A Terrorized Literature: Terror, Terrorism and Locating Identity in Three Québec Novels

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ABSTRACT

A Terrorized Literature

Daniele Pinese

This thesis examines three Québec novels: Hubert Aquin's *Prochain Épisode* (1965), Claude Jasmin's *Ethel et le Terroriste* (1964), and Michael Basilières' *Black Bird* (2003). During the 1960s, Québec identity moved away from traditional values—the preservation of religion and the mythology associated with rural life. This change lead to an uncertain literary project which grappled with the view that French-Canadian history was an inadequate base from which to construct a new, authentic, Québécois literary identity. *Prochain Épisode* and *Ethel et le Terroriste* are examples of this attempt to construct a new identity. However, both texts are unable separate story and history (*histoire* and *histoire*). Here, the figure of the terrorist is representative of a new paradoxical state of identity: the terrorist embodies ideas of revolution but is consistently confined by an inability to break free, via narrative, from the constraints of history. Michael Basilières' *Black Bird* is examined using the gothic mode as well as Charles Taylor's thoughts on G.W.F. Hegel's dialectic relationship between self and other. Though *Black Bird* employs similar strategies to *Prochain Épisode* and *Ethel et le Terroriste*, it acknowledges that both history and literature— *histoire*—are inadequate and contradictory; that a constant recognition of this fact best articulates any concept of a future Québec identity.

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Introduction: Nationalism Re-Territorialized

In *Reconciling the Solitudes*, Charles Taylor outlines the differing concepts of nationalism in the province of Québec before and after the Quiet Revolution. Broadly, Taylor defines the two streams of nationalism as reflective of a "difference both of style and of goal" (4). French-Canadian nationalist thinking, pre-1960, was conservative and defensive in its identity politics and "was meant to defend a civilization based on a set of values, mainly the religious values of a certain interpretation of Roman Catholicism and the linguistic values of the ancestral language" (5). Here, the preservation of religion and the French language are paramount to the definition of French-Canadian identity. Fearful of materialist North American values, this nationalism is characterized by a movement away from large cities, industrial centers, and the United States to Québec's rural areas in order to preserve the traditional French-Canadian way of life (5). Ultimately a failure both literally and figuratively as the rural landscape proved to be infertile and too harsh for productive cultivation, the myth of French-Canadian rural life later changed to connote "enforced incubation," isolation, and backwardness (4).

Not surprisingly, this change in perception toward the traditional is also reflected in French-Canadian literature. The rural environment and mentality of preservation pervades the literature of pre-1960s Québec.[1] During the period 1837-1937, the rural novel exemplified the French-Canadian genre. In these rural novels, the preservation of French-Canadian culture and identity are directly linked to the defense of the rural homeland as well as loyalty to the motherland of France (den Toonder 260). As critic Kathy Mezei points out in her analysis of Québec fiction pre- and post-1960, the rural

[1] A further analysis of the novel in Québec during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be found in Pierre de Grandpré's *Histoire de la littérature fraçaise du Québec*, Montréal, 1968-69, Vols 2 and 4.

and isolated Québec voice echoes an ideology built on the constraints put forth by the Catholic Church: this literature is didactic, moral, and decidedly accepting of the rural status quo (Mezei 896-7). Examples such as Louis Hémon's 1916 novel, *Maria Chapdelaine*, depict French-Canadian identity content with stasis, as Hémon's title heroine states:

> In this land of Quebec nothing has changed. Nor shall anything change, for we are the pledge of it. Concerning ourselves and our destiny but to one duty have we clearly understood: that we should hold fast—should endure. (Hémon 896)

Rural narratives such as Hémon's and those like it, where opportunity is forgone in favour of the reestablishment of rural and Catholic customs, limit the choices of its characters and embed this stasis in French-Canadian myth. But in doing so, Mezei argues, this nationalist narrative "contains the seeds of its own destruction" (896). The traditional values once thought to exemplify French-Canadian identity later change to connote notions of isolation, harsh environments, and death. The didactic message of rural life symbolizes, not tradition, but rather one that turns "resignation and misery into a national collective destiny" (897). This sentiment is also reflected in George-André Vachon's differentiation between what he terms the writing of Canada during the period of New France and its contemporary French-Canadian counterpart:

> I call Québécois writing those texts which for more than a century have been born of a real doubt about the possibility of a French settlement in

> British North America. They are the only ones which are truly alive.
> They are produced from a clear vision of death. (Vachon 194)[2]

What differentiates French-Canadian writing from writing in general, for Vachon, is writing must question the necessity of life and death in order to be relevant to the individual and, by extension, the nation. His attribution of French-Canadian writing only to death functions not as a literal device, but one that acknowledges the inevitable process of "assimilation to the Other" (Sarkonak 12). The threat proposed by this type of writing, in other words, is that the incessant voicing of difference in an isolated space (death) sidesteps the possibility to exist separately (life).[3] This "dead" writing resigns itself to assimilation via its own preservation.

This passive resignation toward a concept of collective identity built on tradition changes during the 1960s with the creation of a new form of nationalism. The basis of this nationalism is not built on the conservation of the traditional ways of French-Canadian rural life. Its goal was external and urban rather than internal and rural: to modernize French-Canadian society on the North American continent. Definitions of identity changed, as it was not tactic that moved away from encroachment; instead, it was a struggle to economically take control and rewrite a national narrative which was silenced in pre-Quiet Revolution Québec as a result of illiteracy and centralized economic

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[2] It should be noted that Vachon's term "Quebec writing" is somewhat premature as critics often label writing in Quebec pre-Quiet Revolution as "French-Canadian." So, it is useful to interpret Vachon's term as one that refers to French-Canadian writing. Further, the above citation is provided by Sarkonak, though his article provides no source for the English translation. Vachon's original French version is as follows: "J'appelle ÉCRITURE QUÉBÉCOISE les textes qui, depuis plus d'un siècle se nourrissent, et naissent, d'un doute reel quant à la possibilité d'une installation française en Amérique britannique du Nord. Ce sont les seuls vivants. Ils sont provoqués par la claire vision de la mort" (194).

[3] Vachon states, "J'appelle ÉCRITURE l'acte par lequel un homme tente, la plume à la main, une aventure dont il ne peut sortir victorieux ; pose et tente de résoudre une question insoluble— question de vie ou de mort — qu'il ne peut pas ne pas poser. C'est la somme des écrits nécessaires d'un homme, d'une nation" (194).

and political control (Sarkonak 9). During this period, the word Québécois came to denote what was previously referred to as French-Canadian (10). However, Sarkonak sees this new term of identity as proof that the feelings of resignation and misery, what he terms "national neurosis" and "inferiority/superiority complex," felt by isolated and uneducated French-Canadians during the previous 200 years (1763-1963), as a remedy to French Canada's instability of identity (10). It may have subdued an internalized anxiety, but the concept of a Québécois identity represented in writings of the 1960s is far from concrete. Nationalism was still based on the preservation of the French language but language came to denote a revolutionary association between self and nation that symbolized a *separate* identity (in terms of person and territory) "over and against" the surrounding English speaking continent (Taylor 13). In this way, the new nationalism was not internalized within the rural areas of Québec, but was a Québécois identity that defined itself against those outside Québec borders, culture, and language: identity became comparative, rather than isolated. However, as Taylor argues, comparative forms of identity are unstable: "to compare oneself with anyone else always raises the problem of identity" (13).[4] On the North American continent, Québécois had a choice to define themselves either as North Americans, or as comparatively different. As economic reforms and political writings of the period suggest, these two definitions were combined—the North American identity relieved anxieties of economic and political ghettoization but the Québécois identity was still regarded as separate from the rest of

[4] This is a generalized form of Charles Taylor's argument. Taylor sees the change in nationalism as a direct result of a new class of French-Canadians he terms the "new intelligentsia." In contrast to the old intelligentsia, which occupied a relatively small, French-speaking middle class, the highest attainable social position because of foreign ownership of property and business, the new intelligentsia was larger in number, more diverse with regards to profession, and ventured into small business (7-9). With this growing middle class combined with Montreal's growing population many French-Canadians became "less and less isolated from the English-Canadians and increasingly were being forced to operate with them in the scope of the same institutions and by the same set of rules" (10).

English North America. This blended identity resulted in "a violence of attitude and a strong rejection of the other identification" (14). In a sense, Québécois identity was simultaneously emptied due to its rejection of the traditional while it compared itself with its surrounding difference. The defense of this new nationalism was not of "anything existing; it was the creation of something new" (5). Outside of the promotion of the French language, the traditional was seen as negative (6).

The disposal of the traditional, combined with the promotion of the concept of a unique and distinct voice in predominantly English-speaking North America, leads to an uncertain literary and historical project in Québec. According to Sarkonak, the absence or rejection of a history embodied in literary tradition lead to a paradoxical and conflicting depiction of language as a distinct voice in Québec literature *tout court* [without qualification]. In other words, without a literary base from which to refer, the expression of identity becomes blurred and unlocatable, even in terms of difference: "The language is definitely French, referent resolutely North American, and the text creatively, productively Québécois. Is this the language of difference?" (20). History is rejected as a basis for the definition of a collective identity whilst this rejection of history denies a literary and narrative base from which to construct this new identity. This dilemma of being represents the ontological crisis for the literary project of 1960s Québec. As critic Pierre Nepveu argues in his analysis of poetry and the novel during and after Québec's Quiet Revolution, "Modern Québécois literature was born in the moment it could say: In the beginning, we do not exist" (100). Identity finds its source at the moment its literature exclaims its own historical non-existence.

The ontological problem of the Québécois identity raises the question, how can a collective identity be understood if its voice rejects history as its referent or interprets this history as not its own? Indeed, the creation of a *new* voice was the national project of revolutionary journals, like *Parti Pris*:

> There never has been a French-Canadian literature for the simple reason that there has never been a French Canada. We were only a few isolated communities living in a huge territory that was occupied and exploited by foreigners. The few voices who spoke sensibly shouted our nonexistence to us. Our literature will be Québécois or it will not be. (Girouard 30, translation Sarkonak)[5]

Journals like the *Parti Pris* attempted to relate "*La parole* (the word) and *le pays* (the country, the nation)" (Mezei 898). To extend Vachon's relation between writing, life, and death, the mission of the journal is one that was meant to revive the relationship between writing and the nation. There is an emphasis here on *writing*, rather than *spoken* language because Québec's identity problem was not just a language one, but one concerned with history, matters of record, of literature. The fact that Québec felt it had no national literature inscribes the problems of history, culture, and society into its written language.[6] Indeed, the problems of differentiation—those concerned with

[5] This quotation, as Sarkonak rightly points out, directly alludes to Canon Casgrain's comment in the nineteenth century that the literature of French Canada can not be if it is not moral and pious: "If literature is a reflection of the mores, character, capacities and genius of a people as it undoubtedly is, ours will be serious, meditative, spiritual, religious, evangelical like our missionaries, generous like our martyrs, strong and preserving like our pioneers of old. But it will be, above all, religious, imbued with faith . . . That is its sole condition of existence. It has no other *raison d'être*" (Canon Casgrain as cited in Bergeron 127-28).
[6] This differentiation between spoken and written language in Québec is reflected in its fascination with *joual*—a spoken version of French in Québec that takes its name from its pronunciation of *cheval*. As Malcolm Reid points out in *The Shouting Signpainters*, the working class phenomenon of *joual*, though rare in Québec, took on nationalist and symbolic meanings. Reid cites the 1960 Québec best-seller, *Les Insolences*, where, under the pen name Frère Untel, schoolteacher Jean-Paul Desbiens describes *joual* as a

culture, history, and language—become inscribed in the medium of language (Sarkonak 13). The voice of Québécois literature embodies its inability to integrate as well as define itself through the French language, which arguably is not wholly its own.

