The “I”s of Quebec Cinema:
The Paradigm of Autoethnography in the Building of National Cinema (1938-1968)

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Abstract

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This thesis combines the concept of autoethnography with recent research that has linked orality and the development of Quebec cinema. It focuses on the historical desire for self-representation that preoccupied Quebec filmmakers before the institutionalization of Quebec cinema as a culture industry in the 1970s, and underlines a corresponding genealogy of films centered on the filmmaker's presence and first-person discourse. In a handful of foundational films starting with those of Albert Tessier, and moving to the work of Claude Jutra, Gilles Groulx and Anne-Claire Poirier, the thesis argues that the filmmaker's subjectivity embodies the Quebecois community which is made "other" within the space of Canadian and global cinema. The mediation of autobiographical traces conceives film as a "living experience" of culture and identity, embodied in the filmmaker's own body and/or voice. I argue that autoethnographic expression is closely tied to the building of Quebec's national cinema, as a discursive practice emphasizing agency, perspective, and the right to self-representation. Yet, the genealogical approach of the thesis also observes how this mediation of *individual* identity complicates *collective* identity in the process. The nation is rendered a site of competing experiences and perspectives, in dialogue or in conflict with each other across time. Overall, the thesis invites the reader to consider first-person cinema as a paradigmatic form of political inscription in Quebec, and to question notions of "authenticity" and homogeneity in the study of Quebec cinema. Identity entails a process of negotiation that is open-ended and can always be reframed and appropriated by the "other" within.

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I want to thank professor Tom Waugh in particular for teaching me Quebec cinema from the angle of confessional filmmaking, an angle rarely discussed in other film programs and courses in Quebec. This approach helped me reconcile what I already knew about Quebec cinema and what I thought was missing to understand its contemporary stakes: the recognition of difference, the valuing of agency, and culture as a means of political resistance.

My deepest thanks go to my advisor, Catherine Russell, who pushed me to continue when completion seemed out of reach considering various life events. Her patience, diligence and thoroughness made an enormous difference in my progress. Under her supervision, I have also become a much better writer, and for that I am very grateful.

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Introduction: Figuring Out the First-Person in Quebec's Film History

> *"National cinema" is therefore not a master hermeneutic but a master problematic.*
>
> - Bill Marshall

The initial idea for this project came from a seminar on Quebec cinema entitled "Confessionality" that was given by Tom Waugh in the fall of 2016, and which informed the theoretical framework of the anthology of essays he later directed entitled *I confess* (2019). The main question that the seminar asked was this: how does the mediation of intimacy reframe what we understand as the nation – the nation as a social formation, as an "imagined community," as a representation of collective identity? Paying close attention to autobiographical film and video works by Quebec filmmakers from queer communities and diverse ethnical or cultural backgrounds, the seminar's corpus redefined the concept of "national cinema" as a network of voices and identities negotiating representation from a variety of standpoints, engaging with the "imagined community"[1] from an intimate point of view.

Waugh's corpus, bridging work from the 1960s to modern day video essays and performances, thus emphasized the relevance of reframing, opening and questioning the concept of "national cinema" through the framework of "autoethnography." This made me wonder, however, whether such a framework was only relevant to deconstruct the normative representations of any national cinema, or whether it was specifically relevant to Quebec's cultural context and history. Could it address a dimension of Quebec cinema often described as a project of collective self-representation, aimed at creating an independent national culture distinct from

[1] In this text, I shall refer to "the imagined community" as Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined representation of a common life shared by a given people and generated by media.

the rest of Canada? Could a genealogy be traced that would show the connection between autoethnography and national cinema, and their intertwined stakes?

A quick survey of Quebec's film history revealed a connection between the two paradigms and showed the consistence of notions of subjectivity, self-expression and authorial inscription in the discourses and practices that supported the practice of a local cinema. Until the 1970s, Quebec indeed did not have a functional film industry, and local cinema was either a marginal form of production or a production created in a relationship of dependence to a federal agency, the NFB, with a predominantly English-Canadian perspective. This informed a specific investment on the part of Quebec francophone filmmakers and critics into questions of self-representation, authorship and cultural perspective, driving the emergence of many stylistic and technical innovations such as direct cinema. Many historians and writers, such as Dominique Noguez, Gilles Marsolais, Bill Marshall or Michèle Garneau for instance, have situated the subjective style of direct cinema as the starting point of modern Quebecois cinema. In their arguments, it favoured creative engagements between filmmakers and popular culture that liberated discourse from the constraints of official institutions.[2] For example, NFB historian Caroline Zéau has argued that the presence and intervention of Quebec filmmakers shaped direct cinema to allow their underrepresented community to be seen and heard with distinct, embodied voices "[portant] à l'écran la distinction québécoise trop longtemps niée par la culture officielle" (72-73).

Whereas historically, for the National Film Board of Canada, cinema was a tool for social progress and knowledge-building, the interventionist filmmakers of *l'ONF* viewed film and documentary as a vehicle for cultural and personal expression which accompanied political

[2] These constraints entailed, for example, the need to translate scripts and get approval from commissioners, and the technical and economical constraints of re-enactment imposed by the need for clarity and didacticism. On this, see chapter one, section 1.3.3 for more details.

demands for cultural autonomy and authorial control for francophones. The improvised, spontaneous strategy of direct cinema required the filmmaker to participate and interact with the subject matter, suggesting self-expression as the intention of the film alongside the actual documentation of a situation. In that respect, Bill Marshall has spoken of a "certain rhetoric 'of the real,' the real as shock, research, invention" which Quebec filmmakers opposed to the official ideology of realism and objectivity advocated by the NFB (23). For Marshall, this proved to be "an effective mobilizing strategy against the complacencies of 1950s America, the Duplessis regime, or the NFB" that maintained a tight control over discourse and cultural production (23). The strategy of the "real as shock, research and invention" led 1960s filmmakers to experiment with modes such as autobiography, autoethnography and confessionality inherited from the posture of direct cinema, which had initiated a way of filming society "de l'intérieur et en toute subjectivité," as Marcel Jean wrote in *Le Cinéma québécois* (43). Examples include – and I will come back to them shortly – Claude Jutra's autofictional work *À tout prendre* (1963), *Le chat dans le sac* (Gilles Groulx, 1964) and *De mère en fille* (Anne-Claire Poirier, 1968) which explored artistic, social and political dimensions of national cinema through a creative use of first-person narration at the intersection of documentary and fiction, and private and public expression.

In other words, national cinema in Quebec was constructed through autoethnography as a site of imagination and self-expression, in which creative autonomy, subjectivity and agency were key values questioning the relation between truth, perspective and experience. Speaking in the first-person and using the medium of film as an extension of subjectivity were important discursive tropes in the construction of Quebec cinema as a distinct, national cinema. Within a stateless, "minor" nation, or what Fulvia Massimi discusses as the "subnational" space of Quebec "existing within a geopolitical entity that functions according to national-belonging principles, but is

nonetheless subsumed under the governance of a recognized nation-state" (2) the "I" indeed signified the existence of an irreducible and embodied cultural perspective. Autoethnography asserted notions such as perspective and selfhood as the signifiers of a local and singular experience of life and culture that gained access to collective representation within the public sphere.

Following this preliminary survey, I chose in this thesis to take a closer look at the history of first-person cinema in Quebec, in order to reveal the deeper links between autoethnography and the construction of national cinema from the early years of silent cinema to the 1970s.[3] In a context that politicized the stakes of self-representation, what role did the intimate and the personal play in the construction of collective discourses and images of the community? How did it drive a local and original appropriation of the medium, the apparatus, and the institutions of film? And how does that reframe our conception of national cinema from a totalizing to a networked representation of the collectivity, one in which individual performances negotiate the parameters of identity and culture in dialogue with the group?

My hypothesis in this work is that autoethnography is in fact a key paradigm, or trope, of Quebec cinema as a cinema deeply preoccupied with locating and performing its subjectivity and singularity in the "minor" context of its "subnational space." Indeed, my research shows that autoethnographic expression – that is, the inscription of the filmmaker's voice and identity within the documentation of his or her own society – has been tied to the idea of controlling the narratives and representation of culture and reality in Quebec from the beginning of its film history to its

[3] On this, I follow Yves Lever's analysis which situates 1969 as a turning point in Quebec cinema, being the year at which a local, independent film industry began to emerge as a viable form of national film production, diversified in terms of genre (9). Prior to 1969 (and the success of films like *Valérie* by Denis Héroux), national cinema was largely produced within the confines of Canadian institutions such as the NFB, or existed as a local industry unable to sustain its own production consistently across different ephemeral and unsuccessful attempts. On the unsuccessful attempts at building an independent French-Canadian national cinema in the 1950s, see Véronneau, *Cinéma de l'époque duplessiste*.

consolidation as an industrial form of cultural production in the 1970s. Speaking in the first person in the voiceover narration of documentary films, for example, was a way to locally appropriate the medium and to situate discourse in a familiar cultural context, in order to legitimize ideological visions of the nation or tradition. Maurice Proulx, for instance, engaged the first person with the technology of sound in the 1930s – which was turning the exhibition of film from a local spectacle to a standardized mass-produced event – to create a sense of familiarity with local viewers using a subjective non-synch sound voiceover narration. Speaking with an embodied rather than omniscient voice gave Proulx a distinct and recognizable presence as a narrator, bringing images of the "frontiers" to urban centers from the perspective of a fellow witness, glorifying nature and colonization as an extension of "home" in the process. Films like *En pays neufs* (1937), produced by the Quebec Ministry for Colonization and Agriculture, and its sequel, *Saint-Anne-de-Roquemaure* (1942), thus aimed at affecting urban viewers and negotiating modernity by recording a personal voiceover commentary and speaking to the group "from a place of experience," personifying national expansion and identity. Another example of first-person enunciation are 1950s NFB filmmakers who capitalized on the development of lighter equipment to become more mobile and present in the films, achieving narrative authority and autonomy in parallel to public criticism that was addressed toward the institution for its lack of a francophone perspective. A last example is how the first-person was also tied to the development of a local auteur cinema in the 1960s, the technique of voiceover narration providing an area of stylistic experimentation for auteurs to express subjectivity and assert authorship in the absence of significant budgets or large-scale filmmaking opportunities.

In sum, the study of autoethnographic expression in Quebec reveals the question of textual authority and address as one of the defining features of Quebec national cinema. Indeed, my

historical research across first and secondary sources shows how discursive authority has been a fundamental stake in the subnational, "minor" context of Quebec, and how intimacy with the group, through the mediation of personal testimony and first-person address, has been consistently adopted by filmmakers as a strategy to legitimize discourse and contest or claim authority. The originality of this thesis is therefore to contend that autobiographical discourse and first-person enunciation have played a significant role in disseminating notions of *collective* identity, empowerment and autonomy and in shaping visions of the group – which are, however, deconstructed and analyzed as performances in my writing. Thus, my intention is to show how autoethnographic expression can reveal the processes of subject formation of national cinema, meaning in this case the ways of thinking collectively about identity and nation in Quebec. The autoethnographic paradigm of Quebec cinema reveals a cinema in which the private and the public tended to converge to perform identity within a discourse that is both intimate and collective. Identity appears as a figure of political and narrative negotiation that is unstable, staging a plethora of ideological, archetypical and political visions of cultural life envisioning cinema as a site of intervention, debate and subject formation.

Across the thesis, my analyses bring me to associate a type of performative documentary that Quebec cinema produced very early on in its history to the notion of autoethnography developed by M. L. Pratt in her essay *Imperial Eyes*. Indeed, Pratt argued that autoethnography inscribed the perspective of the subaltern within dominant modes and "metropolitan" genres – such as ethnography or travel writing in order to negotiate representation and textual authority (9). Here, I apply this framework to cinema, as a medium hegemonically controlled by major nations across the first part of the 20th century, which an autoethnographer appropriated to embody and defend the singular characteristics of his or her people on the screen. Speaking to and on behalf of

the group, autoethnographers therefore claimed authority over representation and shaped a vision of the community in the process which was however unstable, subjective and open to reinterpretations and competing embodiments.

