Two Solitudes and Return of the Sphinx, the characters who are associated with Quebec nationalism end up defeated. In Return of the Sphinx, Daniel is caught as he prepares to plant a bomb and is sent to jail. Latendresse is simply eradicated from the story altogether. He was just passing through as far as the writer his

concerned. Marius is not given such a chance. Perhaps Quebec nationalism at the time MacLennan was writing Two Solitudes, at the end of Word War II, was just too much for him to support. He seems to be on a mission to destroy that kind of individual. In the end MacLennan shows the world what happens when you go against the current:

> Marius was married, with more children than he could afford to support. When the Tallard land was lost he was old enough to understand what he was losing, but his idea of going home was to be a successful politician. He'd nursed his hatred of the English so carefully it was now a pretty fine flower. He could speak perfect English, but if anyone addressed him in English he affected not to understand a word of it. What he really wanted, of course, was vengeance. The only thing he really loved was a crowd. He always believed they were with him, and for a few minutes they generally were, but ninety per cent of them would go off and vote Liberal no matter what he said. 'If Marius were European he might get somewhere,' Paul said. 'But not here. There are others like him. They're the safety valves for the minority. That's all they are, and God help them, they never know it. When one fizzles out another comes to take his place.'(T.S. 314).

This is the final scene for Marius in Two Solitudes; he is a total failure with the hopes of a blind man. At least this is what MacLennan wants us to understand. It seems as though the author has a personal grudge

to settle. I wonder how he would portray an individual with those aspirations in our day and age. We can sense that already in Return of the Sphinx, at least with Daniel Ainslie, he had slightly moderated his aggressiveness, but the animosity is still present.

In Two Solitudes, MacLennan is also critical of the immense power of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. He severely denounces Father Beaubien's authority over his parish and greatly ridicules his spiritual adoration beliefs. Although I reject the imperious manner in which MacLennan criticizes the religion of the other, I did agree with the writer on the fact that in the twentieth century the time had come to separate state and church and for Quebec to assume its economic development. The immense power of the church had greatly undermined the economic potential of the province.

When the authority of the Church is finally put in question during the sixties (Return of the Sphinx) in Quebec, MacLennan then through his character Alan Ainslie, who projects the author's own outdated liberal views throughout the novel, talks about a psychological disease affecting the province:

> I tell you, Mr. Minister, no people in history has ever tried to break with a strict Catholicism without turning to nationalism or some other kind of ism as a surrogate religion. As I see it, that is the essence of the situation in Quebec today. The problem there isn't economic, it's psychological(R.S. 69).

To put it simply, what MacLennan is saying here, referring to his

psychological theories, is that all active nationalists in Quebec are fascists and crazy. This authoritarian way of preaching through the speech of his characters is very similar in both novels.

In Two Solitudes, it is Athanase Tallard who assumes the role of pedagogue. Not only are we getting a lesson but one of classical dimension as well. Athanase is certainly no usual French Canadian landowner:

> Marx is only half right when he calls religion the opium of people. It may turn a lot of people into sheep, but it turns far too many of them into tigers. Its whole history is violent. Look at the Aztecs, Mahomet and Torquemada!(T.S. 34).

Is this really the kind of speech we can expect from a French Canadian at the turn of the century, no matter how rich he might be? As Linda Leith remarks "MacLennan's characters whether English or French, speak as though they were educated at Oxford"(Leith 37). Even young Paul at the tender age of nine perpetuates that tradition of this unusual French Canadian family:

> Paul was happy now as they walked along, thinking about the Odyssey. He wanted to see the place where the salt water was azure blue the way the picture showed it, and the men had straight noses and the women wore flowing robes. He thought of Ulysses tied to the mast, and the sailors with their oars rowing him past the island where beautiful women white-skinned and black hair like his mother . . .(T.S. 67).