Terror and Terrorist:

From these ontological, historical, and linguistic problems with regards to the creation of a new identity and literature, one can interpret the fictional use of the terrorist in Québécois literature during the Quiet Revolution as a symbol analogous to Québec's literary crisis. Unlike contemporary discussions on terrorism, the phenomenon of terror and the figure of the terrorist as depicted in Québécois literature are closely tied to the struggle for a new national voice. Like the problems that arise in the attempt to create new national concepts of identity and literature without an historical referent, the depictions of terror and terrorist in Hubert Aquin's *Prochain Épisode* (1965), Claude Jasmin's *Ethel et le Terroriste* (1964), and Michel Basilières' *Black Bird* (2003), show literature as an inadequate device in which to construct coherent narrative of identity in terms of fulfilling notions of resolution. Embodied in the terrorist and these works of terror-fiction is an autoimmune response to a literature that cannot define a Québécois identity: the works paradoxically destroy their own attempts to create a new type of Québec literature in order to preserve a sense of non-resolution and thus an indefinable sense of difference. To write a literature with an anxiety toward historical referent is to write one that explodes history, to force an ever-present and changing identity conveyed

symbol reflective of Québec's identity crisis: "This lack of language that is joual is an example of our great French-Canadian nonexistence. You can never study language too closely. Language is the arena of all meanings. Our inability to assert ourselves, our rejection of the future, our obsession with the past, all this is reflected in joual, which is really and truly our language (Desbien cited in Reid 18).

through narrative forms that are too exploded. In other words, a novel that maintains this type of (non)difference is a formal embodiment of the terrorist, a voice of a persistent and indefinable outsider status.

Contemporary criticism has located the figure of the terrorist outside any means of identification. For instance, in his essay "Empires of the Senseless: (The Response to) Terror and (the End of) History," Walter Benn Michaels argues that to confront terrorism in contemporary society is only to do so ontologically: to battle terror is purely a struggle to *exist* rather than one of politics, religion, ideology, or nation. When one becomes a terrorist they must inevitably "leave their identities behind" (Michaels 107). In a similar line of argument, Jean Baudrillard, in his work *The Spirit of Terrorism* argues that the modern event of terror is elevated beyond reality, into Baudrillard's concept of the hyper-real: the reality of the event becomes *too* real, to the point where it is elevated into the fictional realm of the symbolic (Baudrillard 29). To view an act of terrorism, in other words, is to view reality but perceive it as fiction, thus limiting its ability to comment in terms of identity. This contemporary and unidentifiable figuring of the act terror and the terrorist is also evident in its literary representations. Traditionally, as Bili Melman explains, literature presents the terrorist "as an outcast" (Melamn 564), and as someone that "exists in a cultural, political and social vacuum, rejecting any framework and being rejected by it" (564).[7]

This thesis investigates how Québec writers—spanning linguistic and historical differences—when representing terrorists and acts of terror, use the figure of the terrorist and the theme of terrorism to construct a paradoxical form of national identity through.

[7] Melman's analysis of the terrorist is in reference to the likes of Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and Henry James's *The Princess Casamassima.*

In the novels to be examined, Terrorists are at once individually free and socially confined, artistically expressive and politically silenced, and nationally accepted and disposed. Terrorism is legitimated as a means of asserting national difference and simultaneously alienating as generally it becomes an end in itself, perpetuating an inability to fraternize. Here, terrorists are not revolutionaries in a political reality; rather, they are actors in an unrealistic and impossible national myth:

> The revolutionary pose is one of the main features of the fictional presentation of the terrorist. Terrorism is a mannerism. It is not an activity but a gesture. The terrorist is not doing, he is playing a part. (Melman 566)

Simultaneously, the terrorist and his actions are socially and politically real but the discrepancies surrounding the literary project as it pertains to the national concept of Québec present the terrorist and terrorist forms of writing as unable to grapple with revolutionary change as a result of terrorism. Revolution is a pose, a form of mannerism, a role that is played in order to illustrate Québec's inability to take control of its own narrative voice. In other words, the revolutionary and terrorist act, in these novels, is not a moment of change; rather, it is an event that returns the national voice to an incomprehensible and indefinable state of existence. The conclusions to these novels paradoxically force a backward examination of the narrative as a means of moving forward. Even though they thematically deal with the outsider status of the terrorist, these novels promote an outside identity that is still forced to return to its isolated and untellable origin.

In the first chapter, Hubert Aquin's *Next Episode* and Claude Jasmin's *Ethel and the Terrorist* are discussed in terms of their narrators' respective failure and success at enacting terrorism. Here, the bomb acts as a point of comparison between the two novels. Where Aquin's text represents not only its narrator's failure to detonate his bomb, Aquin's narrated text and the text his narrator writes while confined to a psychiatric hospital fail to resolve themselves as narratives. The text concludes as if waiting to detonate, which reduces language to a similar bomb-like state to behold rather than read: its conclusion is a mere visual statement to write a conclusion. Aquin's stated stasis is contrasted with Jasmin's narrative explosion. The opening bomb-blast of Jasmin's text offers a glimpse at revolution and its exploding of notions of time and place. This revelatory moment propels the text's narrator through a narrative obsessed with moving forward as a means to find agency in the present and construct a new sense of identity in America. Here, the fallout of the blast, the past that is left behind, is refused as an avenue to articulate identity in favour of a mythologized, reproducible, material, and assimilative concept of identity. Literally, identity becomes a costumed act. However, the narrator's insistence on forgetting is, by the novel's conclusion, ultimately confronted by the reality of the novel's origin: a nationalist Québec (the terrorist organization known as The Movement), which is representative of an ignorance that reduces identity to absolute and racial terms. By the novel's conclusion, the narrative regresses backwards. The narrator leaves New York the same way he arrived: as a terrorist incapable of redefining himself.

In the second chapter, Michel Basilières' *Black Bird* is discussed in terms of the "terrorist school" or the gothic mode of writing (Miles 2). As a novel published in 2003,

Basilières' text provides a new examination of the problems that prevent resolution in the two works of Québec literature discussed above. The discussion of the gothic mode alongside *Next Episode* and *Ethel and the Terrorist* is apt as the conventions of the genre function akin to Québec's perception of a rigid framework of history, which essentially functions as a template that writes a story before it is written. However, the gothic mode subverts the notion of the absolute, be it historical fact, definitions of identity, or objective perceptions of reality and language. In other words, the gothic mode, by definition, destabilizes confined concepts of identity, history, and reality. The analysis of the gothic mode in reference to an environment—the island of Montreal—which is literally and geographically isolated, as well as via language and history, allows for the collision of contradictory and bordered realities. The result is recognition of the marginal rather than a bordered, confined, and separate identifiable space. The resolution to this text, though similar to the strategies employed by Aquin and Jasmin as it also refers back to the novel's textual origin, embraces the inadequacies of history and its relation to identity. Unlike the discussed works of Aquin and Jasmin, themes of isolated identity—the borders between identities, self and other, history and myth, realism and the fantastic—come together in a work of terrorized literature as the text collapses its beginning and end. Here, fiction and history are continuously blended to create a new hybrid voice.

Chapter 1: Terror-Stories Without Resolution: Reproduction and Myth in Hubert Aquin's *Next Episode* and Claude Jasmin's *Ethel and the Terrorist*

Hubert Aquin's *Next Episode* and Claude Jasmin's *Ethel and the Terrorist* are comparable by way of their narrators' respective failure and success at enacting terrorism.[8] The success or failure of causing an event of terror can be used to examine the implications of terrorism on the perceptions of history and literature during Québec's Quiet Revolution. Each novel is a first-person interpretation of events initially conveyed to the reader by way of a nameless, terrorist narrator. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, Québécois literature, during the Quiet Revolution, rejected French-Canadian history as a basis for a national literature:

> [T]he widespread belief, at the time of the Quiet Revolution, that the Québécois people were outside history or had as yet no history, must be taken as aesthetic pathos: this belief opened up a negativity which allowed timeless discourse . . . to flourish, all the while maintaining with narrative a dual relationship of refusal and desire. (Nepveu 94)

The refusal to acknowledge the past, as well as the desire to restart an historical narrative, to reestablish a voice with a national origin, finds its revolutionary symbol in the terrorist: a figure that represents the choice between life and death, the desire for, or refusal of action. If, as Aquin writes in his essay, "Occupation: Writer," the terrorist stands outside "the dialogue which binds dominator and dominated" and "speaks alone," then the terrorist's failure or success at terrorism can be read as the failure or success at producing

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[8] Originally, Aquin's novel was published in French as *Prochain Épisode* (1965). This chapter uses Sheila Fischman's 2001 English translation. Claude Jasmin's novel (*Ethel et le Terroriste*) was first published in French in 1964. The English version examined here is translated by David S. Walker in 1965.

an authentic and separate national narrative (54). Here, the exploding bomb marks a revolution, a zero-hour of historical and literary record. *Next Episode* is a novel that depicts Nepveu's discourse of negativity and timelessness as its terrorist-narrator sits and writes while perpetually waiting for history to begin. Aquin's text, in other words, is a depiction of an isolated national voice reduced to monologue—a narrative which originates in an environment of literal containment (a prison cell) that gestures outside the walls via language in an attempt to relate the self with the nation. The ultimate failure of this relationship illustrates not only the inadequacies of written language, but also the irony of the literary project in Quebec: Passing the time writing, filling space, while being confined by an unwanted or rejected historical narrative which thwarts attempts at starting anew.

Aquin's narrative without a revolutionary beginning finds its historical counterpart in Jasmin's *Ethel and the Terrorist*, which begins with the exploding of a bomb, and consequently, the exploding of an imprisoning historical narrative. As Nepveu explains, the absence of history as a basis for a Québec literature causes the resulting historical void to be filled with myth:

> With the historicity of the Québécois people and their literature not yet established, the writer had to fill the empty space with myth, accepting the absence of history while at the same time laying the foundation for future history (Nepveu 95-6).

According Roland Barthes, myth, by refusing history as a referent, creates a narrative space that is based purely in the evident, "a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth" (*Myth* 143). This narrative space without contradiction is the

world of *Ethel and the Terrorist*. Jasmin's novel is a myth of escape and immediacy. It represents a fleeing from a past rife with contradiction and a need to immediately assimilate oneself in the historical and narrative fallout. As the author's note to Jasmin's *Ethel and the Terrorist* suggests, a further concern of the novel's fictional account of a Québec terrorist who flees to the United States after detonating a bomb, is the definition of a Québec identity. According to the author's note, the impetus of Jasmin's novel is the horrific murder and conflicting identity of Wilfred O'Neil, who was killed in 1963 as a result of a Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) terrorist bombing:

> The writing of this book is one manifestation of the acute examination of conscience which seized French Canada in the spring of 1963. Nationalists all—or virtually all—and sympathetic to separatist agitation, to a degree, the people of Quebec were rudely shaken when a terrorist bomb exploded in a Canadian military recruitment centre in Montreal, killing the night watchman Wilfred O'Neil (he of Irish surname and French tongue).
>
> "We felt it our duty as writers to enlighten the people."

The examination of conscience—recognition of a Québec identity that is composed of different and fragmented nationalities and histories—is also represented as a kind of shrapnel in the novel: fragments of a national whole which become evident only after the terrorist bombing. The journey to New York, outside the defined borders of Québec, forces an outside-look-in at an identity that is unwilling to accept outsiders. The explosion is necessary, in a figurative sense, in order to see what truly is contained in the borders of Québec. The journey back to Québec is met with recognition of the narrator's

past and the contradictions it embodies. Despite the terrorist's efforts to forget and narrate an ever-present text, the past is inescapable. Indeed, both Aquin's and Jasmin's narrators succumb to the perception that forms of writing are predetermined. The desire to start over results in a resolution that fails to move forward; instead, each narrative spirals into uncontrollable self-sabotage. Even as terrorists, the novels' protagonists fall victim to imposed narrative structures.