Studying seven films from the 1930s to the 1960s, I analyze how the lack of means and structures of production that characterized the local film industry until the end of the 1960s entailed these strategies of embodiment to legitimize discourse and address the community. In chapter one, I discuss recent historical studies that have highlighted the "oral" origins of Quebec cinema and argue that this oral tradition informed a specific autoethnographic impulse in early Quebec documentary films. In particular, I show how the figure of the *bonimenteur*, a live performer who translated and commented on foreign silent films for a local audience, informed narrative strategies that emphasized first-person enunciation and the embodied presence of the filmmaker in local documentary film production. I discuss four films, *Hommage à notre paysannerie* (Albert Tessier, 1938), *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure* (Maurice Proulx, 1942), *La terre de Caïn* (Pierre Petel, 1949) and *De Montréal à Manicouagan* (Arthur Lamothe, 1963), that are all "*boniment*" films, merging orality with ethnographic self-representation to make cinema "national" in the absence of significant means of production. Films like Tessier's, staging his own family working in the fields and addressing the image of an old man as "my father" on the screen, or Petel's following the footsteps of navigator Jacques Cartier as the setup for a personal travelogue, are examples of films that used autobiography and personal testimony as strategies to engage with the conventions of cinema and documentary and adapt them to a local context. Much as the NFB wished to make Canada known to Canadians and the world, these early autoethnographers mediated discourses on the nation, tradition and culture through non-fiction cinema, using a personal voice instead of an omniscient narration to legitimize their view. Their knowledge relied on the existence of the

filmmaker specifically, and staged truth as a locally situated experience of the world, opposed to the neutral tone of Canadian multiculturalism and to Hollywood cinema's pretention at a universal form of cultural production.

In chapter two, I show the continuity of this genealogy within 1960s "confessional" auteur cinema in Quebec. Autoethnography, however, played self-reflexively then on this constructed nature of selfhood and identity in film to achieve emancipation and enfranchisement from tradition. I show how, in a context of creative frustration and lack of independence that marked a fringe of young Quebec NFB filmmakers, the use of the first-person once again embodied the idea of a distinct cultural identity, while it renegotiated the traditional narratives of the nation as the personal became political. With confessional works such as *À tout prendre* (1963), *Le chat dans le sac* (1964) and *De mère en fille* (1968), Jutra, Groulx and Poirier reprised the tradition of autoethnography and oral cinema and embodied the singularity of the Quebecois identity through an expressive "I." But through this "I" they also purposely questioned and critiqued the limits of master narratives that restricted the individual expression of identity within their own cultural group, opening national cinema to issues of sexual diversity, radical politics and gender representation. Addressing competing narratives of sexual liberation, decolonization and feminism, their autoethnographic expression at once embodied the group and challenged its presuppositions in the process. Their cinema imagined national cinema as an intersubjective form of communication and reframed the question of national autonomy to open it to a multitude of identities in search of independence and public recognition as well.

The tone of the thesis is not celebratory however, and the goal of such historical research is also to open the past to criticisms made in the present. Through the rhetoric of personification and embodiment, for example, the nationalist films of chapter 1 mediate conservative and

hegemonic colonial archetypes (the hard-working rural Catholic worker, Jacques Cartier as the founder and discoverer of the nation, or documentary as the formation of a settler subjectivity), and the films of chapter two all stage "foreigners" or "others" that are contrasted with the "self" to ground representation within the limits of a given ethnic identity, something which I analyze closely in the chapter. In fact, by exposing the performative mechanisms by which autoethnography contributed to construct national cinema as a form of control over discourse, my analyses aim to deconstruct the "essences" that those films stage. That is also why the fragmented films of chapter two, which include in conscious and playful ways elements of artificiality and reflexivity in their dissociation of voice and image, follow the bucolic films studied in chapter one. Identity, in those films, is recognized as a performance which is malleable, non-essential and intersubjective, and therefore open-ended. The autoethnographic paradigm of national cinema reveals the rhetorical strategies of identity formation and incites us to deconstruct their truth, and to understand identity and the notion of "filmed reality" and cultural perspective as constructions repeated and relayed by media within the "imagined community."

My analyses of the films are therefore informed by Catherine Russell and Alisa Lebow's uses of the term "autoethnography." Russell defined autoethnography as an autobiography in which "the film- or videomaker understands his or her personal history to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes" (276) which are played out and challenged by the performance of self-staging. It is difficult to argue that filmmakers like Albert Tessier or Maurice Proulx, two priests, were conscious of the relativity and inauthenticity of identity, or that they their films involved a "'staging of subjectivity' – a representation of the self as a performance," as Russell describes autoethnography (276). However, Alisa Lebow has furthered the definition of autoethnography by claiming that it can also be understood as an act of decoding performed by the

audience, instead of an act of encoding by the author (xiii). In *First Person Jewish*, she argues that autobiographical films can lead the viewer to reassess the signs of a common identity shared with the filmmaker and to question the homogeneity of notions such as ethnicity or cultural identity, while those notions are simultaneously "always reinscribed into pre-existing cultural narratives during the interpretive process," reinforcing and reactualizing the significance of identity (158). In this case, autoethnography therefore becomes a paradigm enabling me deconstruct my own gaze as a Quebecois scholar, leading me to identify identity and nation as staged rhetorical constructions. But at the same time, it locates a genealogy which has contested and negotiated authority time and again, alerting me to the fact that, as Bill Marshall writes, "Quebec film texts tend to be vehicles for competing (as opposed to totalizing) discourses of the nation" (3), "exploring the ways in which a national hegemony may be constituted, but also how it is made constantly provisional" (13-14). In this perspective, national cinema becomes an open-ended paradigm, still relevant and productive as an interpretive framework.

Thus, through the paradigm of autoethnography, my thesis aims to critically explore the cultural legacy of national cinema both in its possibilities and in its limits. Cinema in Quebec has been, on the one hand, a medium in which agency, independence and representation were valued and negotiated, leading to important innovations in the field of documentary filmmaking and autofictional cinema.[4] On the other hand, national cinema appears as a set of discourses reproducing archetypes, tastes and ideology, a process of subject formation exerting discursive pressures on the imagined viewer which it is imperative to unpack. In the conscious recognition

[4] In her book on autobiographical cinema, for example, Juliette Goursat traces the origin of autobiography as a subject of artistic experimentation to American filmmakers of the 1970s such as Jonas Mekas, Hollis Frampton and Robert Frank, preceded only by rare examples such as Claude Jutra's *À tout prendre made* a decade earlier (20-30). What appears to her as an odd rarity in the figure of this isolated precursor of the genre is, I hope, contextualized within the autoethnographic genealogy of Quebec cinema that this thesis excavates, grounded in longstanding debates around representation, agency and expression within the "subnational" cultural space of Quebec.

of this double nature of identity as resistance and as performance, I conclude the thesis with a discussion on the possibility of appropriating the autoethnographic "tradition" from the perspective of other minority groups, challenging the limits of national cinema through the possibilities that it has created. I therefore argue for the importance of studying contemporary forms of autoethnography in Quebec (1980 and over) as a genealogical prolongment of its practice and as a questioning of its presuppositions. I briefly discuss films by authors such as Marilú Mallet, Michka Saäl, Louis Dionne and Erik Papatie to signal how the autoethnographic gaze of women, migrants, queer and Indigenous filmmakers potentially redefines the "imagined community" by challenging dominant notions of gender, ethnicity or culture that "local" or "national" cinema has performed in the past. These films show the possible expansion of my thesis as they continue a genealogy of documentary filmmaking that has been present since the beginning of cinema in Quebec, a genealogy which showcases the continually contested status of identity, territory and culture at the heart of the colonial "contact zone"[5] that is Quebec; a genealogy that also reframes national cinema as a network of voices in tension and in communication.

For her doctoral thesis, scholar Joëlle Rouleau made an exhaustive survey of such contemporary works that defend diversity through autoethnography, and Waugh's *I Confess* addresses the topic as well in a variety of situations and cultural contexts. The theme of autoethnography is therefore relevant within contemporary debates and discussions around Quebec cinema. It is, on my part, the absence of writing about the role of individual mediations in most studies dedicated to the history of Quebec national cinema that lead me to investigate the past rather than the present. Most accounts of Quebec cinema and its history overlook the question

[5] The term is from M. L. Pratt, who defines it as a "social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination— like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4).

of the individual or even suspect autobiographical genres and personal forms of expression of withdrawing from the collective reality of the people. Marion Froger, for instance, has written about the importance of film as a way to create or articulate collective dialogue in Quebec, contrasting this view of cultural mediation with solitary works that "refuse" social dialogue by favouring the artist's subjectivity (81).[6]

Similarly, Quebec critics saw in the trend of more "personal," autobiographical auteur films in the 1980s a retreat into narcissism as a consequence of the collapse of collective ideals following the failure of the 1980 referendum on sovereignty. In "Manifestations autobiographiques dans le cinéma documentaire québécois récent,", Alain-Napoléon Moffat opens his survey of autobiographical films produced in Quebec during the 1980s by expressing suspicion as to the meaning of such a "symptom" pervading Quebec cinema across the decade. He contends that this symptom signals a form of "indifference" toward past collectivist visions of culture, a general alienation from the failed ideology of nationalism and its prescriptive forms of identity (*devoir-être*) (37). Even as he concludes that autobiography can have a positive political value by engaging with the present tense of the nation in some precise cases (Marilú Mallet's *Journal inachevé* about the reality of immigration for instance), this tone of suspicion is symptomatic of the lack of credibility that has been associated with the subject and the rarity of such studies as Moffat's, "personal" cinema being most commonly opposed to "national" cinema. This suspicion echoes the reception of Jutra's film in the 1960s as well, as critics like Leo Bonneville deplored that the tone

[6] Froger takes as examples the *Refus Global* manifesto – a rejection of society's conservative norms and Catholicism in favour of artistic freedom and the sovereignty of the artist's subjectivity written by a group of modernist painters in the 1940s. Criticizing the idealization of subjectivity and its withdrawal from social reality. Froger however overlooks how impactful the *Refus Global* manifesto has proven to be, being abundantly commented and cited over the years, to the point of being taught in history classes and the public school system. Therefore, such "solitary acts" can address and shape collective imagination just as well, when taking into consideration the continuing engagement of collective reception. In this case, it has allowed subsequent generations to view Quebec as a space constructed through the contestation of authority and tradition and influenced the way that values and identity are being discussed as "national."

of revolt of the film remained in the "individual" rather than the "mythical" and "collective" realm due to its autobiographical nature (14-15). Even as critics eventually revised this opinion and later heralded the film as the manifesto of a new wave of Quebec cinema (Brady) as well as a work of significant political meaning for sexual and queer representation in Quebecois culture (Waugh, "Nègres blancs, tapettes et 'butch'"; Moffat, *Une rhétorique de l'homosexualité*) the discussion of such autobiographical films often remain centered on individual case studies, disconnected from questions of genre, genealogy and cultural tradition as my thesis aims to emphasize.

Another element missing from most critical discourses which my work wishes to compensate pertains to the question of documentary as a site of symbolic imagination. Contrary to critics and historians such as Christian Poirier or Bill Marshall, I do not value fiction over documentary in terms of its capacity to create collective symbols (C. Poirier 25) or articulate the line of thought of the collective unconscious (Marshall 2). On the contrary, I argue that non-fiction was an important site of imagination and feeling within the cultural appropriation of film language in Quebec. On this question, I tend to follow David Pike's intuition instead, discussing Canadian and Quebecois cinema as a cinema at the margins of dominant genres and traditions (that is, Hollywood cinema and narrative fiction in general) discovering that "the constraints of a minor role provide real opportunities unavailable at the heart of the empire," namely through a creative engagement with the documentary genre (23). Autoethnography, indeed, captured the "real" as a site of cultural and poetic construction able to speak to the nation and mediate the singularity of its cultural identity, notably through the intervention of speech and subjective authorial marks.