This is the boy whom MacLennan takes as the representative of French Canadians. It is through this half-French, half-Irish boy, educated in the best Protestant schools, that the writer will solve the problem of the two solitudes in his bi-national wedding. The marriage between Paul Tallard and Heather Methuen will be the symbol of reconciliation of the two founding races of this country. At least that is how it was received and acclaimed, as Leith demonstrates, from the very beginning, by many of the most influential English reviewers:

> Warren Stevenson refers to "the fact that Paul is of French and Heather of English extraction"(59); W.J. Keith writes about "the marriage of French-Canadian Paul and English-Canadian Heather"(1985,135); T.D. MacLennan discusses how their marriage is "meant to point to a reconciliation of French and English . . . (49)(Leith 21).

There is seemingly nothing more to add to this debate other then to simply say that MacLennan's denouement just doesn't make any sense. Paul Tallard is surely no typical representative of a French Canadian at the time nor would he be at present.

MacLennan chose the classical epic mode for Two Solitudes, with heroes such as Athanase and Yardley, the sympathetic English old man living in the village of St-Marc, along with villains such as the militant Marius, the Protestant McQueen, and Janet Methuen. There are many conflicts in the first part of Two Solitudes that give authenticity to the story. We see different rivalries forming from the very beginning, Tallard versus Father Beaubien, Beaubien versus McQueen, Marius

versus his Father, Old versus New, Rural St-Marc versus Elite Business circles of Montreal. In that first part, we move freely between St-Marc and Montreal, and the main character, Athanase Tallard, confronted with the two worlds, certainly becomes one of the most interesting characters ever developed by MacLennan.

In this first part of the novel, MacLennan lets dialogue control the theme. We learn about the difficulties Athanase must surmount in order to bring his small village into the twentieth century. MacLennan in the development of Athanase does a good job. Although, he could have gone deeper to make his hero more sympathetic, the character is very credible. Like many of MacLennan's characters, Tallard is given too much to self pity to make him a powerful hero. So in the end, when the business enterprise crashes and he ends up broken, we do not feel like shedding too many tears for him. We can understand the difficulties he must face in trying to bring a Protestant Anglo-Scottish business man like McQueen to a village dominated by the immense power of the Church, but when he finally loses it all, we are too far removed from the action.

The main problem with Two Solitudes is the second part of the novel, which is surely the weakest. After the death of Athanase at the end of Wold War I, we skip a gap of thirteen years to 1934, where MacLennan introduces us to an already made hero, Paul Tallard. Paul, now in his twenties, has had time to become a soldier, an Oxford graduate, a professional hockey player, a writer for magazines, and has travelled all around the world. He will become the vehicle for

MacLennan's preachings for the rest of the story.

The epic that had started with Athanase in St-Marc dies in the hands of Paul. We are too far removed from this young man to take him seriously. The form moves to a series of lectures on Paul's attempt to write the all-Canadian novel: a parallel to MacLennan's own difficulties at the beginning of his writing career. When Paul, after attempting to write an international novel, gets a flash from Heather about writing something closer to his reality, something about Canada, we are reminded of Cameron's rendering of Dorothy Duncan's suggestion to MacLennan. Paul then becomes the vehicle for MacLennan to go on theorizing for the rest of the novel about the psychological changes of the twentieth century and the difficulties of writing a novel about Canada:

> A book about Canada—it would be like writing of the past century! Having said this he wondered if it were really true. He sat down before the fire again, staring into it. Must he write out of his own background, even if that background were Canada? Canada was imitative in everything. Yes, but perhaps only on the surface. What about underneath? No one had dug underneath so far, that was the trouble. Proust wrote only of France, Dickens laid nearly all his scenes in London, Tolstoi was pure Russian. Hemingway let his heroes roam the world, but everything he wrote smelled of the United States(T.S.364).

MacLennan, as we notice in the second part of Two Solitudes, chose to move from an epic genre, which made for an interesting first section of the novel, to a series of lectures on writing an all—Canadian novel. The

story has taken a turn for the worse. Goodbye dialogue, which is the strong point of the first part, and welcome to a series of psychological introspections. The many conflicts in the first part of the novel are convincing because we experience them from conversations between the characters, like many arguments between Athanase and Father Beaubien or Athanase and McQueen.