In his essay, "Occupation: Writer," Aquin describes literature as a form of unoriginal expression. For Aquin, literature is not unoriginal because of the writer's inability to create; instead, the blame lies with the audience, through no fault of their own, as "the originality of a piece of literature is directly proportional to the ignorance of its readers" (51). This ignorance stems from Aquin's argument concerning history as it applies to literature. History, he argues, is a totalizing and thus co-opting force of difference and writing "original" literature that promotes variance is superfluous within this vacuous historical narrative. For the minority, literature promotes a fashioning of originality and ultimately showcases only an "illusion of difference" ("Occupation" 51):

> There is no originality: works of literature are reproductions . . . run off from worn out plates made from other "originals" reproduced from reproductions that are true copies of earlier forgeries that one does not need to have known to understand that they were not archetypes but simply variants. (51)

Aquin's thoughts on the reproduction of literature are similar in argument to Walter Benjamin's relation between reproduction and art. For critics like Benjamin, the act of reproduction disassociates the object reproduced from its original function. For

Benjamin, the implications of capitalism's modes of mass production result in the diminishing of an object's aura, or "the authenticity of a thing" (Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 221). Aura, which is based on of the object's "presence in time and space" (220) represents a "unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (220). However, as the object is reproduced, this unique existence is lost and reinvented:

> By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. (221)

The object with aura is abolished as it is reproduced and the unique function of the original gives way to a relative meaning dependent on the reproduced objects' new "beholder or listener"—a new interpreter as numerous as the amount of reproductions. No matter how close the reproduction is to its 'beholder or listener,' there still maintains an historical distance: "True to its nature, [the object] remains 'distant, however close it may be'" (243). The function of the disseminated reproduction changes, to not one rooted in history but the political as it becomes fluid and open to relative interpretation (224). What reproduction does, according to Benjamin, is re-create the historical—aura (time and place) becomes re-temporalized, re-situated, and thus un*origin*al. Indeed, to perceive of history through the reproduced object in this way is to do so through a copy that allows for a constant assembly of meaning in the present. Where Benjamin's ideas on reproduction can be interpreted as a form of liberation from a totalizing perception of history by way of the reproduced object's initiation of a relative interpretation of the past, for Aquin, the reproducibility of literature is part of a dominating history and inscribed in

the act of writing.[9] Writers, Aquin argues, "cannot escape being formalists in the sense that their very existence is defined by the forms they use and which establish their uniqueness as authors" ("Occupation" 53). What establishes writers as "unique" is their treatment of form: difference is only defined within a larger and historically set system of order. For Aquin, the situation of the writer is directly related to that of the Québécois, who he argues are dominated by a predefined system of Confederation, which has institutionalized inequality and encourages the dominated to reproduce relative meaning (9). The inclination to produce and reproduce becomes an ongoing necessity for the dominated: "For want of realities, there is an overproduction of symbols...Survive or disappear" (53). Reproduction of reality through literature only provides a fleeting state of uniqueness that must be perpetually reproduced and thus remain unstable as basis for a national definition:

> [T]o be dominated is to live a novel written in advance, to conform unconsciously to patterns of behaviour which are sufficiently ambiguous for their meaning to escape those who are caught up in them. (53)

According to Aquin, this totalizing view of history and its constant encouragement to produce difference results in perpetual narration and an ever-changing literary and national voice. In a sense, history becomes story. The pun here, as Anthony Purdy

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[9] For critics like Walter Benjamin, linear conceptions of history represent a threat to mankind's agency in the present. Linear history, in the Benjaminian sense, is an "aestheticized, and totalized past . . . that ultimately produces, and justifies, the present" (Steinberg, "Collector as Allegorist" 90). Essentially, to think of history as a linear process is to see the present in terms of the past: time and space are stable along a continuum. In this form of history, the passage of time is a mechanized, rational, and stable progression that is "lived merely by marking time" (Wohlfarth, "Smashing the Kaleidoscope" 200). Thus, it is only possible to "live" the past objectively. The mechanized and stable version of the past is viewed through a merely objective "marking" of time's passage, thus displacing a means to subjectively interpret it, trapping the present at the end of an 'aestheticized' and thus unchangeable past. In other words, as Kittsteiner writes regarding Walter Benjamin's thoughts on history, the individual in the present lacks agency in reference to this objective and linear form of the past: "[History] derives from human actions alone, but in its totality it cannot be causally initiated by humankind" (Kittsteiner, "Philosophy of History" 47).

explains, is between story and history: *histoire* and *histoire*. Because *histoire* is being constantly created, a criticism of *histoire* can be done only by telling how *histoire* is produced, while being told (Purdy, "Form," 886). Aquin makes this claim because from this unstable view of *histoire*, Québec "suffers from a disability to tell its own story" (886). French-Canadians, in other words, are perpetually bound to be a people "without literature and without history" (Purdy, "Introduction," xvi).

For Aquin, the solution to this paradox is a terrorist form of writing, which is tied to his political and revolutionary position as a separatist.[10] Terrorist writing is to opt out of formal and narrative coherence in favour of incoherence and monologue: "outside the dialogue which binds dominator and dominated" ("Occupation" 54). From this terrorist position, one can "speak alone" (54). The Québec writer who opts for incoherence can speak outside the laws which have determined his writing and the history of his nation. Here, the incoherent and terrorist form becomes a medium which adequately voices the paradox inscribed in the literature of Québec while simultaneously being separate from Aquin's totalizing and co-opting perception of *histoire*. The systematic and linguistic base of *histoire* is abolished: "Syntax, form, the meaning of words—all are subject to explosion" (57).

Aquin's *Next Episode* represents a failure of this terrorist form of writing. Imprisoned in a Montreal psychiatric hospital, the novel's nameless narrator immediately attempts to write a spy novel with the intent of surpassing the conventions of the genre:

[10] It is important to note here that Aquin did not promote violence as a method of change. His discussion of the terrorist is in reference to a form of writing. Aquin, according to his essay "The Politics of Existence," favoured a democratic method of change: "I am not an advocate of the *coup d'état*, or the *putsch* or of its related forms; even if, in retrospect, yesterday's *coup d'état* seems to me to have been inevitable. I think tomorrow's should still be denounced. . . We live in a political context coloured by British parliamentarianism and we like things to run smoothly. Violence cannot be learned over night; politics, fortunately, can. That is our only chance. Let us not grow careless just when we are starting to have some kind of method" (13).

> There are no distractions then, nothing to replace the clockwork of my obsession or make me deviate from the written record of my journey. Basically, only one thing really concerns me and it's this: how should I set about writing a spy novel? My wish is complicated by the fact that I long to do something original in the genre that has so many unwritten laws. (*NE* 1)

The isolation of the narrator induces the need not to record biographical events, but to create an original work of fiction within a conventional system that requires an inherent knowledge of "unwritten laws." Anthony Purdy's essay, "The Politics of Incoherence" outlines the "laws" or conventions of the spy novel during Aquin's time. Purdy's analysis of the genre finds that the world it creates is one of myth, "of absolute oppositions which allow no ambiguities, contradictions, or critical distinctions" (92).[11] Purdy's comparison of the spy novel and myth further relates the narrator's choice to write in this particular genre to the situation of Québec. In other words, the narrator's novel, like Aquin's thoughts on Québec as a nation confined by the structure of Confederation, is "written in advance" (92). Further, the narrator's project is a refusal to write history combined with the impossibility to write original narrative. Both facets of *histoire* are defeated. The fact that the narrator is housed in a psychiatric hospital adds to this refusal and impossibility to be part of a system or society at-large, all-the-while being unable to step outside this totality because one is part of it:

> Psychiatry is the science of individual imbalance enclosed within a flawless society. It enhances the standing of conformists and the well-

[11] Purdy's distinction of myth is similar to that presented by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*: "[Myth] organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear by themselves" (*Myth* 143).

> integrated, not those who refuse; it glorifies all forms of civil obedience and acceptance. It's not just the solitude I'm battling here, but the clinical imprisonment that casts doubt on my effectiveness as a revolutionary. (*NE* 7-8)

The narrator's immediate and imagined environments simultaneously present the opportunity for a revolutionary moment but literally and figuratively, the four walls of the cell and the four edges of the paper enclose and isolate the subject's attempts at originality. In this bordered space, the narrator's only revolutionary opportunity is suicide, one that will subvert both forms of self-containment: "I am a prison of my madness, locked up inside my probationary helplessness, crouching over a piece of paper as white as a sheet with which one hangs oneself" (15).

However, the reader is not given a literal suicide of the narrator; instead, the novel becomes a literary or narrative suicide. As Fredric Jameson argues, Aquin's novel does not function with normal narrative conventions in mind. Doubles and binaries—such as self and other, truth and secret—the mirror images or "keys," which cause predictable solutions in narrative are replaced with mirage (217-8). The "infinite proliferation of such mirror images" (218) results in a "pseudonarrative" (219) of a room: a narrative that progresses but remains ultimately confined to the psychiatric ward where it originates. The hotel room in Montreal, in Lausanne, the reciprocal chases between self and other, terrorist (narrator) and historian (H. de Heutz), all points of perspective meaning, contribute to a narrative without resolution being written by its author and ultimately read in solitude by its readers (219). Indeed, for Jameson, the narrative becomes one of shooting not writing, a series of objects aligned on a page rather than an interpretive

whole, mere furniture in a room that functions as a printing press does for the totalizing narrative of history. To elaborate on Purdy's pun, *l'histoire* becomes a series of literal symbols, objectified letters, and thus a dead-end *histoire*.

In a narrative that is doomed to fail, the actions of the narrator do not break free from *histoire*, the one he is creating and the one outside both the text and his room. The narrator exclaims, "I am not writing, I am written" and acknowledges the impossibility of resolution in terms of writing and existence inside and outside the text (*NE* 61). The narrator states, "This hybrid novel," which is simultaneously story and history, "is merely a disorderly variation on other books by unknown writers" (62). Caught in the perception that the larger narrative of history disables one's ability to tell one's story, the narrator's writing becomes a form of distraction rather than interpretive narrative:

> Mired in a bed of clay, I follow the course, I never invent. That holds true for everything I write: here I am, deep in an impasse where I no longer want to move forward. That depressing observation ought to let me break free of it and find a counter-truth to make up for it. But I can find nothing beyond my evidence, especially because I resist transposing into a rigid system. (*NE* 62)

The larger system of *histoire*, the system "of other books by unknown writers," is refused as a source of terrorist writing. Indeed, the narrator relinquishes his authority as author to that of the copier: the goal of writing becomes a depressing exercise of following "the course," a disordered compilation of objective evidence. Even the presumed climax of the novel, the narrator's terrorist, waiting for de Heutz to return to his residence so that he

may kill him, views de Heutz's print of Benjamin West's, "The Death of General Wolfe" with admiration:

> I notice that just above the chest of drawers he's hung a very rare engraved reproduction of "The Death of General Wolfe" by Benjamin West; the original, which belongs to the Marquis of Westminster, hangs in the Grosvenor Gallery. The print is now worth more than the large canvas. It's a genuine masterpiece printed from his original by the painter himself. (89)

Arguably the origin of Québec's historical and literary predicament as the scene depicted in the painting takes place during the Battle of Québec, which represented a victory of British forces over the French, the protagonist's admiration of de Heutz's copy can be interpreted as a literal reproduction of narrative and historical beginning. Further, his description of the print is not based on the historical significance of the painting. Instead, the focus is on the story of the painting's (re)production. The origin of Québec's history, in other words, becomes an object removed from its origin: the painting is not the original housed in the Grosvenor Gallery and therefore, in the context of the terrorist's viewing, the story of the copy is not significant to history.

If the novel's representation of the origin of Québec's paradoxical and untellable history results in the story of that representation's reproduction, then the conclusion to Aquin's novel is fittingly a mere intention to write a concluding statement. This statement of intent to conclude not only defies an intention to convey meaning but it suggests that the novel itself is an agent of reproduction: "That's what I'll say in the final sentence of my novel. And, a few lines later, I shall write in capital letters the words:

THE END" (122-23). The description of the process of writing, like the reproduction of West's painting, reduces the narrative and the possible historical significance in it, to that of a blank object. It is one thing to conclude, but to state an intention to conclude while describing the process of conclusion creates an end-point that never exists in terms of the narrative. Instead, the ending is only visible in type: "THE END." The novel ends without a detonation, which results in neither a revolutionary beginning nor an end.