As with most historical accounts of Quebec cinema, my work gives a lot of attention to direct cinema, focusing on its application in the field of autoethnography and the intersection between personal and political expression. With direct cinema, indeed, the representation of "lived

experience" became a defining trope of Quebec national cinema, most notably with poet and ethnographer Pierre Perrault who rather used the term "cinéma du vécu" to describe his films. Perrault's vision of film as a means to participate in the lived experience of a community, such as l'Isle-aux-Coudres in *Pour la suite du monde*, entailed a resistance to traditional documentary discourse that emphasized popular expression instead. "On s'obstine à faire descendre le discours au niveau d'un échange de personne à personne," writes Marion Froger (30), commenting on Perrault's role as a mediator, rather than a figure of knowledge and authority, mediating what she calls "le choc du terrain" (30).

It appears thus that Perrault's films would be important to analyze in my discussion of subjectivity and ethnography as a foundational paradigm of Quebec national cinema. Yet, my thesis questions this vision of direct cinema as a transparent representation of the nation's subjectivity, and I choose not to include works such as *Pour la suite du monde* in my corpus precisely since Perrault's position as a mediator is not at the center of the text, but rather concealed behind the voices of participants. Mediating what he sees and hears, and editing these pieces together in a "polyphonic text" (Garneau 59), Perrault creates what Gilles Deleuze has described as a form of "discours indirect libre": "Perrault s'adresse à des personnages réels, ses "intercesseurs". […] C'est le personnage réel qui sort de son état privé, en même temps que l'auteur de son état abstrait, pour former à deux, à plusieurs, les énoncés du Québec, sur le Québec […] (discours indirect libre)" (Deleuze 290). "C'est mon orgueil de ne pas être l'auteur de mes films," Perrault once commented, adding: "Je me raconte au pluriel. L'individu Perrault ne tient pas beaucoup de place" (qtd. in Garneau 59-60). The autoethnographic posture of Perrault therefore amounts to speaking in the first-person plural, conflating filmmaker, community and

nation in the process: “Je deviens collectif. Je deviens pays” Perrault commented (qtd. in Garneau 142).

The conflation of filmmaker and subject as the same transparent prism creates an epistemological and ethical problem that Trinh Minh-ha has discussed in her influential piece “Documentary Is/Not a Name,” remarking that the relationship between mediator and medium, or the mediating activity is ignored in this form of cinema (695). Centering the truth of documentary and defining “the social” around the representation of a common experience set in the framework of realism, and wherein the filmmaker pretends not to be speaking for himself, actually precludes from questioning the parameters of this act of mediation – or “voice-giving.” In other words, within such form of direct cinema, the filmmaker’s subjectivity is present, yet concealed behind a notion of common identity and transparent exchange, without the filmmaker either communicating or questioning his or her own relation to such terms. Lever has criticized this as well, arguing that it is merely a displacement of the author into the figures of his characters (33). Therefore, by focusing on autoethnographers who, contrary to Perrault, are manifested and embodied in the film – that is, speaking to the audience in an explicit first-person singular address – the thesis aims at questioning the political relation between truth, performance and mediation which is at stake within documentary film. Autoethnographic performance makes explicit the constructed nature of this relation and how a discourse on identity is the object of a complex negotiation between auteur, participants and audience at the center of the film.

Additionally, the autoethnographic paradigm of Quebec cinema reveals national cinema to be not a simple reflection of “collective consciousness” (or “the collective unconscious” depending on the author), but a network of individual acts of imagination and projection interacting. This keeps us from thinking about the people or the nation as a homogenous entity in which films or

auteurs are unquestioningly representative of the group. Historians such as Germain Lacasse have shown a tendency to conflate individual speech and collective expression, indirectly claiming a coincidence between the voice of the author and the voice of the group (*Le bonimenteur de vues animées*). Although this is indeed what is at stake in the performance of autoethnography, this overlooks how each author is positioned differently within society in terms of class, gender or race for example. Autoethnography therefore reminds us that in each work of cinema a source of authority defends and constructs a vision of the group, which my aim in this thesis is therefore to deconstruct, showing how this vision of the group is contested, reinterpreted, or put in dialogue with competing perspectives across time. The idea of an autoethnographic genealogy therefore emphasizes the commonalities between such authorial positions – claims for autonomy in the name of a minor group for example, or the will to assert identity as an important project of national cinema – as well as the differences between them – traditional or secular values, positive or negative views on modernity, foreign influence, gender diversity, working class or middle class sensibilities, etc. This results in showing that identity is always an unfinished project, a proposition continually negotiated between the particular and the collective.

There is therefore no essential identity to be discovered through autoethnography, or a historical moment when "true" values of a community were founded, but a relationship to identity and community constantly negotiated across history by and between the people inhabiting a territory and a culture and giving meaning to their own experience. Across the thesis, national cinema is reframed as the fragmented expression of singular experiences of identity engaging with each other. This is also the utility of my project which is to give back this meaning to the concept of "national cinema." In relation to "national cinema," I follow Paul Willemen's use of the concept as a framework which is not concerned with the origin of a work or its author, but with the question

of "address." National cinema is, or can be, "a cinema that seeks to address the issues that constitute and move the 'national' configuration'" and engages with "the complex, multidimensional and multidirectional tensions that characterise and shape a social formation's cultural configurations" (35-36). Thus, my goal is not to see what is "Quebecois cinema" specifically, but "What opportunities of speech and address has it generated" within culture; how is it addressing itself and speaking to its audience? How is national culture a question of communication which is individually interiorized, but also challenged and reframed, and in fact never identical to itself across the chain of its iterations?

Regarding the concept of national cinema, my work also follows the recommendations of Stephen Crofts in his influential article "Reconceptualising national cinema." For Crofts, national cinema is neither to be rejected as a dubious totalization of culture, as scholars like Andrew Higson had suggested in "The Limiting Imagination of the National," nor should it be heralded as the immediate expression of a people free from any discursive pressures, as "this can subsume into a fictional identity all manner of differences, across axes of class, gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, cultural capital, religion, and so on" (41). Writing about Quebecois, but also Catalan, Welsh and Black nationalist cinema, he argued that national cinema can represent a form of resistance to cultural hegemony which, in sum, "implies the importance of a political flexibility able, in some contexts, to challenge the fictional homogenizations of much discourse on national cinema, and in others to support them" (44). As Quebec is situated on both sides of the question due to its "subnational" and colonial situation, my analysis of each film supposes the two attitudes that Crofts proposes. I see national cinema as the expression of a resistant form of identity – or as Germain Lacasse wrote, a cinema "défendant et maintenant une temporalité locale et collective contre la temporalité universelle et linéaire propagée par le cinéma institutionnel" (*Le bonimenteur*

de vues animées 16) – while I remain conscious that notions of "collective temporality" or culture should be studied with precaution, and dissected as rhetorical objects potentially creating new hegemonies.

To conclude, discussing the various forms of autoethnography is also, indirectly, a move against contemporary discourses that crystallize the notions of collective identity and values as homogenous, linear, and fixed in time. I want to give back power to the individual by stating how important the figure of the first-person has been in terms of contesting and negotiating authority, and at the same time to critique the totalizations that such discourse has tended to operate at the time. The history of Quebec cinema shows that the nation was host to collective creativity, innovation and empowerment through an intervention of individual voices, articulating collective representation as a form of non-totalizing dialogue. Self-determination, a concept that is crucial to understand the cultural past of Quebec, is a concept that necessarily branches out to multiple forms of identity and experiences manifested by media, to which this thesis is but a preliminary introduction.

Chapter 1: Autoethnography, orality and the emergence of Quebec national cinema

> *Je soutiens qu'on en apprend plus sur l'individu Pierre Perrault en regardant ses films que sur l'Île-aux-Coudres.*
>
> – Denys Arcand

This chapter retraces the history of first-person documentary cinema in Quebec before 1963, focusing on the relationship between what scholar Mary Louise Pratt has called "autoethnographic expression" and the development of national cinema in Quebec. Surveying a wide period that ranges from silent to direct cinema, I refer mostly to the work that scholars such as Germain Lacasse, Gwenn Scheppler, and Vincent Bouchard have conducted on the concept of "oral cinema" and the figure of the "*bonimenteur*" to show how the early decades of Quebec cinema intersects with autoethnography.

Indeed, both oral cinema and autoethnography refer to modes of resistance and self-inscription within relations of cultural subordination. Pratt, for example, defines autoethnography as instances in which minor subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* dominant representations, performing the inscription of a subaltern perspective in genres such as travel writing, ethnography or autobiography (7). In this sense, oral cinema – which refers to the tradition of having a live narrator, the *bonimenteur*, commenting on the silent films of Hollywood and Europe to give them "a local accent" (Lacasse, "Le cinéma direct en 1906" 1) – played a similar role in the absence of a local film industry. Germain Lacasse, for instance, describes the involvement of the *bonimenteur* in Quebec as a local appropriation of the medium, "défendant et maintenant une temporalité locale et collective contre la temporalité universelle et linéaire propagée par le cinéma institutionnel" (*Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 16). Adapting a foreign

context of production to a local context of reception (V. Bouchard 53), the physical performance "actualise, individualise et discrimine le texte oral" (Cornellier 3) by either interrupting or speaking over the film to explain it, steering the attention of the audience toward (or diverting it from) certain scenes, or voluntarily or involuntarily changing the meaning of dialogues. In this way, the *bonimenteur* acted as an autoethnographer, inscribing the group in the text while producing a singular vision of the self in the process. Indeed, not only did foreign films gain a "local flavour," but concepts of identity and home were also negotiated, and traditions challenged, reasserted or adapted through the contact with film.

Autoethnography also proves to be a productive paradigm in the study of Quebec cinema in view of the historical importance that documentary has had as a national tradition. Most film historians conclude that oral cinema evolved into an original form of performative documentary having its roots in the involvement of the *bonimenteur* in the expression of a "local reality" (Scheppler; V. Bouchard; Lacasse 2004). As Lacasse contends, with access to technology, the *bonimenteur*'s live performance eventually moved from the stage to the screen, and from oral cinema to direct cinema, engaging with the group beyond the confines of the theater and within the filmed reality: "Au lieu de s'installer près de l'écran pour expliquer son film, le cinéaste pénétra dans le champ pour s'y montrer en s'attachant à une caméra mobile; le spectateur est donc amené à suivre des yeux sa geste […]" ("L'accent aigu du cinéma oral" 53).

In the early decades of Quebec's "minor" national cinema, even after the advent of sound film, the speaker thus remained an important component of filmic enunciation, guaranteeing the cultural legitimacy and authenticity of discourse. In the study of oral cinema, scholars have mostly focused on speech as a collective form of embodiment; Germain Lacasse has argued, for example, that language informed the "audible evidence" of Quebec cinema as a distinct, or "accented,"

national cinema: “La parole est déterminante, situe le lieu d’énonciation (collectif et individuel) et laisse entendre une réalité intraduisible, qui est en fait *la seule réalité universelle*: ce qui est universel, c’est la différence […]” (“L’audible évidence du cinéma oral” 63; emphasis his). Yet, while speech delineates the cultural specificity of language, it also points to a speaker engaging his or her own individual subjectivity in the process. In discussing national cinema, speech and speaker thus tend to be conflated in a relation of homology. However, as philosopher Ginette Michaud argues in her discussion of the concept of “the nation-subject,” this unquestioned homology between the individual and the collective subject merely acts as “une analogie, une figure discursive [nous permettant] tout au plus d’opérer un saut conceptuel […], une manière de continuer à penser ce qui répugne le plus à la pensée, c’est-à-dire tout ce qui se présente sous la forme informe du magma, de la confusion, de la masse, du nombreux” (118). To what extent, then, is the individuality of the performer implicated as a “discursive figure” in the expression of collective identity? How have nation and culture been represented in Quebec through the staging of the filmmaker's identity within the film? And how can the framework of autoethnography reveal the work of national cinema in Quebec as the production a “nation-subject”?