In the second part, however, there is two much philosophizing, which puts a dent in the denouement of the story. It is as if MacLennan never really makes up his mind in Two Solitudes, wether he is writing fiction or non-fiction. We move from the central conflict in the first part, where we see Athanase caught between the evolution of his village into the modern industrial age and Father Beaubien who wants to keep control of St-Marc, to a series of long, theoretical meditations by Paul Tallard.

The novel would have done much better, as many critics have argued, if it had ended with the death of Athanase Tallard. As I have suggested earlier, other characters, such as Marius, could have been developed to a greater extent.

Paul Tallard is by no means a representative of a typical French Canadian and in the end, the all-Canadian marriage between him and Heather is a forced solution in the lost cause of reuniting the two founding nations of this country. Again, as is customary, it seems, with a lot of MacLennan's characters, Paul is an Oxford graduate, miles away from the common type French Canadian education in Jesuit seminaries of the period. He is no more credible now as an adult than he was as a

youngster in the first part, when MacLennan, using Yardley as a spokesman was setting the stage for his young hero:

> He had come to love young Paul as though the boy were his own son. And he knew they would all fight over him yet. The obscure conflict within the Tallard family would certainly centre on this youngest member. Beyond that, the constant tug of war between the races and creeds in the country itself would hardly miss him, for people seemed so constructed that they were unable to use ideas as instruments to discover truth, but waved them instead like flags(T.S. 69).

Paul cannot be viewed as the spokesman for French Canadians not only because of his Irish mother Kathleen but also because of the education he has received. His father Athanase after a dispute with Father Beaubien, had elected to send him to a Protestant school in Montreal:

> Unless he took a firm hand in steering Paul's career, the boy would become involved in all the same old dilemmas. The simplest way to avoid that happening would be to send him to an English school. And again the legend would be challenged(T.S. 80).

MacLennan, no matter how sympathetic he might be to the underdog cause of the French Canadians, has no interesting solution to offer. If his solution to the language conflict in this country consists of sending all French Canadian children to Protestant English schools, it surely was a lost cause, even in 1945. Although I might be exaggerating

MacLennan's intentions here, one corollary remains clear throughout the novel: the French Canadians must change their ways, whether it be in business, education, or religion, if Canadians are going to become one. The only solution that emerges after reading Two Solitudes, which seemed to have been understood and accepted by many English Canadian critics at the time the novel came out, is to have the French speak English.

The solutions offered by MacLennan in solving the all-Canadian problem are often utopian. Through the sympathetic character of Yardley in Two Solitudes, MacLennan wants to show us that a good old English Canadian from Halifax can live happily in a village like St-Marc. He makes this old man charming and lovable to all the villagers. But what is the reality of a retired English Canadian seaman coming to live in such a different environment? The story likes us to believe that he wants to be closer to his daughter and grandchild, but altogether it is not very probable. He is far more believable and at ease when we find him in his native town of Halifax in the latter part of the novel. He becomes another instrument for MacLennan in his didactic endeavours.

The good old Yardley has travelled the world and can also take to philosophizing about the universe like any good Oxford graduate. He reads Shakespeare and plays chess with Athanase. Nevertheless, he does play an important role in the plot. He acts as the chorus to the story, often reasoning and commenting on the events with a sort of detachment. He also becomes a sort of father figure to Paul after Athanase's death.

The shift in style in the second part, as I have said, is the greatest weakness of the novel. We move from free dialogue to introspection, from the vivacity of locations like St-Marc and Montreal to a tour of the world at large. Paul is everywhere but nowhere at the same time. He is a young man looking to find himself in universal phenomena and we, as readers, are trying to find the storyline from the first part, which MacLennan has abandoned somewhere between St-Marc and Montreal. The problem is that we never succeed in finding it. What we find instead is a series of lectures and psychological theories on how to interpret universal conflicts:

> In every city the same masses swarmed. Could any man write a novel about masses? The young man of 1933, together with all the individual characters Paul had tried to create, grew pallid and unreal in his imagination beside the sense of the swarming masses heard three stories below in the shuffling feet of the crowd. For long minutes he stood at the window. To make a novel out of this? How could he? How could anyone? A novel should concern people, not ideas, and yet people had become trivial(T.S. 339).