From this point of non-detonation an examination of Claude Jasmin's *Ethel and the Terrorist* can be made alongside Aquin's novel. Jasmin's novel opens with a nameless narrator's account of his act of terrorism. The narrator's detonation of a bomb is noticeably fragmented and conveys little objective information:

> No more long talks for me, summer or winter, on the sunlit streets. Noon already! I had to be careful. The flash when it went off! A little smoke. Sound of digging two streets away. It's all vague now, I was so scared. Noon. Time goes fast. (11)

In the passage, the specific moment and location of the bomb blast is juxtaposed with the broad expanse of the lit urban environment. Where the "sunlit streets" are associated with "long talks" throughout the seasons, once the speaker invokes his act of terrorism, the brief "flash" of the bomb explosion, language and time are also exploded and become formally fragmented and scattered as one proceeds through the passage. Immediately, the reader becomes aware of the narrator's struggle to remember the past after the explosion of his bomb: "Time goes fast." Indeed, the struggle to remember after the explosion that initiates the narrator's escape to the United States is also an effort to construct a new timeless history without reference to a past. The explosion ends the

narrator's concern with the past. Reading the above passage, and the novel that follows it, is like moving forward through historical wreckage in the present. The struggle that faces Jasmin's narrator is how to begin a Québec narrative outside of Québec, how to find meaning in a present without referring to an unspeakable past. Here too history is debilitating when wanting to move forward. Moving forward thus becomes a form of assimilation, an on-going and mechanized assembly of identities.

The novel's use of the automobile provides an immediate manifestation of this mechanization of identity. The fact that the narrator and Ethel, his Jewish girlfriend, travel to New York in an automobile is significant in terms of the automobile as a symbol of America. As Deborah Clarke explains in her work *Driving Women*, where she analyzes the significance of the automobile in American fiction, the automobile acts like an objectified or material version of a nation. Not only does the automobile symbolize America in terms of the individualism it promotes, but "Novels in which citizenship is a highly contested sphere, the car often supplants home and even national origin as the site of identity and identification" (Clarke 168). The environment inside and outside the automobile displace a uniqueness of origin and identity and encourage assimilation. Rather than separating the concepts of origin (Québec) from their destination (New York), the automobile, and America itself, present the narrator with an ongoing mechanized and reproduced environment which allows for new forms of assimilative identity: "we stop every fifty miles only to see the same service station, parking lot and cafeteria. The same old junk stores, same menus and the same American coffee. . . We try to look natural" (32). To look natural in this predictably reproduced landscape is to consume, to constantly relate oneself with objects like the automobile: "[The automobile]

situates an individual in a kind of borderland but one grounded in material reality; cars, after all, demand fuel and maintenance and rely upon actions of real people" (Clarke 167). In the novel, going forward also relies on the maintenance of identities in order to move further from the past.

The past that is left behind by Ethel and the narrator is contradictory to their experience in America. What is left behind is a literal connotation of death, a result of the bomb's detonation, as well as one analogous to Québec's perception of history, which prevents the opportunity to voice an authentic national narrative. In a material and assimilating destination like New York, opportunity to move forward is contrasted with the origin of Québec, complete with its literal and historical connotations of death: "You see, we can't keep our minds off reaching New York, the top of the world, the end of America, the illuminated spring board. We were wasting our time back there. Why? Because we left death back there" (37). However, this is not to say that the present state of being in the novel is one that revives a sense of freedom to identify oneself in a concrete manner, as the journey through repetitious scenes of gas stations and parking lots causes the narrator to think, "We're really dead people wandering about in North America like zombies" (36). Rather, the differentiation between origin and destination in the novel is one of opportunity for a future that is unwritten. Unlike Québec, where a return journey means to return to notions of literal and historical death, the reproductive aspects of the American environment in the novel allow for the construction of a future even if it means being part of an environment that encourages reproducibility by way of being part of an assimilative landscape. This paradoxical view of an environment that is

simultaneously imposing, assimilative, yet freeing is further shown in the narrator's imagined description of New York City:

> I try to recognize the surroundings, the future, the cherished future! I finally succeed in imagining gigantic masses in the air, kinds of monoliths forming strange barriers of darkness in a milky night lit by car lights penetrating into the inky blackness. Delicate symbols are visible in the distance that become enormous black signs: turns, tunnels, railing, unheard-of-signs, basic designs, anonymous sculpture—unfinished or temporary. (42)

The freeing aspects of the city are directly linked to its changing imposition of direction. The image of cars flowing through the distant city lights the darkness of the city's imposing silhouette and break the barriers of the seeming monolith. Though this initial impression is at a distance, even when the narrator enters the monolith the impression that is given is one that only temporarily dictates direction as the signs are "unfinished or temporary." In a sense, the environment, like the identity it promotes via assimilation, encourages a constant change of direction. Further, unlike Aquin's suicidal model of narrative, the reproducibility of the environment here, if taken as an allegorical description of writing, allows for the individual penetration of the "inky blackness" by way of the anonymity granted via the "unfinished or temporary" maneuvering through "black signs." In other words, the journey through the city and its narrative are never complete.

This freeing sense of narrative and identity through ideas of reproducibility and assimilation in America and New York is ultimately a futuristic myth in the sense that it

is an imagined environment that is directly and absolutely contrary to the past left behind in Québec. In this mythic space, differences of identity are resolved and the narrator and Ethel can exist without the concerns the Movement—the terrorist organization that the narrator is a part of, which excludes foreigners and maintains a "racial purity"— has with Ethel being Jewish (90). This mythic and contrary-free world is a manifestation of the narrator's refusal to acknowledge the past as well as desire for a future with Ethel. Indeed, the narrative depicts this mythic refusal to acknowledge the contradictions of the narrator's past and origin as Ethel and the narrator enact their literal desire for each other while wearing African, Chinese, and Egyptian masks and clothing. In this performed space outside reality, mythic "Tales of old will come true" and Ethel's "foreign" identity becomes, not one of prejudice, but of the possession of an object (87): "I have to discard all her Chinese apparel and her Egyptian head-bands to take complete possession of Ethel" (87). Real notions of identity and how they relate to the narrator's position within the Movement are refused in favour of a desirable ignorance of otherness.

This false and masked performance of identity while in America is demythologized as the reality in Québec catches up with the narrator. Fittingly, during this time, the narrator's anonymity is disposed of and his real name, "Paul," is finally given (84). Further, the myth of anonymity that coincides with Paul's initial perception of America is further thwarted as Slide, Paul's New York link with the Movement, makes contact even though he knows Paul has been pushed out of the terrorist organization. Slide's motivation for communicating with Paul is due to the similarities between his situation and that of Ethel's; because Slide is "a negro . . . [and it] would be the same way if Ethel had been black" (67). This revelation is a turning point for Paul, a sign that "The

true evil. . .is ignorance" (88), which causes a questioning of his, past, present, and future identities: "Tomorrow is Thursday and tomorrow I certainly would like to know who I am—who I've become" (93). Here, there is an absence of a definable present state of identity: Paul reflects on who he is and who he has become, a definition of the self throughout his existence, but this definition is contingent on "tomorrow" rather than his present state. Identity, once the myth is confronted with the reality of the past, becomes one that is uncertain and yet to be written.

Caught in an unidentifiable situation akin to Aquin's perception of Québec writers as figures whose form is predetermined by their precarious inability to write their own national version of *histoire*, the conclusion of Jasmin's novel depicts Paul in a narrative position that is beyond his control. Even though he agrees to act against the Movement and "play the game" (100) and "the role" (100) of informant for the federal agent that confronts him, he is picked up by the Movement before he has the chance. The events that follow—Paul plants a second bomb, returns to the car, finds Ethel waiting in the car, and receives orders to return to Montréal—cause a repetition of the actions that initiated the novel's beginning, only in the opposite direction (107-12). Ethel and the Terrorist are doomed to repeat the same yet antithetical voyage and narrative home.

Chapter 2: Meaning Lies in the Margins: Gothic Territories and Transgressing Borders in Michel Basilières' *Black Bird*

The gothic literary mode, or terrorist school of writing, reacts against Enlightenment tendencies to border its subjects. The Enlightenment program, according to Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, represents a gathering of objective knowledge "aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty" (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* 3). This liberation from fear, as Justin Edwards argues in *Gothic Canada*, which categorizes reality through bordered definitions of social laws in an attempt to stabilize forms of chaos, confines the self within "clear-cut notions of identity" (Edwards 92). The paradox of the libratory project, in other words, is that these prescribed boundaries of identity, what Edwards refers to as "borderlines," stabilize concepts of identity because they deny and exclude abstract or complex definitions that complicate these rigid borderings (92).[12] Ultimately, these ordered and bordered concepts result in binary definitions—what is and is not. However, gothic narratives often present subjects and moments that advocate in-between states of definition. The conveyance of in-between states and therefore complication of these *a priori* rules of Enlightenment law, according to Edwards, illustrates how

> the law sets up its own frustration… [and] highlights the lawful language that supports the social order, while simultaneously transgressing the Enlightenment principles of reason and logic upon which the law is conceived. (92-3)

[12] Critic Fred Botting also characterizes the gothic as a mode bent on subverting borders. Botting says the mode exhibits "boundlessness" with respect to reason (Botting 3). To Botting, the gothic mode favours a narrative style where "Passion, excitement and sensation transgress social proprieties and moral laws" (3).

Presenting exceptions to Enlightenment rules while emphasizing its rigid base of understanding allows the terrifying moments of the gothic—those moments of transgression—to highlight and blur the binaries of Enlightenment order (93). Here, in this indefinable and in-between space, the gothic mode destabilizes and re-examines previously objective-based notions of history, language, and consequently, identity, through alternate and subjective criteria.

The re-examination of history in the gothic mode is contingent on the comparison between a rational interpretation of the past with irrational and supernatural moments within the gothic text. Markman Ellis argues in *The History of Gothic Fiction* that the gothic's subversion of reason preys upon linear ideas of time and history; the rational, cause-and-effect progression of events. According to Ellis, the gothic mode caters to rational Enlightenment discourse and "approaches the supernatural as if it can be described or observed in the mode of formal realism" (22). But when this empirical form encounters the supernatural and transgresses rationality it prompts the irrational response of terror (Ellis 14). These irrational and terrifying responses, for Ellis, locate the gothic as "a mode of historicist criticism" (14). Essentially, the gothic "is served up as a self-conscious mode of questioning criticism that professes its own allegiance to enlightenment strategies" but simultaneously shows the limitations of those strategies (14). This formal engagement with Enlightenment discourse allows the gothic to infect an historical narrative with its own gothic version. But this response is double-edged: As a result of these gothic histories, gothic literature not only criticizes its own depiction of events by being blatantly and supernaturally false but proposes a "skepticism not only towards supernatural experience but towards all forms of credulity" (14), including "the

enlightenment construction of history as a linear account" (14). William Day agrees and argues that the gothic emphasis on the fantastic and irrational, complete with its blurring of fact and fiction, creates an historical mode unique to the gothic text:

> The creation of a fantasy world is an assertion of the existence of a timeless reality outside history . . . the author, and reader both accept the disappearance and irrelevance of history and replace the past with a world outside time. (Day 32-3)

In the gothic mode, history is fractured along the lines of what has happened and what has not with the gothic text transcending the binary between fact and fiction by occupying the middle. The gothic attempts to redefine the historical by exploring the past in a new—darkened— light.