Rather than seeing cinema and language as a direct reflection of *collective* identity, I contend that the object of oral cinema before the advent of a local film industry in the 1970s was the production of a “nation-subject” transiting through the filmmaker’s individual I/eye. I am interested in how oral cinema has produced specific strategies of autobiographical inscription and first-person enunciation, and how such strategies had at their heart the shaping of a “collective consciousness.” To explore this, I analyze four first-person documentary films that staged a vision of cinema and nation by borrowing from the genres of autobiography, travelogue and testimonial to mediate discourse. In my discussion of each film, I reframe the focus from speech and language

to the identity of the speakers, examining how they translated the collective tradition of orality into a first-person filmic address. The films are, in chronological order: *Hommage à notre paysannerie*, a silent film by Albert Tessier who accompanied each of its screening with a live commentary, 1938; *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure*, a film with a recorded, non-synch sound narration spoken by the author Maurice Proulx, 1942; *La terre de Caïn*, a travelogue with a poetic, subjective voiceover narration by Pierre Petel, 1949; and *De Montréal à Manicouagan*, a direct cinema reportage combining synch sound recording with a stream-of-consciousness commentary by Arthur Lamothe, 1963. In each, the signs of identity such as language, history, genealogy or territory become embodied in the filmmaker's personal experience of space and memory. Their enunciation uses the "I" as a marker of national cinema serving as a site of affirmation, experimentation, transmission and authority. Thus, those films propose a vision of the self to the group that performs identity through a staging of the filmmaker's presence, in which discourse is translated into "being" through cinema.

This hypothesis leads me to uncover two major trends of autoethnographic performance. With the films of Proulx and Tessier, which negotiatied the transition from live narration to recorded commentary, autoethnography stages a self that showcases an emotional attachment to the land, the family and the church, positing tradition and technology as compatible and grounding cultural values within the paternalistic voice of the author. With Petel and Lamothe, working inside the NFB and its federal ideology of disembodied objectivity, autoethnography stages the self as a mobile explorer, reprising colonial tropes of navigation and territorial discovery as a metaphor for film conceived as a discursive space to conquer, a space of experimentation, perspective and expression. As I will show, this move from "sedentarism" to "nomadism" between Tessier (1938) and Lamothe (1963) also signals a significant shift in attitudes toward media, technology and

identity. The first trend viewed national cinema as a way to root representation within traditional images of culture and nation, while the second represented collective history as a movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, propelled by technology, praxis and individual experimentations.

The two trends also bring into focus differences and similarities between the lecturer and the *bonimenteur,* two competing postures within oral cinema in Quebec that reveal foundational tensions between elite and popular cultures, as well as tradition and modernity in the building of Quebec national cinema. On one hand, the lecturer, such as Tessier and Proulx, employed speech from the perspective of an authority figure, controlling discourse and interpretation along ideological guidelines embodied in the performance and rendered present for the audience by the speaker in person. Thus, in their filmed lectures, Tessier and Proulx staged themselves, their family and their own subjectivity to ground a nationalist ideology within an exemplary version of the nation-subject that they personified. On the other hand, the *bonimenteur*, to whom Petel and Lamothe were closer in spirit, used his or her tribune to challenge the intended meaning of films and to appropriate the authority of official institutions on behalf of "the people" (that is, the audience), through in situ interventions and ad-libbed asides. However, as I will show, filmmakers like Petel and Lamothe, who redirected NFB resources to foster their own autoethnographic expression in the form of travelogues, often legitimized their position by mediating nationalist tropes as well. Much like the priest-filmmakers, the voiceover commentary written to accompany their filmic experiments was literary and aimed to exalt sentiments of national identity. In other words, their autoethnographic expression was constructed as an alternative to the official federal discourse, rather than in opposition to notions of authority or nationhood, which they in fact engaged. Therefore, the genealogical lineage that this chapter articulates does not aim to separate

the cinema of priest-filmmakers from that of "maverick" NFB filmmakers as more or less authentic, neither does it posit the history of documentary cinema in Quebec as a movement toward the liberation of a popular expression of "truth" freed from the confines of ideology and authority. Rather, the framework of autoethnography allows me to reveal how self-expression was a means to engage with authority and legitimacy, perpetually (re)negotiating values of authenticity, kinship and cultural representativity with the audience within an unstable subnational context devoid of its own film industry.

1.1 The model of oral cinema

Going back to the early years of silent film, the first manifestation of cinema as an autoethnographic performance in Quebec resided in the act of translation that live oral cinema initially operated. With little access to film production and cultural representation, the cultural and linguistic "difference" of Quebec appeared through a live appropriation of foreign films, rather than through the original productions of local culture. Unable to compete with the hegemonic presence of Hollywood or European cinema, the reality of national culture thus appeared as a series of transcultural problems tied to the reception of films: how should a work be interpreted and performed in front of a local audience, which films deserved to be adapted, to which "local" trait corresponded another "foreign" one to be translated, etc. Scheppler, Lacasse and V. Bouchard all highlight in their study of oral cinema that difference was thus always at stake in the performance, but its meaning was also rendered open by the plurality of perspectives available.

Indeed, the numerous incarnations of the live speaker attest to the variety of contradictory and competing ways in which local institutions imagined the "local." To designate the speaker,

Quebec historians commonly employ the term *bonimenteur* ("hawker") instead of *conférencier* ("lecturer") although the two were commonly used at the time, a choice which suggests the primacy of performance over content. Thus, the *bonimenteur* was not an autonomous *auteur*, but rather worked in the margins of another's text to steer the reception of the audience. Heterogenous and unstable visions of the self and of cinema were thus disputed among different *bonimenteurs* whose live performance would complete and "make" the film local. Across the evolution of the oral spectacle in Quebec, three autoethnographic tendencies in these live shows successively emerged that deserve notice as they pre-figured the particularities of national cinema: oral cinema centered the spectacle around a discourse on identity, it redirected the global space of cinema's cultural industry to a local site of enunciation, and it performed the text as a form of live dialogue with the group.

1.1.1 Oral cinema as a discourse on identity: the Historiograph

In the early years of the cinematograph, the new medium was introduced and promoted in Quebec and promoted as either a modern attraction or a device that could preserve the past and tradition. In his book *Le bonimenteur de vues animées*, Germain Lacasse informs us that the majority of French-Canadians were introduced to cinema for the first time by the viscount Henry de Grandsaignes d'Hauterives, an itinerant French exhibitor who toured Quebec with live "film lectures" between 1897 and 1906, and whom Lacasse mentions was the most active exhibitor in the province (108). Naming his device "the Historiograph," the viscount aimed at making his spectacles acceptable in the eyes of local authorities by presenting images of Christian processions and celebrations produced by or for Christian institutions, exhibiting them in local churches, schools and other communal spaces under the supervision of the clergy. Advertising thus promoted

"la possibilité presque magique de faire apparaître des images du passé" (Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 108) and emphasized the French and noble origins of the lecturer which guaranteed the purity and clarity of his oral expression for local French-speaking audiences(109). This type of illustrated lecture, as Lacasse writes, "valorisait l'appareil en l'intégrant à un discours 'noble' instituant un rapport de respect avec le passé, l'étranger et la tradition orale" (*Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 109).[7] In sum, local authorities used the discursive framework of the orality framework to control cinema and make it "national," engaging with a modern attraction that was potentially disruptive. Orality reinforced notions of tradition and heritage instead: "Les capacités spécifiques du cinématographe demeuraient inexploitées, elles étaient plutôt mises au service d'anciennes pratiques signifiantes institutionnalisées depuis longtemps, possédant leurs propres normes et leurs propres codes" (Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 109). In other words, media technology was apprehended to illustrate a discourse on the origins of the nation and the promotion of traditional identity, embodied by an exemplary speaker.

1.1.2 Oral cinema as a redirection of the global culture industry

By the mid 1900s, as cinema slowly turned into a stable cultural industry in the US, films became the main attraction of dedicated theaters. A second wave of exhibitors thus emerged in Quebec, who reframed the tradition of live oral performances to engage with the new reality of film as an industrial cultural product. As Karel Dibbets writes, film during the silent years was not a final product but a "semi-manufactured good" that allowed for "local variations in presentation" (214). In minor nations or subnations such as Quebec, the concept of "national cinema" therefore

[7] Lacasse writes "*l'étranger*" (the foreigner), but it should be noted that his remark applies more specifically to the foreigner from metropolitan France, as a point of origin.

mostly applied to such strategies of exhibition. For example, one of the most successful French-Canadian exhibitors of the first decade of the 20th century, Léo-Ernest Ouimet, systematically produced and programmed local newsreels to go along with the main feature. The programming of the Ouimetoscope, the theater he founded in 1906, was thus a singular amalgamation of global and local culture, aiming to create a form of local engagement with cosmopolitanism. Other exhibitors employed professional actors to create simultaneous live performances that capitalized on the distinct personality of local star performers to distinguish their product. Advertising and reviews emphasized, for instance, the richly documented commentary of one lecturer, the "stentorian" voice of another, or a third one's "inimitable répertoire, [qui] déchaîne le fou rire et fait se tordre le plus neurasthénique des spectateurs " (*La Presse*, 31 août 1907, qtd. in Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 110). The exhibition of foreign films, in sum, was co-extensive with the existence of a local spectacle.

Author-performers could also gain local influence by rewriting scripts in the process and introducing elements that were deemed more meaningful to the audience in light of the local cultural context. Lacasse mentions for example the case of Fernand Dhavrol, a Montreal-based theater director who scripted new dialogues most notably for a series distributed by Pathé between 1908-1909. Renaming the series "Vues parlées de M. Dhavrol", Dhavrol branded himself as the prime author and star of the films, featuring his rewritten dialogues which were performed at "le Nationoscope" theater (Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 111), "un endroit à la mode pour le public chic et distingué de Montréal" qualified as "[une] entreprise vraiment patriotique et nationale" (*La Presse*, 14 May 1907, qtd. in Gaudreault and Lacasse 45). Oral cinema moved the site of authorship from the film text to its live performance and from the space of global cultural modernity to the physical site of exhibition. Lacasse describes this gesture as a legitimizing tactic

"[pour] faire en sorte que les films produits ailleurs soient atttribués à une institution nationale" (*Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 111).

1.1.3 Oral cinema as a collective dialogue

The practice of staging local live adaptations of hit films reached its peak during the mid 1910s, after which it lost the favour of critics and "high brow" audiences. As V. Bouchard explains, with the democratization and expansion of cinema, habits of viewers had shifted, and class distinctions crystalized around the ability of cultivated spectators to access and decipher the "real" representation on their own (53). Critics started to dismiss *bonimenteurs* as incompetent interpreters who, more often than not, distorted the truth according to their passing fancy (Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 112-113). Nevertheless, their importance remained throughout their integration into more heterogenous forms of spectacle such as the vaudeville and the musical revue, in which film figured among many other art forms (*Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 113-114) and which attracted a diverse audience (V. Bouchard 53).

In this phase of oral cinema, which Lacasse calls the "resistance" phase, the *bonimenteur*, often a comedian, entertained local audiences by stressing distinctions between the diegetic dimension of the film and the reality of the audience, or, in other words, between the cultural contexts of production and reception. For example, Alex Silvio, owning and directing several theaters in the early 1920s, commented on French films by addressing the audience in a French-Canadian vernacular which challenged metropolitan hierarchy and marked his product as national and popular (Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 116).[8] Additionally, Silvio's shows were

[8] In another article, Lacasse also mentions the existence of several reviews created or produced by Silvio in which skits had a "documentary" quality inspired by cinema or parodying cinema. Comedians and actors frequently impersonated characters from local current events, within a setting alluding to filmed reportage, touristic documentary

hosted at the "Théâtre Canadien-Français" which he renamed the "Théâtre du peuple" in advertising around 1923. Films were given new titles that had a strongly local flavour, such as the series *Envoye fort, Hutch!* – a colloquialism implying a collective cheer (Lacasse, *Le bonimenteur de vues animées* 116). In their live performances, Silvio and other *bonimenteurs* intentionally diverted viewers from the original text to create connections between themselves and the audience instead, using humour, parody, digression, and thus generating a form of participative reception and appreciation of cinema. In sum, the *bonimenteur* situated him or herself as an implied, if more vocal and authorized, member of the audience, whose performance created "une négociation [qui] s'engage alors entre le film, la voix autorisée et les interactions avec la salle" to reflect on the local dimensions of culture (V. Bouchard 53).