MacLennan's own words here essentially explain what the problem is with the second part of Two Solitudes. He forgets his own rules by letting ideas control the story rather than the characters. In the end, we are a long way from the internal conflict between the two founding nations of Canada. Two Solitudes focuses much more on dividing than on uniting and offers no real solution to the internal conflict of our

Canadian heritage. Like the two founding nations of our country, the two separate parts of the novel are essentially solitudes of their own.

In Return of The Sphinx, more than twenty years later, MacLennan continues his ongoing quest to save Canada. This time it is Alan Ainslie the politician who acts as MacLennan's "designated hitter." He is of the writer's generation and feels compelled to find a solution to the country's cultural problems to affirm his purpose in this world.

The political crisis in Return of the Sphinx, which is the main plot of the novel, as in many other of MacLennan's novels, is a setting that acts as a basis for exploring universal issues. Ainslie's final thoughts in Return of the Sphinx reflect Zezulka's remarks, which I have presented in the first part of my thesis. The critic writes that MacLennan's liberal optimism had considerably diminished by the time he was writing Return of the Sphinx but that the old flame had not completely died down.

Devastated at the end by his son's revolutionary action, which leads to a jail sentence, Ainslie still manages to hold on to his national dream after a trip across Canada: "The vast land. Two vast even for fools to ruin all of it"(R.S. 303). This sense of the vast land has followed MacLennan throughout his writings. Athanase Tallard in Two Solitudes also recalls his journey across the country:

> Ten years ago I went across the whole of Canada. I saw a lot of things. This country is so new that when you see it for the first time, all of it, and particularly the west, you feel like Columbus and you say to yourself, "My God, is all this

ours!"(T.S. 30).

As I presented in the introduction, Return of the Sphinx was the product of the great influence that Taylor's Sex In History exerted on MacLennan. Along with Freudian theories the writer had already absorbed in his Oxford years, MacLennan set out to show the decadent forces that were present at the turn of the sixties. The patrist era for MacLennan culminated in the two great wars, and the fifties were a time where society was moving away from this overly aggressive period. MacLennan is certainly not a fanatic of the war periods, but he is a product of that era, and, when here in Quebec, at the turn of the sixties, with the province having a lot of catching up to do, the dramatic Quiet Revolution appeared, it seemed to have been too much for an outsider like him to understand. Elspeth Cameron presents this fact in her biographical work on the author in a letter he had written to John Gray his editor, just before setting off for France to work on Return of the Sphinx:

> I felt late last winter that there was nothing that I, personally, could do at this juncture. I've said my piece and I want to get out in the hope of gaining some perspective. Montreal used to be a fine place to live if you wanted to write. It would be good if you were young today. But the pressure of the past three years have been very bad, they make it hard to contemplate, and the English-speaking community is becoming more and more isolated even when, curiously enough, there is much more intercourse between them and the French than ever before. They have never behaved better than now, but they are paying for more than

> a century of indifference and arrogance in the past . . . I can't understand or even sense the shape of things to come. I know nobody else who can, either(Cameron 317).

Although MacLennan did understand, up to a certain point, the frustrations of the French in Quebec, the sudden shift of the sixties that brought the Quiet Revolution was too sudden even for him. It was going against his own belief in cyclical theories. As he understood from Taylor's theory, there was usually an intervening period between matrist and patrist stages. However, here in Quebec, where the province had been in a stronghold (La Grande Noirceur) during the Duplessis years, the shift struck like lightning.