This darkened look at the past and promotion of an in-between state of what is real and what is not, what Ellis calls a gothic progression "untoward," allows for the comparison of societal norms inside and outside the text (Ellis 14). As David Punter explains, though composing a conventional genre, those deemed gothic writers interpret the world against the norm:

> [T]hose writers who are referred to as Gothic turn out to be those writers who bring us up against the boundaries of the civilized, who demonstrate to us the relative nature of ethical and behavioural codes, and who place, over and against the conventional world, a different sphere in which these codes operate at best in distorted forms. (184)[13]

[13] Fred Botting argues this point along similar lines and locates the gothic as mode of returning to the past to explain that which the Enlightenment left unexplained: "Enlightenment rationalism displaced religion as the authoritative mode of explaining the universe and altered conceptions of the relations between individuals and natural, supernatural and social worlds. Gothic works and their disturbing ambivalence can

Writing against the "boundaries of the civilized" allows the gothic to comment outside the text by creating a past that is contrary to present moral and rational standards.[14] Gothic literature forces one to acknowledge the present via the presence of the degenerate, uncultured, and supernatural past within the text:

> The Gothic dwells in the historical past, or identifies 'pastness' in the present, to reinforce a distance between the enlightened now and the repressive and misguided then. The tyrants and monsters of this mode represent an attempt to exorcize the ghosts of the past. (Mighall xviii)

Present societal conventions addressed by the gothic, then, are linked to the mode's depiction of *its* "pastness" insofar as exorcizing ghosts and monsters forces a backward or negative definition of the present: the present is seen through the gothic lens of what it is not, through its supernatural and historical other.

Similar to this subversion of the present and linear interpretations of history, moments of gothic transgression also demand a rethinking of confined notions of identity. Fred Botting discusses the terrorizing elements that result from the mode's encounters with the irrational. According to Botting, these gothic transgressions, which take the form of immoral behaviour and supernatural occurrences, induce a sense of terror onto the genre's characters and readers due to the supernatural opposition to rational and social norms (4). Consequently, the response of terror questions the very foundation of the prescribed order:

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thus be seen as effects of fear and anxiety, as attempts to account for or deal with the uncertainty of these shifts. They are also attempts to explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained, efforts to reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle . . . [The] Gothic was a site of struggle between enlightened forces of progress and more conservative impulses to retain continuity" (Botting 23).

[14] Fittingly, this comparative result is embodied in the very definition of the word gothic. As Robert Mighall explains, the term, originally used to denote the northern tribes that sacked Rome in the fourth century, always "carries a (pseudo-) historical inflection, and testifies to one culture's views of its perceived cultural antithesis" (Mighall, xv).

> Gothic terrors activate a sense of the unknown and project an uncontrollable and overwhelming power which threatens not only a loss of sanity, honour, property or social understanding but the very order which supports and is regulated by the coherence of those terms. (7)[15]

The threat to the base of social understanding and order that results from terror allows the characters and readers of the gothic to subjectively experience and interpret their respective realities through alternate criteria. The use of terror causes "an opening out of imagination that leads to amazement and bewilderment" as a result of posing an epistemological obstacle for characters and readers alike (Hogle 9). More than a device of reading delight, however, this terrorizing engagement of interest propels characters and readers toward the unknown and forces recognition and finally expansion of their notions of self:

> Terror, in its sublime manifestations, is associated with subjective elevation, with the pleasures of imaginatively transcending or overcoming fear and thereby renewing and heightening a sense of the self and social value: threatened by dissolution, the self, like the social limits which define it, reconstitutes its identity against the otherness and loss presented in the moment of terror. The subjective elevation in moments of terror is thus exciting and pleasurable, uplifting the self by means of emotional expenditure that simultaneously excludes the object of fear. In

[15] Botting is not alone in his definition of gothic terror as a destabilizing force that stems from the limitation objective understanding. Jerrold Hogle also relates this notion of terror to the exploration of the objectively indefinable and unknown. For Hogle, inducing a feeling of terror is done so by limiting situational knowledge, which consequently holds both "characters and readers alike mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in the shadows or suggestion from a hidden past" (Hogle 3).

> the process, fear and its darkly obscure object is externalised and limits are reconstituted between inside and outside. (Botting 9-10)

The moment of terror is not only a confrontation with feared forms of otherness: rather, the encounter with the unknown is a simultaneous recognition of the societal boundaries which define the self. In the moment of terror, self-definition is expanded as the other is re-excluded.[16] However, though the definition of the self is expanded, moments of terror function via a negative positioning of the subject. This expansion is only realized *against* terrorizing events or forces. The encounter with the sublime—the recognition that "in great natures their very greatness spells danger"—is also a paradoxical confrontation with the self and the thought of his or her own dissolution (Longinus 219). Only the mental thought of demise and threat to order initiates the cause for renewed self-definition.

The argument that gothic forms of terror result in an expansion of a self-conceived identity only when it is threatened stems from the inadequate inclusivity of the ideology in which the gothic genre originates. Indeed, the examination of Enlightenment discourse allows one to locate how the gothic manifests these inadequacies in forms of otherness. Historically, the origin of gothic writing is located during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment's pursuit of objective and standardized knowledge. As Mary Louise Pratt explains, the second half of the eighteenth century represents a gathering of objective knowledge with the goal of "making order out of chaos" in the natural world (Pratt 25). Pratt, via Michel Foucault, argues that the classificatory project of the eighteenth century brought the designation between words and objects closer together

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[16] For Botting, this expansion of the self's definition is what distinguishes the confrontation with terror from horror. Botting argues that "if terror leads to an expansion of one's sense of self, horror describes the movement of contraction or recoil...Terror expels after horror glimpses invasion, reconstituting the boundaries that horror has seen dissolve" (10).

due to its categorizing gaze. This objectification created a form of "natural history" built on Cartesian notions of the self as "all-knowing and self-sufficient" that is ultimately "indifferent to difference, and [produces a] consequent refusal to accommodate that which is not human" (Gandhi 39). Enlightenment ideology has a predisposition to visual differences, which objectively alienates non-human otherness.

Conventionally, these differences embody themselves in the gothic's use of the monstrous. From the perspective of the dominant objective discourse, a monster is an anomaly; it "is a being without a place in the cosmic order" and is thus unlocatable in reference to the world (Brown 196). The monster is a figure that resists objective classification. Also, if one is to analyze the monster at the level of language, unlike Foucaultian word/object association, it becomes "a floating signifier . . . [that] exists beyond or before language, not within it" (198). The monster, by being outside language and outside historical and human realms of identification, then, pushes an objective-based language's ability to convey meaning beyond comprehension (Foucault, *Les Anormaux* 58–61). In the gothic, therefore, the reaction to the monster "cannot be properly perceived [because] it cannot be looked on without panic" (Brown 198). The visual confrontation with the monster is a confrontation of both objective visual based otherness and indefinable subjective fear, as a result of its unlocatable chaotic nature within a system of objective language and knowledge.

The conventional placement of the monster as an outsider and the terrorizing response it incites upon viewing illustrates not only its outsider status within an objective system of language and knowledge, but also the ability of the terrorizing experience to destabilize the universal order rooted in that system. This inability to compromise fear

within an objective system of understanding, however, is not just manifested in the monstrous confrontation, but is a general outcome when Enlightenment discourse encounters indefinable moments of subjectivity. The Enlightenment did not just attempt to classify its objective reality. Its objective and classificatory gaze was also turned inward toward the human mind, for "feelings, desires and calibrating all forms of knowledge and behaviours" were also objectively analyzed (Smith and Andrews, "The Enlightenment" 2). If one is to extend Pratt's use of Foucault here and apply the Enlightenment gaze to the abstract emotions and behaviours of humanity, objective definition and classification become subjectively blurred and, consequently, also *other-ed*. For, how does one objectively define abstract subjectivity? As David Punter explains: "[T]o consider the passions and emotions as mere subject faculties to be brought under the sway of all-dominant reason, as the Enlightenment thinkers did, will render those faculties all the more incomprehensible" (Punter 24). In other words, as the Enlightenment attempted to objectify the "subject faculties" of humanity using a discourse based on objective classification, it created a second discursive other in addition to the visual, one rooted in the objectively "incomprehensible" faculties of the subjective mind. Inherently, then, Enlightenment discourse paradoxically carries its own monstrous and dual-identity: it is inherently inclined to push its visual as well as subjectively perceived realities outside its own discursive borders.

The gothic exploits the attempts to define one's reality through an objective ideology. Indeed, the gothic emphasizes "Ambivalence and uncertainty [in order to] obscure single meaning" (Botting 3). Because the emphasis on objectivity carries with it inherent others, defining oneself in a reality must be done so negatively—in opposition to

objective differences as well as a divided self. As stated above, the visual confrontation with the unknown initiates a terrorized expansion of the subjective definition of the self. Identity is, thus, a paradoxical exercise in the gothic: encountering the limits of objective ideology, initiates terror, which consequently expands a subjective self-definition. The expansion of the self is dependent on a dialectic relationship with the other. The expansion of self-identity is an ongoing confrontation of opposites: each is necessary for the other.

This dialectical relationship between self and other is similar in argument to G.W.F. Hegel's theory of self-identity as shown in Charles Taylor's *Hegel and Modern Society*. Taylor defines the movement of expressivism as a reaction to Enlightenment perceptions of man "as both subject and object of an objectifying scientific analysis" (Taylor 1). Like the gothic complication of an objectified world outlook, Taylor interprets the works of Herder and his ideas of an objective view of the individual as "against a view of man as the subject of egoistic desires, for which nature and society provided merely the means of fulfillment" (1). Here, the individual is merely utilitarian in motivation: happiness stems from scientific, social, and moral alignment. Herder and his notion of expressivism reacts against this Enlightenment positioning of man within an organized system; instead he favours the idea that unity was not a form of organization, rather it is analogous to a piece of art, where "every part or aspect only found its proper meaning in relation to all others" (1-2). Thus the artistic perception of the individual acknowledges that Enlightenment views of man relied on the suppression of the subjective sides of inherent dichotomous relationships between reason and sensibility (2).

This suppression, according to Taylor, "isolated the individual from society, and cut men off from nature" (2):

> Man is not body and mind compounded but an expressive unity englobing both. But since man as a bodily being is in interchange with whole universe, this interchange must itself be seen in expressive terms. Hence to see nature just as a set of objects of potential human use is to blind ourselves and close ourselves to a greater current of life which flows through us and of which we are a part. (3)

In other words, the failure to acknowledge man's relationship to the whole universe is to dismiss his potential to express his part in it. In expressivism, man is dialectically linked to the world in which he lives and the one he aims to express: the subject is the "centre of consciousness, perceiving the outside world and itself" (16). From this inside and outside position of identity, man recognizes that he is a mere part of nature rather than its sole voice.

Expressivism's dialectical view of man, however, is one that can only flourish within a community, as the community is described as an institution that not only sustains its members, but is also the source where individuals find the means to express themselves. For an explanation of this expressive source, Taylor cites Herder's idea of the "volk":

> [T]he Volk as Herder describes it is the bearer of a certain culture which sustains its members; they can isolate themselves only at the cost of great impoverishment. We are here at the point of origin of modern nationalism. Herder thought that each people had its own peculiar guiding theme or

> manner of expression, unique and irreplaceable, which should never be suppressed and which could never simply be replaced by any attempt to ape the manners of others. (2)

For Herder, and afterwards, Hegel, the nation allows for expression and autonomy to flourish. Autonomy meant that the subject was not bound to the laws of the physical. Subjective motivations like desire, dogmatic religious commands, and other demands of society do not dictate the freedom of the subject (4-5). The paradox that results is thus one that reflects an imbalance between "self-conscious freedom on one side, and life in the community on the other; the opposition between self-consciousness and communion with nature" (8).

The answer to this paradox, for Hegel, is to see oneself in a progressive interpretation of history meant to constantly encounter the limits of identity and otherness. This historical structure is described by Taylor as a "spiral vision of history, where we return not to our starting point but to a higher variant of unity, expressed at once [in] the sense of opposition between the two ideals and the demand, flaming up to a hope, that the two will be united" (8). The historical solution is dialectical: Each opposition is made inexplicable on its own by way of the equation that "A is A; A is -A; -A is A" (15). Essentially, the recognition is that each identifiable opposite or other is each other's opposite. Self and other become simultaneously identical and contrary but are only to be defined in a linked relation to each other (15). Like the gothic confrontation and need to acknowledge the other to become more self-aware, Hegel's symbiotic model of identifiable opposites is contingent on the progressive encountering of opposites toward an ultimate sense of unity. Otherness is thus necessary to the

eventual and autonomous concept of the self and visa versa. However, this Hegelian model does rely on the incorporation of these contradictions as the historical narrative progresses both cyclically and in a linear fashion: "things come to be and pass away. Pass away they must, because they contradict the very basis of their existence, which is to express rational necessity" (56). The desired outcome is still an empirical one based on the development of a sense of perfect knowledge, where ultimately "contradictions in reality. . . are reconciled in a larger synthesis" (58).