1.2 The cinema of priest-filmmakers: performing the subject of tradition

One of the first consistent forms of local film production emerged in the 1930s with the documentaries of priest-filmmakers, such as Albert Tessier and Maurice Proulx. At the time, while cinema was an object of mistrust by the Church (Gaudreault et al.), Tessier and Proulx envisioned the medium as a possible extension of traditionalist discourse through the use of live commentary, and thus began shooting non-fiction films to illustrate educational lectures, conferences and sermons. Images simultaneously entertained audiences and magnified discourses of religious authority that were embodied in the live commentary – and, eventually, the recording of such live narrations. As home-made films, most frequently silent, accompanied by a live presentation, their

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or city films ("L'audible évidence du cinéma oral" 58-60). With this information, Lacasse attempts to draw a connection between oral cinema and documentary that is perhaps a little too direct, however. Rather than viewing "a documentary quality" in those performances, I argue that it would be more accurate to say that cinema induced an impulse to stage and *perform* reality.

exhibition strategy borrowed from each of the previous stages of oral cinema: they mediated a discourse on identity and history; they stressed their local context of enunciation (often filming their own parish and surroundings); and the narrative voice employed the first-person pronoun, the filmmaker thus addressing the audience in person. Additionally, the priests' status as amateur filmmakers and the non-existence of a local distribution network further entailed artisanal methods of production and exhibition that involved the filmmakers closely with the material and its presentation, which explains why oral cinema persisted as a significant practice even through the standardization of sound cinema in the 1930s. Documentary could thus "compete" with Hollywood sound cinema as its oral enunciation allowed clergymen, who already had access to a variety of public platforms and spaces, to screen their films in non-urban communities within numerous sites of social gathering, therefore controlling cinematic discourse while making film a communal event.

In the context of economic depression, rural exodus and mass emigration to the US that marked the 1930s in Quebec, the priest-filmmakers aimed at countering the "influence" of American entertainment on the "French-Canadian lifestyle" by documenting positive images of rural life. Two of their most well-known films, *Hommage à notre paysannerie* (Tessier, 1938) and *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure* (Proulx, 1942), show how they relied in fact on autoethnographic strategies to achieve such goals, the former through live narration combined with autobiographical material, the latter through a subjective, personified voiceover commentary track. While hostile to the popular cinematic spectacle of the *bonimenteurs*, Tessier and Proulx produced autoethnographic films which I argue could function as "collective" home movies, in order to generate feelings of kinship, identity and nostalgia in the audience. Lacking any professional training, the mise-en-scène of their films evoked the aesthetics of the family portrait indeed and

used color footage such as the Kodacolor film (Pelletier) to create an intimate and vivid depiction of "homeland" and tradition. Furthermore, the inclusion of the filmmakers within the representation, as actors and witnesses of the community, entailed a strategic use of the first-person as a figure of both authority and familiarity, guiding the viewers in the reception of their lectures on themes such as national self-sufficiency and land occupation. Against threats to the traditional lifestyle made by cinema and modernity themselves, autoethnography thus integrated media technology as a potential extension of tradition. This leads us to understand how, in this early stage of national cinema, nationalism was performed as a form of filmic presence, and how the creative purpose of documentary was to inhabit the "land" of images, media and discourse, made tangible through autoethnographic representation.

1.2.1 Albert Tessier: autobiographical traces as ideological proof

Perhaps the most compelling example of autoethnography in the first half of Quebec's film history is Albert Tessier's silent film *Hommage à notre paysannerie* (1938), which documented the traditional values and culture of the "French-Canadian race" by using the filmmaker's family as the subject of representation. Screened more than 1500 times as part of live educational lectures on the topic of agricultural self-sufficiency and rural nationalism (Bossé), Tessier's film deployed directly in the credits a unique autobiographical strategy. A still of the filmmaker himself holding a camera is shown, followed by a picture of his father with the inscription: "Dédié à mon père, un habitant de bonne race" (see fig. 1). Instead of employing an impersonal "voice-of-God" enunciation, the filmmaker thus claimed authority on the basis of his own familial ties and biographical existence. The father invoked is a temporal and tangible, rather than spiritual father.

In the film, Tessier, the priest, speaks not from the position of his clerical authority, but as an equal, exemplary member of the group engaged in a common lineage.

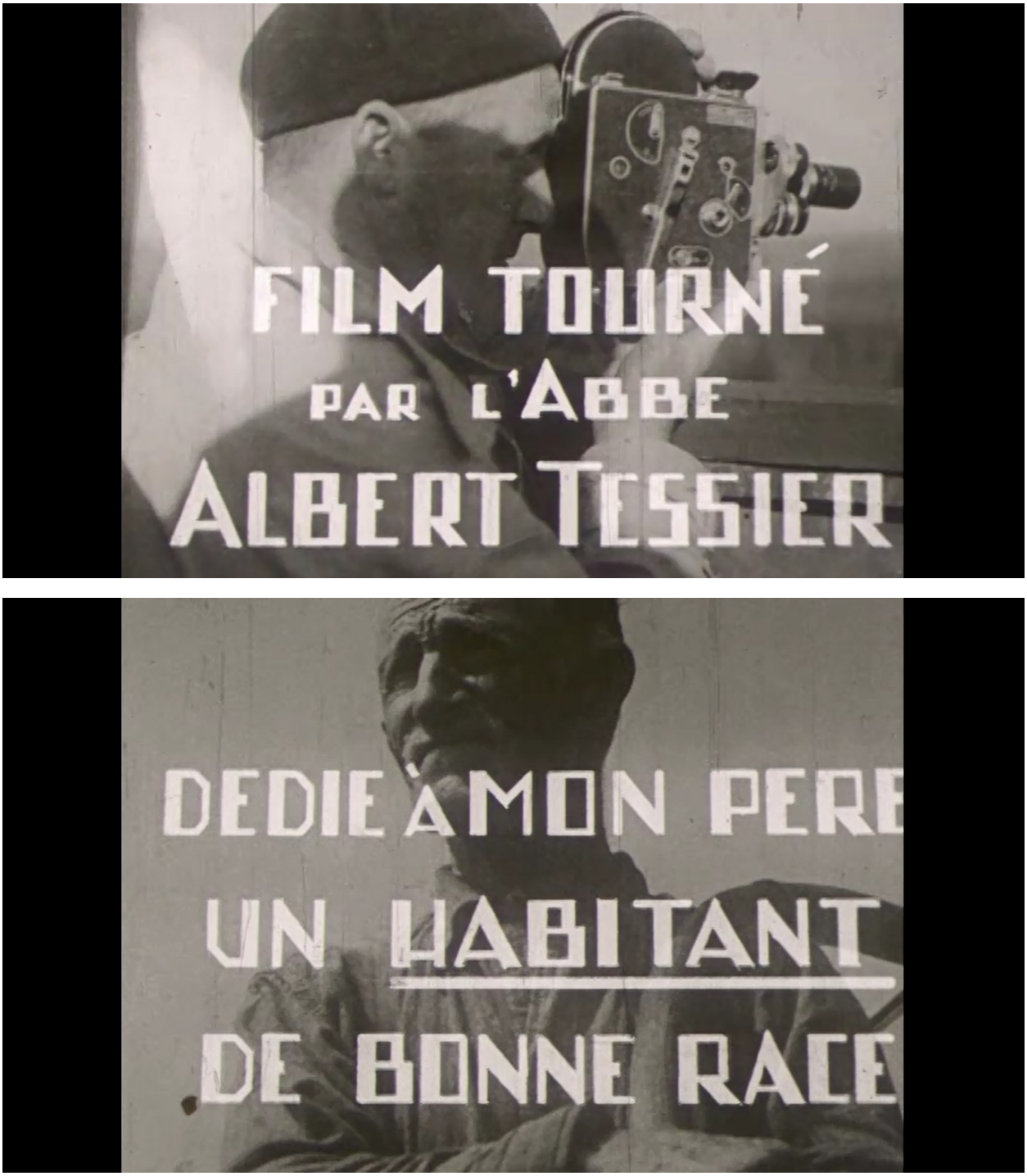

Fig. 1: Opening credits of *Hommage à notre paysannerie*: Filiation and self-representation in the manner of a family portrait.

For the purpose of its "educational" and political lecture, *Hommage à notre paysannerie* thus borrowed the form of the family album to transmit collective memory. Tessier filmed his own family both to document a type, the French-Canadian peasant, and to exemplify this type himself. Tessier's father in the film demonstrates traditional rural techniques and the usage of certain ancestral tools, embodying the past within the present tense of the image, as well as the idea of collective filiation in the process. The portrait was exemplary yet intimate. It also recalled Tessier's own position as an autoethnographer: amateur film or "home movie" technology was at once destined to private use, and unaffordable to rural communities. The gesture of filming the private was thus also a form of collective mediation in that context.

As for the oral component of the film, Tessier's live performances as a *bonimenteur*, commenting on his silent images, had the purpose of preventing distraction and, as he wrote in *Conférences sur l'emploi de l'image en éducation*, "provoquer la curiosité, l'intérêt […], guider l'auditoire durant la projection en ponctuant certains passages, en ramenant l'attention sur les idées maîtresses du film" (qtd. in Lacasse, "L'audible évidence du cinéma oral" 61). Lacasse contends that it was also a way to promote ideology by using a type of archaic and formal French, the "terroir" dialect, a highly literary and normative form of local French ("L'audible évidence du cinéma oral" 61). However, this did not go without incorporating elements of familiarity and warmth in the live component of the performance, which echoed the visual intimacy of the autobiographical material. A review of one of Tessier's filmed lectures in *Le Devoir* mentioned for example "une tendresse et une pointe d'humour dans ses commentaires, qu'il fait combien savoureux"(Huot). Tessier's embodied oral performance was thus an important element of the films that conveyed an emotional quality essential to the reception of their content.

One of the most striking implications of *Hommage à notre paysannerie*'s "autobiographical pact" is therefore the fusion of the "key idea" with the speaker himself. In the live, autobiographical performance, Tessier becomes the human incarnation of the argument that he makes about the generational continuation of the French-Canadian people through tradition. In his written filmography of Tessier's work, René Bouchard contends that the film demonstrates "l'affirmation politique de la nécessité de la terre [et] que par son autarcie économique et culturelle héritée en droite ligne de l'intendant Talon, la population agricole du Québec a su résister aux lourdes pressions qui ont pesé sur le pays dans le cours du XVIIIe siècle et du XIXe siècle et qui auraient pu le démembrer," a thesis which Tessier discussed in details in the lecture (75-76). This, however, was mediated only through the orality of the performance: traces of that knowledge are nowhere to be found in the images and the titles, which only show scenes from contemporary rural life and from the filmmaker's family. Autobiography therefore supported a variety of possible abstract discourses demonstrated by the lecture, grounding their representation within tangible notions of home, kinship, and lived experience. Thus, the author's family – where only the older patriarch is named – appeared as a flexible signifier of the collectivity's history. Through this signifier, Tessier gave meaning to the images as much as they gave meaning to his discourse, evoking feelings of familiarity, nostalgia and presence within ideological and political discussions.

Indeed, thinking about oral cinema through the theories of literature scholars Wlad Godzich and Jeffrey Kittay, Bruno Cornellier remarks that encoding and decoding a text relies on a pre-existing system of signs, whereas oral performance is indissociable from "the bodily presence underlying the words" (Godzich and Kittay, qtd. in Cornellier 3; my translation). Thus, oral performance, he adds, "suppose une adéquation entre *langage* et *être*" (5; emphasis his). The particularity of *Hommage à notre paysannerie*, in that sense, was to articulate a movement of back

and forth between the two physical, embodied dimensions of text and speech featured in the performance: Tessier was on one side of the screen speaking to the audience, while on the other he was also present through the inscription of his own autobiographical traces, in words such as "my father." The film itself, therefore, was conceived as an extension of his physical, speaking voice and as an authorial inscription of meaning into the images themselves – which reflected reality in a palpable, physical way through performance.