One symptom of the matrist period that MacLennan illustrates well in Return of the Sphinx is the break-up of the family. In the novel, we learn that Constance, Ainslie's wife, has died in a futile accident at the beginning of the story. With him working in Ottawa as a Minister, his children Daniel and Chantal are left to themselves. There is no center in this household and 'Things are falling apart'(324). Of course this reference in Cameron's biography is related to W.B. Yeats, whose themes, as MacLennan understood, had many similarities with Taylor's cyclical theories. This is what I meant when I mentioned that MacLennan, even before reading Taylor, had absorbed many of his theories through his years at Oxford:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;

> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> (Norton Vol 11, 1880)

Much like Yeats, MacLennan is very ominous in Return of The Sphinx about events to come. The breakdown of family values and respect for authority that is taking place in Quebec during the sixties sends MacLennan back to his theories.

Ainlie's world has fallen apart. His daughter Chantal is having an affair with an older man, Gabriel Fleury his closest friend, while Daniel sleeps with his girlfriend's mother Marielle. The culminating point, of course, is when Daniel joins a nationalist revolutionary movement in Quebec. In the turmoil of the Quiet revolution, the stage is set for a very critical and dramatic period for Ainslie, the Minister of Cultural affairs.

MacLennan surely had a good theme for his new novel but, much as he had done in Two Solitudes, he theorizes too much. Not only had he decided to base his story on Taylor's cyclical theories but also to use Greek tragedies for structure (the famous Oedipal plays). As Cameron points out:

> So real to him had Taylor's theories become, so compelling the truth of Sophocles' play since he had first translated it at Oxford, that it apparently did not occur to him that his world view might differ from that of other people . . . The truth was that models as remote as Sophocles and as intellectual as Taylor were far over the heads of his wide following(Cam 328.)

Even for some of his most aware readers Taylor's theories were far from being common knowledge and the classical Oedipus plays were certainly not on the mainstream curriculum, even at that period, in every Canadian school. It seems that the thought, however, never really crossed the authors mind.

The theme of Return of the Sphinx is the incapability of man to learn from the past, by constantly repeating the same mistakes of war and evil, over and over again. The problem is that much as he had done in Two Solitudes, MacLennan takes too much of a role in the story. We always notice his presence, teaching, commenting and philosophizing. These interruptions remove us from the action and reduce the authenticity of the characters.

MacLennan's Return of the Sphinx is in many respects a prolongation of Two Solitudes. Again, he addresses the everlasting problem of French and English dissension in Canada and, again, even after twenty years, he fails in his attempt to present an interesting solution. Not only does he bring back the old rivalry, but also, in many ways, the same characters. We can very easily find parallels between Alan Ainslie and Athanase, caught between their work in Ottawa and their revolutionary sons. There are also a lot of similarities between the characters of Marius and Daniel, as I have demonstrated earlier. Daniel represents the new breed of separatist at the turn of the sixties. As he had done with Marius, MacLennan presents the aspirations of this young man as decadent and futile. Although he seems more willing to excuse Daniel for some of his actions, by portraying him as the result of

family break-up in the sixties, the characterization of Daniel remains much like that of Marius Tallard, uni-dimensional. Secondary characters, such as Gabriel Fleury, the captain Yardley of Return of the Sphinx, are used in the same manner in both novels by MacLennan. Gabriel a veteran of World War II, as Yardley was, has travelled the seas and relates his experience as flashbacks in the story. He becomes the vehicle in the novel for MacLennan's philosophizing interludes:

> You can't ever persuade me that what happened to France during and since the French Revolution can be explained by economics. If you want the real reason why Alan Ainslie's in politics, I can tell you. He's terrified that unless English Canada wakes up pretty soon, things in this country will drift into civil war(R.S. 20).

This is a good example of how MacLennan uses his characters to theorize on the cyclical periods in history. Comparing the situation in Quebec during the sixties and the French Revolution is a proof that MacLennan was years away from reality. As he had done with old Yardley in Two Solitudes, Gabriel is there to relate information about Alan:

> Political nationalism is the last thing he'd ever go out for. He has a curious mystique about the country. He really loves it. If this makes any sense to you, he reminds me sometimes of William Butler Yeats. My mother's family knew Yeats in Dublin and when I was living with them he came to my uncle's house several times. When Alan was

> trying to make up his mind about whether or not to run in that by-election, I reminded him of what the Irish did to Yeats after they'd squeezed out of him all they wanted(R.S.16-17).