Black Bird and the Spiraling Gothic:

An application of Hegel's dialectic spiral to Michel Basilières' gothic novel, *Black Bird*, collapses the borderlines between the isolate interpretations of reality that inhabit the novel. The novel's initial description of Montreal is imposing and isolates man from his environment. The novel's introductory words, "Montreal, an island" provide the reader with a literal space that instills themes of containment (*BB* 1). Indeed, the initial description of city imbues the text with gothic concerns of isolation:

> Montreal, an island, placed a cemetery atop its mountain, capped that mountain with a giant illuminated cross and wove streets along its slopes like a skirt spreading down to the water. In this way, its ancestors hovered over the city just as the Church did, and death was always at the centre of everything. (*BB* 1)

Here, there is a human disconnect from nature. The city, not its inhabitants, is the depicted as the narrative subject and source of its construction. The city's living population is absent from the description; rather, it is the dead "ancestors" that populate

the city. Further, the city lacks a solid base of understanding for the living as "death was always at the centre of everything." Hegel's dialectical solution is thus initially thwarted as man cannot interact with his environment. The environment is not even depicted as an empirical series of objects from which one can find potential use. During the first human action of the text, for example, Grandfather is described in an act of grave-robbing: "Grandfather had one foot in the grave and the other on the shoulder of the spade. He pressed his weight on it; nothing. He stood on it, lifting himself completely from the earth—still nothing" (1). Uncovering a sense of empirical or objective truth in the past is impossible. Montreal is literally bordered and isolated by natural design and this very structure limits an objective understanding of the present. In addition, "Desouche," the surname of the family that occupies the novel's human focus, carries connotations of immobility as well as the genealogical source of a group of people or language.[17] Again, at the novel's origin, meaning found in the past is met with stasis in the present. These limitations offered by the past are combined with other forms of isolation. The past is isolated from the present just as French and English, fact and fiction, and the individual and nation are separated in a city that lacks unity. In this environment where binaries are ever-present and isolating, the gothic mode is used to reveal all-inclusive yet paradoxical truths when these binaries collide. Only through encountering the rational limits of identity, reality, and history can Montreal exorcize the unknowable ghosts and terror of its past. However, the dialectical resolution does not resolve the paradoxes that exist between the novel's many contraries. Instead, rational truth is dismissed and mixed with

[17] *Le Dictionaire Québécois d'Aujourd'hui* defines the Quebec usages of the word "Souche" as "Origine d'une lignée…De *vielle souche*, de vielle famille.—Origine commune (d'un groupe de peuples, de langues)" (1111). Further, *Le dictionaire general de la langue française au Canada* defines "Souche" as illustrating stasis: "Il se dit, par comparaison pour exprimer l'immobilité, l'inertie: *il est comme une souche*" (1203).

falsehood. Historical truth, in its purely rational form, is rewritten and terrorized by its irrational and false other. The result is a gothic narrative that embodies a hybrid identity, which thematically and formally promotes an embodiment of contradictions. Narrative resolution comes not from linear progression and integration but cyclical re-examination.

Gothic Language and Identity in *Black Bird*:

At the outset of *Black Bird*, identity is defined through language. This bordering of identities based on dominant spoken language (French or English) results in clear and defined notions of identity but also illustrates the paradoxes that come from an insistence on objectivity. French and English identities are defined through the eyes of Marie, a member of a FLQ terrorist cell. It is significant that the text refers to the terrorists as "idealists" as they offer a view of identity that is wholly objective and based on dichotomous and negative definitions of their English-speaking others (44):

> *Anglophone* and *English* were synonymous to [Marie and her friends]; they couldn't accept the anglophones as Canadians, even though they saw themselves as Québécois, distinct from the French of France. (44)

Quebec Anglophones, to Marie, are associated with the British, an "occupying power, as they were in Ireland and as they had been in India" (44). But the defining characteristic of language is not as simple as French versus English. Though she admits that the divisions within Quebec are rooted in "language, pure and simple" (45), which places the onus of a national identity on the subject's speaking of the French language, the Québécois are still "distinct from the French of France." Just like the elusive definition of what defines a Canadian to Marie, what being a Québécois entails, even from the

nationalist perspective, is absent from the novel's definition of a Québécois identity. This definition too is in-between; not Anglophone, not Canadian, and not French.

Further, the connotations of the terms Anglophone and Québécois represent the multiple borders that exist, for Marie, between the two groups as well as the objective instability of those differences. For Marie, identifying as a Québécois and using this term of identification relates a common language and a common territory: French and the province of Québec respectively. Like the terms French and English, which have a direct correlation between identity, language, and location, the use of the word Québécois reflects an absolute bordering of identity. In Marie's idealist and nationalist discourse, those considered outsiders are denied the same bordered significance. For this reason, the term Anglophone represents an identity associated with a language, but not a territory. Indeed, for Marie and her fellow nationalists, Anglophones are not even identified within the borders of Canada; instead, they represent a more abstract, colonial, and distant threat tied to Britain. Marie's rhetoric is decidedly empirical and objective as it casts the Anglophone other outside the borders of Quebec and those of language. This bordering denies the Anglophone identity not only a territorial association but also a legitimate means to define who they are with where they are. In other words, the nationalist definition of Québécois identity, here, through the eyes of a terrorist, is objectively identifiable and one needs only to affirmatively fit the rigid criteria of language and location. However, there is still an uncertainty to the Québécois identity as it too is defined by Marie in opposition to the "French of France." Defining the Québécois identity paradoxically requires a definition against otherness, be it Anglophone, Canadian, or French.

This extreme objective view of identity and its paradoxes also affects Marie's perception of time. Marie sees her terrorist form of nationalism as "a struggle against the past, a struggle for the future" (*BB* 228). Conceptions of time for Marie are trapped in the present as her ways of exerting nationalism through terrorism are heavily fixated on the witnessing of action:

> Timers were accurate, and [Marie] knew her business . . .[S]he couldn't bring herself to set [the bomb] and walk away. That was too impersonal, as if she were an anonymous quirk of fate rather than an active, intentional being. That would be like one of those unsigned statements her comrades in the Front de libération du Québec—the FLQ—were always sending to the newspapers . . .[H]er insistence on watching it to completion was her way of signing her statements—for they were a political statements—just as an artist would sign a canvass. (*BB* 19)

Marie's insistence on being at the scene of the blast—just as an artist signs their work—and not relinquishing control to the randomness, acts as a way to objectively solidify herself in an historical time and space. But, there is a paradoxical disconnect for Marie with regards to time and place. As Bili Melman explains, the "terrorist's personality in fiction is not a coherent entity, which develops consistently in relation to time and space" (Melman 561). This identifiable incoherence of the terrorist, Melman argues, is temporally fixed but strives to disrupt time itself:

> [There] is a paradox. The terrorist, who aspires to annihilate history and to achieve timelessness, or eternity, can achieve this only by manipulating chronological time. Therefore he is doomed to fail. This is the dialectic

> of the detonator and the clock, and the paradox of the fictional presentation of the terrorist. (572-3)

Like Marie's concept of Québécois identity, which is only definable against otherness, Marie's efforts "against the past" rely on time's linear passage. Further, Marie "slipped away" when the detective comes to interview witnesses (*BB* 19). Though claiming that seeing her work detonate in front of her is a act of claiming authority over it, it is not only fleeting but lacks authority all-together: she is anonymous at the scene and leaves the claiming of responsibility to her fellow FLQ members. Inability to completely define her identity is mirrored in an apprehension to relate her interpretation of events as "it wouldn't do to be identified at the scene" (20).

Marie is enveloped by action and violence, which limits her abilities with language. Immediately after setting off the bomb, Marie acknowledges the separation between violence and language:

> When she was done, the others began chattering excitedly, smiling grimly, gesturing importantly. Now it was time for the press release. Marie's job was done, and theirs began.
>
> She would let the others contact the media. She wasn't interested in words, unlike her brother. Words were so anemic compared to actions; words were the weapons of her enemies, the English politicians. (20)

Marie's description of words as "anemic" after the bloodshed her actions cause shows the ignorance toward the association of words and actions. Just as she advocates language as the aspect that defines the Québécois, she does not define herself in terms of language: "She wasn't interested in words." Marie's sense of language is disconnected from an

ordered version of the world in terms of Foucault's ideas on the close associations of words and objects in order to facilitate an objective version of natural history. In other words, as a terrorist, she is an agent of chaos and violence. After all, an ordered interpretation of the world is, by definition, one without chaos. The conclusion can be made in light of these paradoxical inconsistencies that Marie's perception of reality and nationalist pursuit are self-defeating. Like the paradox of using time to control history via the ticking bomb, Marie's linguistic abilities are diminished while trying to promote language as a defining aspect of nationalism.

When one considers the connotations of the Desouche surname as one that denotes an origin of language or group of people, it is fitting that Marie's detonation of the bomb in the novel's opening is met with a simultaneous disruption in the Desouche household. Further, according to Diane Lamoureaux, the family unit was historically regarded by Québec nationalists as "the basic unit of society... [and] the microcosm of the nation" (Lamoureux 104).[18] Therefore, the revelation that Marie's act of terrorism kills Angus, Marie's grandfather on her mother's side, causes Marie's objective and dichotomous interpretation of nationalist identity to collapse with its perceived others:

> [Marie] was overwhelmed; her world had changed unexpectedly. It would take weeks of sullen silence to digest it. It had never occurred to her that anyone she knew personally would be affected by her terrorist acts.

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[18] The family unit in Quebec, since France's concession of what was to be Québec under the Treaty of Paris in 1763, was seen as "the only institution that was under the [French-Canadian] nation's complete control, that refused all compromise with foreign domination; it was the key to the future" (103). Because of this belief in the idea that nationalism could be learned at home as "Language, culture, and tradition, the seeds from which nationalist ideology was cultivated, are all learned first in the family" a high birthrate was encouraged in response to a French-Canadian fear of being cast into a future minority position (104). This form of nationalism, the "revenge of the cradle", or the emphasis on large families, created a promise for the future in light of an undesirable present, a trend that saw the area once called New France to have the highest birthrate amongst territories that were of European origin until the 1960s (Lamoureaux 102-3).

> Everything had always been aimed against an ill-defined "them" and not an all-too-familiar "us." (27)

Previously definable and easily separated contraries—them and us—collapse as terror enters the Québec microcosm. Terrorism terrorizes the home and renders Marie silent as the previously definable opposites merge. But Marie's moment of clarity is short-lived, which further shows her ever-present state, as she "lost no love over Angus" (31). Marie's terrorist persona represents an identity that shows the limitations of an ideal or objective view of reality. Not only is there a failure to embrace emotion but also a blindness to the paradoxes embedded in Marie's identity: she is simultaneously one who advocates a concrete form of identity based on objective criteria and one who functions via chaos.

Marie's ineffectual approach to terrorism is met with gothic terror inside the Desouche home, where Marie's silence is opposed by an increase in the voicing of a gothic figure outside language: The black bird. As a figure outside the French and English languages spoken within the Desouche home, the black bird acts as an advocate for the isolation of Aline, who, because of her inability to speak English, is socially as well as spatially confined within the Desouche home and by extension the microcosm the home represents:

> At last a curious thing happened: Aline began to like the crow. She took its squawking as her own complaining, complaining that she was much too timid to undertake herself. Every time Grandfather flinched at a piercing cry, she felt as if she herself had screwed up the courage to yell at him. (33)

As a gothic figure, the black bird is outside the two languages that inhabit the Desouche home and acts to disrupt social order. The black bird acts as a voice for Aline in an environment that has limited her communications and place in society. The black bird gives her the agency needed to leave her previously defeated position within the home. Following her realization of this agency after the bird's crying, Aline defies grandfather and "moved her things into Marie's room" (35). Further, it is fitting in light of the gothic's disruption of an objective based system of knowledge that Aline says to Grandfather after he questions this move, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out" (35). Like the Enlightenment insistence on an objective based language, the Desouche home functions in a way that resists definitions outside of its use of the English language. Thus, the home inherently creates the othered figure of Aline, as a result of excluding her from the definition of what is to be considered a Desouche. Indeed, embodied in the eyes of Grandfather and all that his world-view represents—the source of Aline's confinement—Aline's recommendation of plucking out his eye in response to her establishing an existence that goes against Grandfather's world-view speaks to the emergence of another discourse as a result of the black bird's terrorizing force.