Between 1930 and 1940, Tessier had personally narrated more than 3000 live screenings, which averaged to almost one a day (Lacasse, "L'audible évidence du cinéma oral" 61). However, as Tessier's health degraded at the end of the 1930s, the use of amplifying and recording technology became a necessity, compensating for the physical limitations of such an exhibition model based on live performance and itinerant distribution. Gradually, a recording of his voice "speaking live" replaced the lectures themselves. In a 1938 letter addressed to Tessier, fellow filmmaker Father Jean-Philippe Cyr indeed suggested using a microphone that could connect to a sound projector. The device, he wrote, could amplify the voice as well as projecting sound films (Lacasse, "L'audible évidence du cinéma oral" 61). This technological advice led to the recording of the performance, fixing the official voiceover soundtrack of the film (Lacasse, "L'accent aigu du cinéma oral" 52).[9] Thus, performance migrated to a virtual space that blurred the boundaries between screen and venue as a space of "authentic" and situated expression where a speaker addressed the group. The "authentic expression" and site specificity of oral cinema had entered a process of standardization through which the signs of presence remained, but instead were projected as a part of the film itself. A technological reproduction of the performance could then reach various audiences across boundaries of space and time, each spectator accessing the

[9] Lacasse mentions that the soundtracks of some of those lectures have even kept the sound of the projector ("L'accent aigu du cinéma oral" 52).

"embodied authenticity" of oral expression. This shaped the making of future national cinema as a space of familiarity, an encounter with "ourselves" through a media of mass reproduction, locally and individually appropriated.

1.2.2 Maurice Proulx: performing for the virtual audience of national cinema

Beginning with Tessier, the transposition of the oral performance into a non-synch sound, recorded voiceover narration implied the separation of audience and performer in time and in space. On the part of filmmakers-*bonimenteurs*, it therefore implied new strategic forms of address that engaged with the nation as a virtual fellowship. Indeed, the reproducibility of the priest-filmmakers' lectures at the end of the 1930s coincided with the beginning of the Service de ciné-photographie, an office that purchased and distributed films across the territory to serve the means of official propaganda (Lacasse, "L'audible évidence du cinéma oral" 61). What had previously been regional, amateur, local, and oral cinema, presented in person by the filmmaker to the audience, began to be accessed by a variety of spectators across space and time – a virtual entity which Benedict Anderson has called the "imagined community" of national culture, in which strangers separated by time and space perceive to be living in communion through media (6). Thus, communion with the audience was created in larger part through the recorded commentary and its textual markers of presence, rather than through the live performance. Through the Service de ciné-photographie, as the credits often showed, the Province of Quebec itself became an "interlocutor" (see fig. 2), mediating standardized discourses that emphasized the filmmaker's voice as "familiar" and paternal, addressing the audience through an implicit "I/you" type of dialogue as in the classic non-synch sound films of Maurice Proulx *En pays neufs* (1937) and its epilogue *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure* (1942).

Fig. 2: Opening credits of *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure*: The State is speaking.

Regarding the transition from silent to sound cinema in the 1930s, Karel Dibbets has characterized this shift as "the transformation of a communal happening between four walls into an exclusive relation between the film(-maker) and the individual viewer" (214). This aptly describes the films of Maurice Proulx, a priest-filmmaker who began to collaborate with the Service de ciné-photographie at the end of the 1930s, and who was one of the first to make (non-synch) sound films in Quebec. Indeed, to quote from the introduction of his feature-length film *En pays neufs*, Proulx's first-person voiceover commentary of ethnographic and travel films had the function of "[nous] guider à travers notre visite du pays." Essayist Étienne Beaulieu discusses Proulx, who produced films for the Ministère de la Colonisation and the Office provincial de la publicité, by stressing this importance of the voiceover as a way to domesticate and bring home images of the nation to the audience: "La superposition de la voix à l'image, comme dans une conférence, donne en somme aux films de Proulx le caractère d'un cinéma d'exploration

transformé en tourisme de salon" (Beaulieu 35). In Maurice Proulx's key autoethnographic films – and their carefully recorded commentary – the "imagined community" was thus mediated by the signified presence of the filmmaker in the voiceover narration of the film, interpreting and taming the territory and populations of Quebec for the viewers. The narrator's voice is personified as Proulx's own voice (in fact the voice of actor Maurice Montgrain), embodying the testimonial presence of the filmmaker and telling viewers about the cultural and natural landmarks of various regions of Quebec "from his own eyes." Addressing the audience from that perspective, Proulx therefore connected both sides of the screen, the film and the venue, as one continuous and common national space, bounded by his figure. Indeed, contrary to Albert Tessier, who was mainly a regional filmmaker documenting the Mauricie-Bois-Francs region, Proulx covered great distances and documented a vast portion of the territory. The singularity of his voice, however – in fact, of Montgrain's voice reading a first-person text – made him recognizable and present as a character in the voiceover narration, and thus rallied different audiences across the province around a familiar and common figure, instantly identifiable as a paternal voice circulating among images of the homeland.

As the purpose of his films was to show urban viewers the different peripheral regions of Quebec such as Abitibi and Gaspésie and incite them to leave their urban environment to become settlers (Beaulieu 34), Proulx's voiceover narration typically represented him as both a traveler and a narrator. This posture allowed him to singularly cross the space of the nation while creating a totalizing representation of territory and culture. The mobile singularity of his own perspective was an important element of the films indeed, mediating the time and space of the nation as homogenous, continuous and connected through media documentation and discourse. In *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure* (1942), for instance, the individuality of the filmmaker becomes acutely

manifest as the film describes for urban viewers the creation of a settlement colony from the point of view of the author, who witnessed various stages of its evolution with his own eyes. Proulx documented it first between 1934-1935, in his first recorded, non-synch sound narrated film *En pays neufs* (1937), and then in *Sainte-Anne*, in which he mentioned coming back to the village five years later to witness the settlers' progress. Typically screened as an epilogue to *En pays neufs*, *Sainte-Anne* also created a form of continuity that connected national and personal history in the figure of the autoethnographer. Filming a beautiful and prosperous farm, the narrator reminisces: "Je ne pourrai jamais regarder cette belle ferme sans me rappeler le visage d'un agronome barbouillé, arrachant des souches avec son bœuf."As the narrator expresses that, the viewer is reminded of such scenes of hard work and sacrifice that populated the first film, and together with Proulx's imagination and memory witnesses the happy result of colonization. Furthermore, Proulx's memory refers to a filmic memory, embodying collective memory as a personal experience of history within film.

The singularity of *Sainte-Anne* in particular is also that the "I" of the voice track implies a "you" which the film also makes manifest, a fictional viewer to whom the narrator relates his experience, observations and memories. The film recreates the active relationship of oral cinema between audience and performer in the soundtrack, by staging a conversation with a fictional spectator in the voiceover. The fictional viewer often expresses surprise or awe at the sight of images and asks for precisions and explanations which the author can thus deliver "in person" as dialogue, accentuating his figure as a witness. The text of *Sainte-Anne* is filled with the typical language of propaganda (speaking of children as "the future strength of the nation" or health and fitness as the "building [of] the heart and muscles of French Canada"; my translation), yet it is this metacommentary fictionalizing audience participation and individualizing the narrator that relays

the heart of the ideological content. This conversation with a "spectator" characterized as an interlocutor in the voiceover emphasizes the partiality and subjectivity of the author through dialogue, and therefore completes the affective and rhetoric strategy of Proulx's testimonial address. Enunciation and ideology are split between two discursive bodies, who appear to have a casual conversation as if Proulx is recounting a travel experience and sharing images with an acquaintance. When this secondary commentator exclaims, for example: "Je suis d'accord avec vous!", this personified viewer becomes not only a receptor of information, but a transmitter of meaning, validating statements in the form of dialogue. As he can therefore theoretically agree or disagree with the text (and of course, he always agrees), his presence in the dialogue attempts to gear the potential readings of the film by enunciating the correct interpretation and emotional response to the images shown. Proulx's film is therefore a singular case that reverses the classical tropes of documentary, in which an official voice "conceals" its subjective point of view to mediate a form of totalizing discourse. In the opposite sense, discourse is instead concealed in the form of a staged dialogue between "real" interlocutors in *Sainte-Anne*.

In effect, the emotional, embodied nature of dialogue arises precisely to conceal the shortcomings and contradictions of ideology. For example, images showing primitive technology and obsolete methods of work (harvesting wheat with a scythe, for example), which attest to the austere conditions of life in colonial Abitibi, are commented on with great lyrical emphasis by the narrator as signs of piety and respect for tradition: "Scène émouvante que voir cette femme cueillir précieusement les épis à la poignée… Les ancêtres, voyez-vous, avaient le respect du blé, de quoi sont fait le pain et l'hostie." Images of progress and success, on the other hand, such as scenes that show children playing in a modern schoolyard, are celebrated through the same rhetorical device, the personified voice of the spectator exclaiming: "Ce sont des scènes reposantes à regarder, non?"

The irrational and subjective aspect of the commentary allows the filmmaker to adapt content to ideology by creating a distance from the images. Indeed, the dialogue between the author-narrator and the character-spectator addresses the *experience* of watching images, rather than their content. The scenes are "relaxing" or "moving," that is, described from the point of view of the viewer, which the filmmaker shares as another member of the viewing community. The content of images is thus described with an abstract language (using words such as "tradition," "respect," "piety," "sanctity," etc.) while the experience of the viewing is made concrete and is emphasized as a site of subjectivation. As potential settlers, viewers are called upon to colonize Abitibi as they would go to the cinema, called through their work, that is, to perform and actualize an image of the nation. As modernity threatened tradition, cinema was appropriated to generate tradition as an image. Gwenn Scheppler writes that this is how orality negotiated cinema itself in Quebec, oscillating between hostility towards an industrial apparatus and the will to appropriate it to generate "une solution de continuité, entre la culture traditionnelle et les bouleversements ressentis au quotidien et représentés *au* et *par* le cinéma" (66; emphasis his).

In sum, the oral cinema of the priest-filmmakers in the 1930s-1940s saw the return of a more guided "rituel de réception savant et passif," as was previously the case with lecturers such as the viscount d'Hauterives (Lacasse, Le bonimenteur de vues animées 123). Yet, contrary to such previous incarnations of the speaker, the performance this time situated the lecturer as an embodied member of the community, sharing the viewers' identity and point of view through strategies of self-representation and self-inscription. In *Hommage à notre paysannerie* and *Sainte-Anne-de-Roquemaure*, this inscription of the author's voice and autobiographical experience was designed to guide reception: the speaker told the viewer what to think, while legitimizing this discourse by stressing its source as an act of *witnessing*, emanating from a personal engagement

between the filmmaker and the community. This, in appearance, is only slightly different than the totalizing, classical "voice-of-God" documentary enunciation. Yet, the mediation of authority through the tangible participation of an individual, present both in the film and in the community, has defined the singular trajectory of documentary cinema in Quebec ever since. As we have seen so far, an explanation for such a strategy lies in the absence of a stable, locally organized film infrastructure, bringing the group to recognize itself in individual rather than institutional voices. This becomes particularly clear when studying the next phase of Quebec cinema, marked by the influence of the anglocentric, federal NFB, a phase during which francophone filmmakers advocated for the importance of inscribing cultural perspective as an empowering paradigm of documentary practice. As we will see, in Quebec, a Canadian voice-of-God documentary could just as well be perceived as a translated "foreign" film indeed, mediating neither identity nor community without the help of an individual representative personally engaging with the audience and with representation.

1.3 Oral cinema and the NFB: the issue of cultural perspective

With the creation of the National Film Board of Canada in 1939, the authority of the clergy was deeply challenged in the field of cinema. Similarly to the priest-filmmakers, the NFB favoured an approach centered on documentary and used an alternative circuit of distribution and exhibition that reached rural audiences but challenged the values of tradition, advocating for values of social progressivism, secularism and democracy instead, and with more significant resources than the Church. The mission of the NFB being to transform Canada's abstract multiculturalism into a

common political identity using film (Scheppler 68),[10] oral mediation was key in negotiating the political and cultural tensions that it inevitably generated, notably in Quebec. Here, I want to discuss how the source of speech thus shifted from the traditional elite to a local federal worker, the NFB representative,[11] whose task was to negotiate representation with the audience in a live format and to articulate the group's agency within the space of Canadian multicultural identity. This, as I contend, will provide a context that can help us situate the recourse to orality and to subjective enunciation markers by francophone filmmakers, as a similar strategy that they employed in their films to make a distinct French-Canadian cinema within the NFB, before the creation of a separate French production branch in 1964.