As Yardley did, he acts as the chorus to the story and, as Yardley did, he is fluent in the classics and English Literature. This is what I mean when I say that MacLennan was light years away from the situation in Quebec during that period. He draws too much on events from the past which removes us from the action taking place. We are given a crash course in history, philosophy and psychology. In the end, all this theorizing takes its toll and, as was the case with Two Solitudes, we lose focus as well as interest in the story. We tend to forget that MacLennan is after all writing fiction.

With all this didactic rendering, we also lose track of some of the better artistic qualities of the writer. MacLennan is the son of an authentic Victorian. He was raised and educated with strict puritan values, and this is noticeable in his writing. It molded him more as a writer from the past romantic era than the modernist period he is writing in, but it also contributed to his strong artistic sense. Hugh MacLennan has a profound love for his country which is admirable. In both novels, when describing the Canadian landscape, MacLennan shows us some of his most beautiful writing. His descriptions are often remarkable, as in the introductory lines of Two Solitudes:

> You can look north across the plain from the river and see the farms between their fences tilting towards the forest and

> beyond them the line of trees crawling shaggily up the slope of the hill. The forest crosses the watershed into an evergreen bush that spreads far to the north, lake-dotted and mostly unknown, until it reaches the tundra(T.S. 2).

If MacLennan had stuck with his strong artistic style, the novels could have gained much. His descriptive skills are certainly one of his most remarkable qualities. When he sticks to the story, the vivacity of the setting, whether in St-Marc or Montreal, is evident:

> That afternoon it blew cold from the northeast, the wind built itself up, towards evening the air was flecked with a scud of white specks, and then the full weight of the snow began to drive, It whipped the land, greyed it, then turned it white and continued to come down hissing invisibly after dark all night long until mid-morning of the next day(T.S.31).

MacLennan is unique when it comes to describing the beauty of his country. We get another example of this on the last pages of Return of the Sphinx, when Alan Ainslie, depressed by the events in Quebec and the revolutionary actions of his son Daniel, decides to take a ride across Canada:

> After a time he drove back into the interior, never sure at the end of one day where he should go the next, but the main road led westerly and he followed the Trans-Canada highway across the Shield and along the north shore of Lake Superior, then past Lake of the Woods until he emerged onto the black earth plain of Manitoba. The wheat was just

> beginning to turn golden and the wind ruffled it. Solitary grain elevators bisected the permanent line where sky and prairie met.

The problem is that those visual scenes in both novels are too few when compared with the amount of philosophizing. They seem to appear as interludes during a crash course on theory.

Two of MacLennan's earlier works Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son are excellent novels. Both of these novels have Halifax, the writer's native place, as their primary setting. Who can better describe the Mont Blanc explosion during the first world war than MacLennan, since the description comes from a writer who personally experienced the events? When MacLennan tones down his descriptive passages, as he did in Return of the Sphinx; the novel suffers.

In Each Man's Son, which will become the historical basis for Return of the Sphinx, we are introduced to Alan Ainslie as a young child. Here also, who can better describe the mentality of the Nova Scotian people, their joys and tragedies then MacLennan himself? I personally consider his last novel, Voices in Time (1980) to be MacLennan's best and most modern work. This novel, which has Europe for its primary setting, in the turmoil of World War ll, demonstrates that, when the writer is on familiar ground, he can create excellent work. Recalled through flashbacks when a French Canadian journalist comes across certain historical documents in 2030, Hugh MacLennan tells the story of Conrad Dehmel, a German scholar struggling to save himself and his Jewish fiancée from Hitler's Gestapo during the Second World War. This is another authentic setting for MacLennan, who had lived in Europe for

many years, studying at Oxford, and taking German as a second language.