However, the monstrous function of black bird is different from that of the conventional gothic. According to Andrew Smith and William Hughes, the gothic's conventional use of monsters, outsider-figures like the black bird, function with the purpose "of supporting, rather than questioning, the status quo" (Smith and Andrew, "The Enlightenment Gothic" 3). In other words, the confrontation with these implacable figures acts in order to "demonize such otherness" in order to reaffirm a conventional and singular world-view (3). It is from this perspective that the black bird, as a figure that

disrupts Grandfather's version of the status quo, can be considered a monstrous figure. By this interpretation, it is fitting that Grandfather attempts to dispose of the bird on numerous occasions in attempts to re-establish his version of the status quo within the home. However, the black bird defies his efforts of disposal and to restore order. Interestingly, when the black bird is given a name—Grace— it "endowed her [the bird] with the right to hate and persecute just as people do" (50). Now, as a recognized part of the definable language system in the home as a result of having a name and solidifying its place in the kitchen, Grandfather's place in the home is re-bordered:

> Grandfather grew more and more afraid of entering the kitchen and so began to take his meals elsewhere—leaving dirty dishes all over the house despite everyone's annoyance and Aline's pleadings that he clean up after himself. (50)

The re-bordering of Grandfather's domestic habits results in a reversal in the home's power structure as Grandfather must now "clean up after himself" due to the terror imposed by Grace.

This re-bordering of the household, as a result the terror Grace represents to Grandfather, leads to an epistemological redefinition of Grandfather's notion of self. After the confrontation between Grandfather and Grace, Aline's recommendation becomes a reality and Grace plucks out Grandfather's left eye. The physical injury changes Grandfather's perception of objective reality:

> Grandfather realized that he was indeed beginning to see out of his new [artificial] eye. . . He discovered that although both his eyes functioned, they seemed to be out of synchronization or parallax or something. If he

> left the new one in and didn't cover his own real eye, his vision was occluded. They seemed to conflict. (157-8)

Dichotomies, for Grandfather, merge. The result of the physical confrontation with the terrorizing Grace causes recognition beyond the physical through an artificial eye. Both artificial and natural avenues of sight that initially conflict eventually dissolve as Grandfather admits to the imprisoned Jean-Baptiste, "opposites have no meaning" (223). As opposites break down, so does the ability of Grandfather to impose and interpret his objective viewing of reality: "I lost the ability to see things the way I wanted. I could no longer control what I saw" (221). The breakdown in Grandfather's control over his objective world-view represents his epistemological change in self-perception as a result of terror. No longer are barriers and borders of difference relevant. Instead, Grandfather's new perception reveals an all-inclusive, dialectic relationship between objects: "I began to see the connections between things. I don't mean their causes and effects, but I could make out direct physical relations between objects, as if I could detect the forces of gravity that kept them in relation to one another" (221). Like Taylor's interpretation of Hegel's expressive view of reality, which entails an acknowledgement of a greater relationship between objects beyond utilitarian and inherently dichotomous objective interpretations, Grandfather's perceptive change expresses a reality that dialectically encounters paradoxical inconsistencies. Relationships between objects are not built in relation to other objects; rather, they stem from inclusive relations with all-things. Fitting to Grandfather's Hegelian interpretation of reality, Jean-Baptiste interprets Grandfather's words as ones that transcend linear, cause-and-effect versions of history:

> [Grandfather's words] revealed a man living unsuspected beneath the grave-robbing reprobate, how the simplest of lives was no shield to the mysteries of Being, and how time itself reshapes our experience so that, at the end of our lives, their beginnings appear entirely different than when we lived through them. (224)

The change in Grandfather's self is explained in dialectical terms. Beginning and end encounter each other by way of "time itself." As a result, the concept of beginning is seen in relation to the whole of existence, rather than in opposition to its end. Terror's physical encounter with Grandfather thus initiates a dialectical approach to the concept of Being by way of the literal bringing together of artificial and objective avenues of vision. His combination of false and real eyes combine to change his concept of Self: his "I." Embodied in this "I" is the dissolution of dichotomous relationships previously seen in reality: the artificial "eye" and real "eye" are thus equally valid as they combine, though remain contradictory, within a unified concept of "I."

This creation of a dual form of self-perception in the mind of grandfather is paralleled with Dr. Hyde's scientific and objective search for the concept of Self via the body. Dr. Hyde, whose namesake is a composite of the rational and irrational identities of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, attempts to create an "artificial being" (235) composed of "interchangeable [body] parts" (276) in order to "prove or disprove the existence of the soul" (277). Hyde's experiment approaches the edges of objective reasoning—and "edges of his profession" (272)—as he is "creating knowledge, literally, without precedent" (272). However, Hyde's methodology is too literal and

objective in its deduction. Upon bringing his creation to life, Hyde confesses his methodology:

> [I]f you know who you are, if you have a self, then you have a soul. But if you don't—if you are just an animated amalgam of interchangeable parts—then I've created a monster and you have no soul. If you, as an artificial man, have no soul, then the soul of a natural being transcends mere matter. It's not just parts. (276)

This deductive and objective reasoning of the soul neither proves nor disproves the soul's existence because even if Hyde's creation does not have recognition of a concept of self and thus has a soul, the soul is still untraceable beyond the objective analysis of "mere matter." Hyde, unlike Grandfather who grows to acknowledge his existence through both objective and subjective reasoning, fails to recognize the existence of the soul because he insists on empirical and scientific discourse. Hyde cannot comprehend the possibility that the soul's existence lies outside the rational and material. Hyde's insistence on viewing the "eyes" of his patient only grants him an objective answer to the soul's existence: he cannot see its "I" (277). Fittingly, as his creation strangles him to death, Hyde feels he has succeeded in "nailing God's coffin shut" (277), when in fact the scene comes to no empirical resolution with regard to the denial of the soul's existence. Instead, the resolution is internalized as Hyde's "final insight" (277), in contrast to his previous reliance on outward sight, suggests a recognition of the objectively inexplicable. Indeed, the description of Hyde's last moments following this "flash" (277) of realization is that of "fear" (277), which suggests a destabilizing and terrorizing response to his

previously objectively based notion of existence. As such, Hyde's terrorizing realization is left unsaid and fails to express his mental realization.

Jean-Baptiste's Marginal, Hybrid Identity:

Hyde's questioning of the transcendent aspects of the soul and self as they pertain to the body also consumes the thoughts of Jean-Baptiste. However, the aspects to Jean-Baptiste's character—his interpretation of reality, bilingual status, and role as a writer—resolve the paradoxes of the self and identity within novel's bordered environment. Visiting the exhibit of shrunken heads at McGill University, Jean-Baptiste questions human existence, post-mortem:

> But these heads weren't objects; these heads had real, recognizable faces. These were people.
>
> Which always led Jean-Baptiste to wonder at the status and fate of people who lost their lives, or pieces of them. Where were their bodies now, what had become of them? Had they ceased to be human when they lost their heads? And whatever happened to Uncle's missing finger? Was it still in some way human, was it still in some way Uncle, or had it instantly, on the point of separation from the rest of him, become something else? A mere thing? (97-8)

For Jean-Baptiste, despite the fact that body parts are objectively rendered in the museum environment to the status of "curios", embodied in their mere viewing, the objects remain "people" (97). The recognition on the part of Jean-Baptiste that the fractured body still results in a link to the concept of the self acts in direct contrast to Hyde's creation of an

artificial being composed of body parts: the resolution to questioning of the self's existence, for Jean-Baptiste, is recognition of the self's tie to the part, rather than the self's existence as a result of the whole. Indeed, a definable existence is not a whole concept for Jean-Baptiste; rather, it is an in-between identity beyond a viewable and definable "thing."

Though otherness is easily identifiable to Marie, identity to Jean-Baptiste is not meant to separate "us from them." Instead, identity embodies a state between English and French, Anglophone and Québécois. Jean-Baptiste, Marie's twin brother, speaks English as he was educated in English, unlike his sister who was educated in French. But Jean-Baptiste, unlike his sister's failure to recognize the paradoxes that result from a concrete definition of identity based on language, occupies a space between the linguistic realities in which he was educated and the realities beyond the borders of Québec. Jean-Baptiste reads French writers—Flaubert, Camus, and Voltaire—but in English translation, the literal embodiment of this space between identities. Indeed, the reality he finds within the pages of these writers is not one that is wholly based on linguistic preference and borders. Instead, the pages and their words transcend the binary between the languages and borders that separate English and French. Two realities are formed into one hybrid reality for Jean-Baptiste when he reads French translations: one where words are wholly symbols of meaning outside of language, and one consumed with language division. In other words, identity is formed inside and outside the borders of language:

> [T]he pages were fields of space in which another kind of existence that engulfed him as completely and convincingly as reality, and one subject

> only to the powers of words themselves. . . Briefly, a pang of guilt crossed Jean-Baptiste's mind as he remembered he was reading English translations. Time and again he'd regretted not being master of his paternal tongue [French]. Time and again he'd wondered if, as much as he identified with these interpreted French words, wouldn't he be so much more consumed by them in the original? (75)

Jean-Baptiste stands "between two languages" (76), neither of which completely depicts an adequate reality of Québec's bordered "two solitudes" (76). Instead, his reality is one that encompasses each side of the English-French spectrum of interpretation without national or literal borders. The space he interprets, like Marie's interpretation of English and French speakers in Québec, is not wholly English, but different from the French of France. But, unlike his sister, Jean-Baptiste's perception of reality as one that transcends language does not limit his abilities to articulate with language. The difference between Marie's concept of language as the basis of a national definition is that Jean-Baptiste's version of language lies outside and between definitions.[19] Rather than separating English and French by way of literally using it to border and define a nation as Marie does, Jean-Baptiste's approach to language is inclusive and incorporates the sum-total of the novel's reality and each of its others. Language-based identity lies in the margins.

With Jean-Baptiste's in-between and inclusive interpretation of reality via language, one can approach the novel's discussion of otherness in postcolonial terms. Here, the other is used to comment on the political environment in its totality rather than

[19] It is also fitting to this line of argument to highlight Jean-Baptiste's role as a translator in the Desouche home. As the character between the novel's two solitudes, Jean-Baptiste naturally acts as the novel's translator figure. "By this time Aline had said, 'Que c'est froid, tellement froid!' often enough that Jean-Baptiste no longer had to translate it as 'It's too fucking cold' for Mother. Nor had he to translate Mother's 'It's like a grave in here' for Aline" (40).

separating these dichotomous spaces of identity. Smith and Andrews define postcolonial's use of otherness as a device that

> helps to isolate images of Self and Other in such a way that they identify how a particular brand of colonial politics works toward constructing difference, whilst at the same time indicating the presence of an inherently unstable version of the subject on which the politics rest. (Smith and Andrew 4)

Postcolonialism attempts to find meaning in the *whole* of the chaotic world and recognize that opposing interpretations of the self are equally valid. Just as Jean-Baptiste is a combination of English and French discourses, otherness is already present in the political environment of postcolonial writing and embodied in its subject. In this textual space, confrontation is not necessary; it is pre-inscribed in the postcolonial subject. The problem, then, is how to comment on and empower the pre-inscribed and othered subject in a political environment that threatens identity. As Homi Bhabha illustrates:

> How can subjects be formed 'in-between,' or in excess, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/ class/ gender, etc)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurate? (Bhabha 2)

The problem is not how to reaffirm an identity through confronting otherness, but how to establish identity that is inherently othered. For Bhabha, the postcolonial subject is representative of a state of being 'in-between' shared histories and exchange values of language. The voice of the postcolonial subject is multi-voiced: The subject is double or even triple-voiced, representing the "antagonistic" state of what Bhabha calls hybridity, a difference within a subject that occupies a space in-between conflicting discourses (13).