1.3.1 The NFB rep: contesting the site of authority

Between the 1940s and the late 1960s, screenings were commented on by representatives who acted as distributors, projectionists, hosts and live *bonimenteurs* for the NFB. Until the democratization of television gave remote communities immediate access to media, reps were responsible for outreach, especially in the countryside, and worked as cultural mediators between the centralized production system of the NFB and the various different communities that comprise Canada. Films were often produced and screened in English and needed a live translation, for example, or represented different cultural contexts that required active interpretation and explanations by the projectionist. Contrary to the priest-filmmakers, reps were therefore

[10] Scheppler discusses the oft-quoted "to show and interpret Canada to Canadians" used by the NFB to define its mandate as such: "'faire connaître le Canada aux Canadiens' […] sous-entend en fait de donner à une entité abstraite une cohérence basée sur l'ancrage dans l'esprit des spectateurs d'une représentation cinématographique des différentes composantes "réelles" du Canada : ses ressources, ses peuples, son histoire" (68). On this, see also Froger 55-66.

[11] The term "NFB representative" will hereby be abbreviated as "NFB rep" to remain specific and avoid confusion.

intermediaries between authority and community and did not reunite those two dimensions as a single, embodied figure. In other words, they did not incarnate an essence, or the familiar, "paternal" voice of the "French-Canadian race," but rather mediated representation from the double point of view of representing Canada officially and representing Quebec subjectively. In other words, they negotiated the alterity and identity of Quebec within the Canadian nation through their personal engagement with film. For example, films contained images that were sometimes subject to local censorship, which reps either pre-empted by manipulating the film reel and censoring the official version, or contested by showing it unaltered to the audience and defying local institutions. In short, their role as *bonimenteurs* was to adapt the notion of a Canadian identity to the singular reality of local culture and to negotiate the cultural tensions between the two. Such cinema entailed an active process of dialogue between audience and speaker, one that renegotiated questions of identity, representation and values, as well as the relationship of the community to tradition and modernity, and notions of "self" and "other." Through the live, oral format of the screening, the enunciation of Canadian films was thus anchored to the site of exhibition in a way that made cinema both a space of cultural specificity and transcultural negotiation.

Thus, the common belief in the value of documentary cinema, shared by both federal and Catholic institutions, allowed the NFB to circulate within the same circuit while redefining the role of film within a more open-ended cultural framework. On the one hand, for example, reps defended the interests of the community by petitioning the Film Board for more culturally-specific content, and on the other, they promoted and defended federal values that questioned the primacy of local traditions. Their informal network of exhibition sites included churches, town halls, community centers and schools, and the clergy often helped in organizing and promoting screenings. Thus, the Church still exerted a form of control over the presentation of films, yet an important shift had

occurred in the control of speech. Within that context, priests were no longer the designated speakers of the group, neither in the form of live narration nor in the form of a recorded commentary, and the limits of representation were renegotiated through the rep's singular intervention. For example, Scheppler mentions how projectionists would sometimes censor the films themselves to appeal to the standards of local authorities (for instance when a film depicted a woman changing a diaper and showed a naked infant) (74), yet, on other occasions, they challenged the norm and engaged the audience in a discussion on the usefulness of such images. In *Montage*, a periodical magazine created by francophone reps to exchange ideas and tips, an Acadian rep noted for instance how he was able to convince the audience of the absurdity of the vicar's reaction when demanding the cancellation of the film *Les Bambins* (Jack Olsen, 1946), the usefulness of which he then had to publicly acknowledge under popular pressure (Scheppler 74).

One of the most important aspects of the rep's work and of the cultural work of documentary cinema in general was therefore the opportunity to complicate official views from a plurality of social and political standpoints. In an interview, Jacques Beaucage, an NFB rep in the 40s and 50s, reminisced on the profoundly original role that he had as a community mediator using film:

> Les gens se sont demandé : "Qui va dire le mot de la fin à l'occasion d'une programmation? Y aura pas de conclusion, c'est dangereux." Jusqu'à ce moment-là, le mot de la fin, c'était toujours monsieur le curé, ou monsieur le vicaire qui le disait. On arrivait là avec quelque chose d'absolument neuf. (qtd. in Scheppler 73)

Chaplains and traditional leaders, he added, confided in him their frustration of having never attained such an ability to spark dialogue, and expressed the concern that those conversations could "spread outside" ("ça sort du groupe") and let people realize that the reality of their daily life was in fact open to discussion (Picard). Beaucage would also "practice" the art of generating debate in

tiny parishes first, before trying out the larger cities of his network, a fact which informs us of an important sociogeographical change at stake, central to the NFB's mission: the countryside had become a cradle of social experimentation, as opposed to a site of tradition and conservation.

Reps also championed the needs of the community in the other direction and contested dominant representations of identity and nation from the perspective of their minor cultural group. They reported and highlighted, among many things, reactions of hostility toward specific themes (notably films on the war effort in the 40s), or unexpected responses such as mockery, loss of interest, the misunderstanding of certain scenes, etc. (Scheppler 72). Their main pleas however were for more films in French, as they often had to cut the sound to speak over the English narration and to improvise an approximate translation in the process (Scheppler 72). Rep Jean-Théo Picard, for example, mentioned that he would sometimes stop the projection to look up words in the dictionary in front of the audience, before restarting the film (Scheppler 72). Thus, not only was the typical "voice-of-God" narration often contested or spoken over during the projection, the act of explaining or translating films also entailed a process of cultural transaction and assertion, an act of self-definition that exceeded the scope of the film. Picard's anecdote referred to a short on the subject of electricity in rural American communities, and although the film was intended to be discussed for its technical content, it ended up engaging the audience on issues of linguistic determination and cultural difference, however. Thus, the social work of documentary which the Film Board promoted was met with concurrent cultural demands from the French-Canadian community, that highlighted distinct needs.

At the level of production, francophone filmmakers attempted to meet those demands by engaging with film through orality as well, within the recorded commentary of NFB films. They expressed, accordingly, a singular vision of documentary centered on identity and cultural

perspective, which complicated the NFB's policy of objectivity as it inscribed the author as a representative of the group, speaking to the audience from a situated point of view.

1.3.2 *La terre de Caïn*: exploration documentary as cultural self-inscription

Until the late 1950s, the NFB studio-system model represented what Vincent Bouchard described as "une conception industrielle reposant sur un dispositif de production lourd et contrôlant" (70) which significantly hindered film production in minor communities such as French Canada. Indeed, financial difficulties that affected the agency after the war, combined with the policy of a "quality" cinema necessitating large budgets (V. Bouchard 72) strongly limited the production of regional content. This was especially the case in Quebec due to the additional factors of provincial censorship, linguistic difference and therefore a smaller domestic market. As a result of this conjuncture, historian Pierre Véronneau reports that annual production of original content in French at the NFB dropped from 30 films in 1945 to 2 in 1950 (*Résistance et affirmation* 19).

To circumvent the financial and cultural limitations of the studio model, a minority of francophone filmmakers, starting with Pierre Petel, therefore experimented with cheaper and more "direct" methods of production to get their voice across. In his short *La terre de Caïn* (1949), Petel indeed challenged the traditional role of the NFB author by imagining a lighter approach to filmmaking, which engaged the filmmaker directly in the situation and, as V. Bouchard remarks, prefigured the aesthetics and politics of direct cinema (71). The film, a travelogue about a journey of exploration along the northern shore of the St. Lawrence River, used the pretext of "documenting a mostly unknown region rich in resources," as the recorded narration describes (my

translation), to experiment with a subjective style that traded factual knowledge for personal expression and the voice-of-God for the authorial "I."

Petel's memoirs show that he was critical of the "ritualistic" tendency of the NFB's system of production, which imposed shot lists and articulated storylines around a dramatized, disembodied narration: "La prise de vue, je devrais plutôt l'appeler un rite" (qtd. in V. Bouchard 72). Indeed, the director complained that such a method consecrated "un certain caractère immuable et conventionnel [de la prise de vue]" (qtd. in V. Bouchard 72) which, as Bouchard writes further, "alourdit le tournage, l'empêche de rendre compte d'une réalité de manière souple. […] Ainsi, les cinéastes sont condamnés à filmer des clichés qui ne correspondent pas à la réalité" (71. The standard studio-quality cameras, for instance, often meant interrupting and staging events to meet technical requirements and hindered spontaneous field recordings.

Petel's desire to reduce expenses to a minimum for the film, which was produced as part of a series destined to relaunch francophone production (*Vigie*), led him to experiment with a different strategy of mediation. With the support of producer James Beveridge, the director opted for a hand-cranked camera typically used for newsreel called the Eyemo, reduced the film crew to a minimum (only the cameraman and himself) and scripted the film loosely in order to adapt to situations, while also renouncing sound. Rather than "filming clichés," Petel could therefore reattribute a significant portion of the budget to transportation and move with greater flexibility to remote areas otherwise inaccessible such as Blanc-Sablon, Quebec's easternmost community facing the northern shore of Newfoundland. The shooting lasted 11 weeks, for only twice the budget of a single day of sound recording (V. Bouchard 71).

To make up for the lack of sound and a shooting process that did not anticipate narrative continuity, the filmmaker opted for a first-person travelogue format in which, as Bouchard writes,

"l'expérience du tournage devient le support de la narration" (77). "[Petel] compense l'absence de la parole des habitants de la côte par celle de son équipe et il remplace les histoires des pêcheurs et des autochtones par le récit de leur expérience [c'est-à-dire l'équipe de tournage]." (78) For Bouchard, this produces a more contextualized commentary than classic NFB films: "C'est comme si Petel tentait, par la médiation de son commentaire, de nous rapprocher des personnes filmées" (78). Thus, through a perceiving "I," the film weaved a singular text that brought together a variety of places and people (the Innu nation, fishermen, log drivers, miners, vacationers, the filmmakers themselves, etc.), while contesting the traditional model of impersonal objective documentary. In the text, for instance, the author is present not only in the anecdotal impressions that punctuate the travelogue, but in the surprising use of flashbacks as well, which break the linearity of representation and immerse it in the flow of personal memory.

On the topic of direct cinema, Germain Lacasse mentions that the crucial contribution of that trend to Quebec cinema was not in giving the people access to "reality" but to discourse. In his words, the goal of direct cinema was never to insert viewers virtually on location ("introduire [un spectateur] virtuellement sur les lieux") but rather to actualize the space of communication of the film as a space of discourse and address: "Le cinéma direct, comme forme moderne du cinéma oral, tiendrait davantage d'une mise à distance du spectateur en même temps que d'une interpellation directe par un cinéaste qui se manifeste sur les lieux du film" ("L'accent aigu du cinéma oral" 49). Deictic enunciation – the enunciation of words dependent on additional contextual information such as "me" or "here" – referred the viewer to "a constructed author" within the film, "c'est-à-dire un auteur dont le spectateur imagine l'intervention" ("L'accent aigu du cinéma oral" 49). This constructed author is thus different from the abstract enunciator of a narrative film, in which the viewers are not faced by a speaker showing them sights and discussing

images but are rather positioned "inside" the space of the story itself, through cinematic narrative techniques (48). "Ce spectateur est toujours à portée de voix de son interlocuteur, il n'est pas dans le monde fictif, il est face à celui qui parle, dans une situation de communication où les traces du réel ne sont pas effacées mais mises en évidence" (49). In that respect, Petel's film on the life of Quebec's easternmost inhabitants functions as a pretext to construct a subjective, embodied authorial voice in the process. The exoticism and remoteness of the Côte-Nord region encapsulates a space beyond the everyday experience of urban viewers, in which Petel's subjectivity and "presence" is highlighted and can engage collective imagination personally, in the manner of a *bonimenteur*. In the tradition of oral cinema, the commentary indeed emphasizes emotions of shock and wonder to communicate the intensity of an "authentic" and embodied experience on-site. Additionally, flashbacks function as a form of reflection, as they allow the author to re-encounter the recorded image in the present tense of emotion: "Je me reporte vers les Indiens, au matin de leur départ pour l'intérieur, dans les solitudes du Nouveau-Québec. Je crois rêver… mais non, je vois leur défilé solennel."