MacLennan is at his best when he is writing from his own experience. In this thesis, however, I have clearly demonstrated the other side of the coin. When describing the French Canadian world in Quebec, especially in Two Solitudes, relying mostly on the retrograde Trente Arpents and a colleague as reference, he was doomed from the start. As I have mentioned on many occasions during the course of this thesis, the writer knew too little of his subject and setting.

Although I do not share his fear of the nationalistic fervour in Quebec, I am sure that he was well intentioned when he set out to explore the cultural duality of the Canadian experience in Two Solitudes and again in Return of the Sphinx.

Return of the Sphinx as he himself had explained (Cameron's article) is a better-written novel. He fails to portray the reality of the French Canadian of the sixties, but he is probably close in identifying the sentiments of the English Canadians of the period. When the scene shifts to Ottawa with the Prime Minister Bulstrode(probably Diefenbaker) he seems closer to the reality of the time.

For MacLennan, the sixties in the province of Quebec, as we see in Return of the Sphinx, was the heart of the destructive matrist phase. The conservative patrist order he favours had given way to the degenerate world of revolution both sexual and political. In this novel, he tries to tackle a world he does not clearly understand, a world miles away from his orderly Oxford years. MacLennan at the time was a

Professor at McGill University, which was then considered the elite institution of the dominant English class. Ironically, it was also one of the issues of revolt on the part of Quebec students in the sixties with the "McGill Francais" demonstrations. As Cameron has demonstrated in her biographical work, at McGill, MacLennan was in an elite English environment. The few French teaching colleagues were from France and just as far removed from the situation in Quebec as he was himself. It is not surprising that in the turmoil of the sixties he was lost in a suddenly changing world. His earlier apprehensions depicted by characters, such as the nationalist Marius Tallard in Two Solitudes, whom he had portrayed as an insignificant lunatic, had come of age.

One of the main objections I have about both novels is their condescending attitude against Quebec nationalism. Never, in any of the two novels, has MacLennan chosen to develop a moderate French Canadian nationalist. There would have been many examples in both periods to choose from. Perhaps MacLennan's outsider life in Quebec did not permit him to notice them. The government of Jean Lesage at the turn of the sixties promoted the emancipation of Quebec but remained very much in touch with the Federal government. It mainly wanted to take back the control of its economy. When MacLennan chooses to illustrate this period only through a group of delinquent juvenile agitators, he is very much insulting the French people of this province.

When in Return of the Sphinx he tries to diminish the importance of militant characters such as Latendresse and Daniel Ainslie, by

ridiculing some of their revolutionary actions, MacLennan's condescending attitude seems to serve partisan political beliefs. He seems in the last stages of a battle against evolution. He is fighting a rearguard action to block an incoming phase—a matrist phase that he fears will be very destructive and ruin his country. Taylor says that the incoming phase was irreversible. MacLennan, who once might have accepted this, seems to have altered his thinking.

After all, maybe MacLennan was right about the fact that one man could make a change, could exert a lot of influence and carry hope for a population that had been disregarded for more than two hundred years. Unlike MacLennan expected, however, it did not come from a fascist leader with violent objectives but a man rooted in the provincial Liberal government. René Levesque, although not one of English-Canada's favourite politicians, had been one of the first in 1970 to denounce the F.L.Q.'s militant and violent actions. The cataclysm that MacLennan feared never really happened. Nor did we have to return to the Patrist period the writer was anticipating. The process is an ongoing one and has become more of a provincial-federal issue than a mere question of language. The old French-English dissensions will probably never really cease; they seem rooted in our heritage. Both sides in our day and age seem less interested in the earlier dissensions. Environmental and economic matters seem much more important battles than the old ones. Perhaps we are at a turn in our young country's history where we realize that the two founding nations of this country along with the natives have more in common than was noticeable a generation ago.

In view of what is happening around the world, we seem to have a lot more in common than we once thought. If the people of Canada, as they seem more inclined today than ever before, begin to look at their differences of culture and language as an asset rather than a problem perhaps some of MacLennan's old Victorian hopes might just be around the corner!

Love consists in this,
that two solitudes protect,
and touch, and greet each other

Rainer Maria Rilke
(T.S.)

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