Paradoxically, Jean-Baptiste's in-between state of identity allows him to encounter the novel's concerns with linguistic, historical, and identity-based binaries. For example, Jean-Baptiste's play is an example of a gothic historical comparison between fact and fiction but one that is not allowed to complete its rhetorical mission. Though the play is only revealed to the reader in fragments—perhaps fittingly as to do so would force a linear and thus rational progression of events—Jean-Baptiste's play reveals an anxiety about the past as it opens with a pair of grave robbers—a reference to his Grandfather and Uncle—opening a looted box only to reveal "Nothing" (191). History is elusive in this gothic environment, the past a "heavy" burden yet out of sight. Indeed, even the set is "a forced perspective" (190) but one in-between reality and fiction, compared as much to the gothic, surreal, and expressionist silent film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, as it is to a familiar "geographical feature" (190). But initially the play fails to move beyond the displaying of an in-between reality as the actors are caught in a rehearsed and rigid performance:

> The actors began a slow dance toward the climax of the play, and though the words were coming out of their throats by rote, they shared the physical tensions of the audience . . . An actor heard his cue and moved

> about the stage in a predefined sequence, speaking his lines all the while, and wondered: have I just said that? (195)

If one is to take the play as a gothic exploration of the Québec's past and present as it references both a mythic past, invoking a version of *La Chasse-Galerie*, as well as contemporary concerns with terror, the association between actions and words cannot be purely objective or "predefined" and limited by the "tensions" of the present; it must, referring to Day, become its own timeless reality outside of artifice. As the play continues its run, just as Jean-Baptiste finds transcending meaning in translated French novels, the actors move beyond written words, becoming one with their roles in-between their realities as actors and as characters:

> For the first time, the lines were delivered in the passion with which they had been written. The actors began to hear the words coming from their own mouths. Suddenly an offhand sarcastic remark took on new significance. . . (194)

The actors, though the words are not their own, objectively take possession of them—"hear" them—all-the-while doing so in an artificial environment that is decidedly historically unobjective and irrational. Taken as a metaphor, the play possessed by the actors can be read as illustrating the breakdown of pre-established roles. Actors are not confined to their roles in a linear and predefined sense rather they submit to their chaotic environment and "For the first time" hear their words, which fittingly prompts an audience member to acknowledge an acceptance of the unknown at the scene's end: "what do you think's going to happen?" (195).

This transcendent moment and break from the predictable, objective narrative is short-lived as the play's artifice is disrupted by the terrorist Marie and her comrades. As previously discussed, terror disrupts notions of time and place in the novel. Here, a similar disruption re-situates the meaning of Jean-Baptiste's play to Montreal's contemporary novelized environment. Though the word used to cause this disruption—"BOOOO!"—can be read as a voicing of disappointment—is also used to incite fear (196). Fittingly, this terrorizing voicing, though not quite the exploding "BOOM" Marie and her comrades are used to enacting, re-establishes oppositions in the audience as the boos are mixed with applause and arguments breaks out in the lobby (196). Further, the re-establishing of binaries in the audience is followed by the uncontrollable defining of Jean-Baptiste's name. Following the disruption, the play is continually sold out and Jean-Baptiste's financial backer, Woland, comments that Jean-Baptiste's "name is made" (197) and it takes on an "infamous" status (200). Consequently, like the confining of his name to connotations of terrorism, Jean-Baptiste is imprisoned after a poetry reading when his poems are mixed with FLQ propaganda. Indeed, Jean-Baptiste's confinement is linked to his losing of control over the meaning of his name. Referring back to Jean-Baptiste's initial view of language as something that transcended time, place, and nation, he now is confined to a place for a period of time as a result of his namesake's association with the FLQ.

Arguably, when writing the play, Jean-Baptiste had no initial control over his work as Woland "erased [his] words" (187) and justifies his actions by saying language cannot be owned and is "common property" (188). And when released from prison, Jean-Baptiste does away with the association between artist and work:

> Enough. From now on he'd write only about other times and other places, preferably places that never really existed, and mix up all the times together whenever it pleased him. And he'd describe only characters who were complete idiots, because everyone who read his work would think they were wise, and therefore that he'd made them up. And events that were clearly impossible, fantastic things out of fairy tales, because people would think they were somehow metaphors for a secret truth. (310)

Jean-Baptiste aims to shed the association between word and object—artist and art. Moreover, it is interesting to note, that the assumed audience of Jean-Baptiste's future work, after his arrest, will be those who associate him with the FLQ. This persona allows Jean-Baptiste to further suspend the objectivity in his work. Unlike his sister's insistence of being associated with her terrorist bombings as an artist is its painting and her consequent insistence on objectively viewing the detonation of her bombs, Jean-Baptiste chooses to approach his future writing in a gothic mode: time is not linear but mixed, realism is disposed of in favour of the supernatural, and the objective truth is buried in misleading metaphor.

Jean-Baptiste's gothic realization is met with the collapsing of the novel's formal and thematic borders. The novel's last words force a realization on the part of the reader that they are also its first:

> There was only one direction open now. He'd tear up his notes, his scattered drafts, and begin again. He moved down the street to join his family. A string of words occurred to him:
>
> Montreal, an island… (310)

If Jean-Baptiste is the author of the novel, but has written it with leanings toward blurring his supposed nationalist with his true motivations, then the text itself becomes, not only as a result of Jean-Baptiste's admission of selecting and mixing false times and places but also formally a mode that encourages a continuous destabilization of the borders that exist in Montreal. The bordered form of the novel is collapsed from beginning to end, called into question as an historical and fictive authority. This formal embodiment of the gothic is combined with the thematic collapsing of borders: Definitions of terrorist collapse with gothic concepts of terror in the monstrous Hubert, and the microcosmic Desouche home literally collapses while the previously confined Aline flies away (305). Also, the author's note to *Black Bird* blurs the line between fact and fiction, historical truth, and recreation and places the reader in a confused historical space. The author's note admits the novel's "pages contradict known facts" (Author's Note) of Canadian history and states, "Facts are one thing but fiction is another" (Author's Note). A common gothic trope, these types of authorial statements that simultaneously acknowledge an authority behind the text, yet admit their inaccuracy as a form of authority, according to George Haggerty, "are the first of many signals alerting us to the kind of reading required of us ... because of its blatant artificiality, by putting us on notice that we must follow it according to its own rules" (Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction / Gothic Form*, 11). Though the statement made in the Author's Note is true, as there are events in the text that do not match the narrative of history,[20] as an example of the gothic imposition of its 'rules', the note also forces the reader to think and read critically,

[20] For example, during the novel's rendition of the FLQ Crisis of October, 1970, it is James Cross who is murdered, not Pierre Laporte. Further, the novel's Quebec has a separatist Quebec premier, not the Liberal Robert Bourassa, and it is this Premier who imposes the War Measures Act, a decision only the Prime Minister of Canada can make. Also, Brother Andrés heart is stolen during the Crisis, when, in fact, it happened in 1973.

challenging the reader to search for truth in a reality that is admittedly artificial. But, as Haggerty continues, the gothic text, "cannot have specific meaning: indeterminacy is inherent to its nature. . . It is central to the nature of Gothic fiction that differing interpretations of the material will seem equally valid." (Haggerty 8). Indeed, the author's note embodies how the text illustrates the gothic form and functions in a state of in-between bordered definitions of reality: it places its readers in an anxious position that challenges his or her knowledge of Canadian history and what is (un)known.

Further, by questioning the authority behind the note, and forcing the reader to return to the novel's beginning at its conclusion, the linearity of the novel as a form is also criticized. If the ending is the beginning then the content in-between is, via the novel's very form, to be continuously re-produced and re-examined. In this light, with the destruction of the Desouche home at the novel's conclusion—its meaning as an authentic version of Québec—is too continuously re-situated and re-thought in a new time and place as a result of the novel's cyclical form. Identity, and what constitutes an authentic Québécois, and all the monsters it produces, must be continuously confronted and re-examined. The conclusion's sabotage of the novel's linearity yet promotion of a cyclic re-examination resolves little in Hegelian terms. Instead, contradictions and borders collapse but offer no sense of dialectic integration of these oppositions. Indeed, the repeated statement of Montreal's identity as "an island" gestures toward a reestablishment of its figurative and literal borders. However, unlike the novel's beginning, the ending provides an interactive voice for the novel's environment. Filtered through the hybrid Jean-Baptiste, the borders within his version of Montreal take on and

embody contradictions. Like Jean-Baptiste's approach to language, the novel's meaning lies in the margins.

Conclusion

The literary struggle depicted in Québec during the Quiet Revolution attempts "to rediscover real time at the heart of the timeless" (Nepveu 96). Essentially, the attempt at writing this national literature is an attempt to situate a voiced origin within a historical timeline that is refused as a means of expression. The question of difference, in other words, is answered via refusal, a literature that defines itself by expressing its voice in a form that results in inexplicability. From this contradictory state of existence, then, the inclination is to mythologize and resolve and embody Nepveu's notion of the historically timeless and non-contradictory, or as Aquin's narrator states, to confine oneself in a cell and enact the "anti-dialectical event" (*NE* 12). Further, the novels discussed above all represent attempts to articulate a concept of a Québec identity in an environment—whether that environment be a confined room, New York City, or the city of Montreal—which prevents a concrete definition of the self and its relation to a concept of Québec that lacks an ability to articulate its own history. Whereas the works of Aquin and Jasmin are produced during a period in Québec's history that vehemently denies history as a basis in which to write a national literature, Basilières' novel represents an acceptance of this history, even if it is represented as an unknowable and ghost-like manifestation that destabilizes present meaning by placing "death…at the centre of everything" (*BB* 1). Here, literary distinctions can be made between Basilières' novel and those of Aquin and Jasmin: the root of the narrative in *Black Bird* stems from the past, even if it is recognized as inadequate.

As Charles Taylor explains, historical inadequacy is a natural movement in any society. The dialectic narrative of history ultimately must deal with the contradictions

that arise from these inadequacies when viewed in retrospect in order to resolve them into a larger historical synthesis (*Hegel* 58). The a-historical literary project represented in the texts of Aquin and Jasmin is ultimately a failure to deal with history as a contradictory narrative: Aquin's novel does not resolve or confront contradiction, which renders the text's conclusion to that of a blank copy. Similarly, Jasmin's narrator absolves himself of the contradictions he and his status as a terrorist embody with regards to his girlfriend Ethel, which results in a repetition of the actions that have led to his present state. To reject history altogether as a basis that engages and resolves its inherent contradictions results in their later re-emergence. This statement, by extension, represents the paradox of the literary project depicted in the texts of Aquin and Jasmin where the articulation of difference is recognized as a first-person monologue that speaks outside the historical narrative instead of dialectically engaging it. As a result of starting outside the historical narrative, the narrator's within these texts have no base to respond to. Therefore, the texts dissolve from within their own narratives. Like Melman's interpretation of the terrorist, the narrators of these works are ones that are perpetual outsiders that exist within their own narrative vacuum.

Black Bird, on the other hand, formally embraces the gothic mode as a basis for articulation. The gothic mode is, by definition, a contradictory one, a mode that confronts and collapses definable borders between known and unknown, fact and fiction, and self and other. Here, history is still presented as a structure that limits an ability to write literature, as the novel's fictional author exclaims the need for falseness and writes a conclusion that parallels the novel's beginning. However, the gesture of this parallel is not one that absolves contradiction in the narrative that has been written. Unlike the

refusal on the part of Aquin's and Jasmin's narrators to acknowledge the narrative of history as one that should be engaged, the concluding referral back to *Black Bird*'s beginning acknowledges the contradiction that exist within the borders of the novel's environment as well as the text itself. Instead of vacuous gesture, there is an acknowledgement that both history and literature— *histoire*—are inadequate and contradictory; that a constant recognition of this fact best articulates any concept of a future Québec identity.

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