About Canadian cinema, David Pike has also argued that the NFB's emphasis on "man's ability to overcome the environment was perfectly suited […] to the myth of the Canadian frontier." This myth, he wrote, was a trope of national cinema depicting nature as "irredeemably 'other', irreducible to the constraints of civilization," thus providing a space of alterity to construct selfhood and nation outside of "the easy domination of Hollywood" (Pike 27-28). In this sense, *La terre de Caïn* reprises the trope of the frontier[12] and appropriates it to inscribe the resisting cultural identity of an "other." Going as far as Petel can in the wilderness implies, indeed, a rejection of

[12] For instance, V. Bouchard quotes producer Jim Beveridge speaking of cinematographer Julien Saint-Georges as "a robust cameraman who was once a forest ranger and who has a great passion for the outdoors and for strenuous pursuits like hunting and canoeing" (74).

the technical and centralized standards of Canadian cinema in pursuit of a “truth” dependent on the autonomy of the filmmaker. Truth is therefore perceived as a surprising, unsettling and exceptional event, which can only be captured by a singular witness whose voice and perspective become central.

As a visual explorer, Petel claims lineage with the navigator and “discoverer” Jacques Cartier, for example, entitling the film after Cartier’s description of the land in his logbook. The film is introduced by a shot of a bookshelf filled with books on Canadian history, all written in English except one at the end of the shelf, unidentified, containing Cartier’s text which a hand then picks out (see fig. 3).

Fig. 3: Stills from the opening sequence of *La terre de Caïn*: Inscribing documentary in the lineage of Jacques Cartier's foundational travel writings and territorial appropriation.

This functions as a symbolic resistance to the NFB's anglo-centric vision of nationhood, yet it also reiterates a movement of domestication and appropriation of the land through colonial writing. Cartier's "discovery" is equated with seeing the land "for the first time" through cinema and claiming the territory and the medium as one's own. Ethnography, as a documentation of "others" – such as Indigenous populations, and harbour communities – becomes a pretext to inscribe the voice of the filmmaker as an explorer, giving a name and founding national history. In many ways, what truly matters is not factual knowledge but the autonomy of the author as such an intrepid discoverer, using his subjectivity as proof of the truthfulness of his discourse. For example, images of the Innu's seasonal migration, which open and close the film, serve no purpose other than to allegorize Petel's own "nomadic" point of view and to inscribe an organic time-space

that actualizes the filmmaker's subjectivity: "Je crois rêver… mais non, je vois leur défilé solennel." "I see" becomes proof of the film's authenticity Images of the cyclical rhythm of nature become reflections of the filmmaker's consciousness, connecting with reality through its own singular movement:

> Cela confirme notre impression du grand va-et-vient qui existe sur la côte: migration des touristes, des ouvriers forestiers, des prospecteurs, migration des pêcheurs, des Indiens, des oiseaux, de notre petite équipe de prise de vue. Et pourtant, quand je repense à notre voyage, il me revient des images violentes de la mer toujours en mouvement… Je revois des petits postes de pêche… Je me reporte vers les Indiens, au matin de leur départ pour l'intérieur, dans les solitudes du Nouveau-Québec. Je crois rêver… mais non, je vois leur défilé solennel.

Much like Cartier claimed the land by giving it a Christian name striking the (European) imagination ("the land of Cain"), Petel seeks a form of a poetic autonomy that can capture the viewer's imagination. In this key passage quoted above, which begins the series of flashbacks ending the film, the "ebb and flow" of the sea thus becomes synonymous with the "ebb and flow" of memory and images. The representation of reality becomes tied to the author's subjective perception itself expressed in the film form, ebbing and flowing in time like the nature of the space he is describing. At this point, Petel is no longer asserting authorship just as a *bonimenteur* in the oral sense, he is steering our attention and communicating identity by manipulating the film form and its temporality itself.

Thus, the film's main novelty lies in its meditation on the poetic and subjective possibilities of the medium, departing from the pragmatic line of the NFB. The necessity to work in the margins of the official structure, along with an emphasis on the flexibility of the filmmaking process allowed Petel to rethink the relation between authenticity, authorship and cultural representation that were at stake in Quebec documentary cinema. Thus, "l'objectif que se sont fixés les cinéastes de rendre compte de ce qu'ils voient et non pas de ce que doit être la côte nord [sic]" (V. Bouchard

75), that is to say, the goal of conveying what the filmmakers experienced personally rather than what should be "universally" experienced) was in fact to access discourse and point of view.

1.3.3 *De Montréal à Manicouagan*: embodying the Quiet Revolution

In retrospect, *La terre de Caïn* is significant as one of the earliest examples of an NFB film asserting cultural independence by focusing on its own poetic autonomy. This 1949 effort, indeed, formed the basis of what direct cinema would become and successfully achieve a decade later. In the late 1940s, however, the *Vigie* series failed to generate sufficient box office revenues and never reached its objective. Many filmmakers were eventually relegated to more commercially viable English-Canadian productions as assistant directors, bringing a director like Petel to eventually quit the institution (Véronneau, *Résistance et affirmation* 19). For their conditions of work to improve, Quebec filmmakers had to wait for the creation of the Radio-Canada television network in 1953, as well as the move of the NFB from Ottawa to Montreal in 1956 following the Massey Commission report on bilingualism. As TV secured an outlet for films in French, local production grew at a steadier rate across the 1950s, although initial attempts at generating successful television documentary series were often unfruitful due to a lack of trained personnel and the competition of more popular forms such as melodrama serials (Véronneau, *Résistance et affirmation* 27)

The lighter, low cost type of cinema which Petel had championed proved an efficient and pragmatic method of work, which gained in popularity among a branch of Quebec documentary filmmakers throughout the 50s as technological progress, such as the development of the Arriflex camera, the Nagra portable recorder, more sensitive 16mm film, allowed for more mobility and improvisation. Direct filmmakers, as they were to be called by Mario Ruspoli in his UNESCO report "Pour un nouveau cinéma dans les pays en voie de développement", employed methods that

were similar to the ones that Petel had devised for *La terre de Caïn*: no script, reduced teams, no makeup or artificial lighting required, and compact equipment that maximized the potential for participation between filmmakers and subjects. Filmmakers could therefore create films more rapidly and with a minimal budget, and overcome administrative constraints that restricted francophone production in general.[13]

Informed by technological development and the formal precedents of oral cinema, a brand of verité-style cinema – direct cinema – emerged at the end of the 1950s within the NFB, which explored non-fiction at the boundary of art and public service, in order to, as Pierre Véronneau writes, "s'atteler à cette tâche dialectique qui vise à établir des liens entre eux et la réalité, entre eux et le film, entre le spectateur et le film et entre le spectateur et la réalité" (*Résistance et affirmation* 38). Progressively, for instance, the tradition of preparing a film through extensive research conducted by academics made way to an approach favoring the inscription within a notebook of personal discoveries or things read in the newspaper (Véronneau, *Résistance et affirmation* 43-44).

Produced at the peak of that trend, Arthur Lamothe's 1963 film *De Montréal à Manicouagan* reprised in an exemplary manner this relationship between low cost portable cinema, subjective point of view, cultural identity and poetic autonomy that Petel's travelogue had begun to articulate. Set in the same region as *La terre de Caïn*, the aim of the film was to bear witness to the spectacular development of an uncivilized region as a symbol of national autonomy. It also reused Petel's idea of a first-person travelogue to link the development of national industry with

[13] Fernand Dansereau, one of the main film producers of the direct cinema era, reminds us that this whole movement emerged out of practical, rather than ethical or aesthetic reasons, as a way to avoid scripts and paperwork that needed to be otherwise translated and negotiated at length: "On savait que si on prenait le cinéma direct, on obtiendrait $20,000 avec une feuille de papier. Si on prenait le cinéma non-direct, il fallait faire des scénarios et on en avait pour six mois de tonnes de papier à échanger, puis de corrections à faire" (qtd. in Garneau 37).

the oral appropriation of the medium. Documenting the construction of the (then) world's largest hydro-electrical dam by the new state corporation of Hydro-Québec, Lamothe followed the trajectory of construction materials from Montreal to Manicouagan, 1000 km northeast, by using a subjective camera to embody his gaze.

In the film, an unscripted approach at the subject matter allows the author to drift and digress in the space of discourse, as he catches meaningful glimpses of landscape along the St. Lawrence river and randomly interviews the people that he meets in the process. In this fluid movement, the film becomes a kaleidoscopic meditation on the colonial history of French-Canada, the life of navigators working on the St. Lawrence River, and cinema as a space of transcultural expression and experimentation (the film's starting point is the Montreal International Film Festival, a reflection of Quebec's inscription in a global space that the monumentality of the dam performs). Reaching the dam is thus merely a pretext to navigate the geographical and temporal space of the nation, between global and local, and past and future.

Discussing the cinema of the Quiet Revolution, film historian Yves Lever reminds us that the construction of the dam was a major event broadcasted daily to thousands of television spectators in the 60s (Lever 19). With Lamothe acting as a *bonimenteur*, *De Montréal à Manicouagan* thus embodied the Quiet Revolution's valorization of media and technology as extensions of the self allowing the Quebecois people to become "masters in their own home."[14] In the film, Lamothe lends his eyes and voice to this discourse by crossing the space of the nation, camera in hand, to document the process. The first-person stream-of-consciousness opens up the journey to historical time as well, as visions of the future and of the past become connected. Indeed, Lamothe moves from familiar sites of memory that unfold along the river – the main artery of

[14] The phrase refers to Premier Jean Lesage's slogan in the 1959 elections for the Liberal party, the government of which initiated the series of reforms that were later dubbed the "Quiet Revolution."

colonial French Canada – to the unfamiliarity of the modern landscape surrounding the dam, a gigantic construction in the middle of the woods where workers from all over Quebec are gathered, yet remain connected to civilization through "TV, cinema, bowling and dance parlours." Lamothe's vision articulates a transitional "I" at the juncture of history, mass society and art that posits and performs identity as a diachronic, deterritorialized state of becoming.

Incidentally, Lamothe's film was produced as part of the series *Ceux qui parlent français* – making language, and not the dam, the official subject of the film. As with the example of Jean-Théo Picard, the NFB rep who interrupted films to look up words in the dictionary, once again a film about infrastructure and technology became an opportunity to assert cultural and discursive autonomy. Its autoethnographic expression thus turned a social and technical event into a singular cultural performance. Looking more closely at a current event that occupied the attention of Quebec society, Lamothe's involvement in the mediation created a poetic discourse that reflected on the stakes of cultural representation and authorship at play in the emergence of a "minor" national cinema. At last, if documentary was "a creative treatment of actuality", then for Quebec documentary auteurs, it presented itself as the medium of a "creative actualization" of national identity, at once ethnically grounded and open to redefinition through the play between the particular and the collective.

Throughout the emergence of national cinema in Quebec before 1963, in the near-absence of a local, independent film industry, filmmakers inscribed the signs of the community within their own signified presence in the filmed reality. By doing this, media was envisioned, in their discourse, as "national," that is, not the neutral and/or foreign apparatus of modernity, but the

possible extension of a lived experience of the self, onto which an imagined, collective identity was projected.

The next chapter will show how this issue of embodiment and perspective progressively brought auteurs to deconstruct and challenge this imagined coincidence between themselves and the group, and to contest the homogeneity of nation from a plurality of individual standpoints. Deriving from the question of national self-determination, I will show how oral cinema became confessional cinema in the course of the 60s and thus extended the question of "emancipation" to new subjectivities that altered and redefined the political relationship between individuality and collectivity.

Chapter 2: Identity, alterity and nation in 1960s confessional auteur cinema

> *Dans le bref moment de la révélation, Jutra ne met-il pas le doigt sur un principe politique fondamental que le consensus nationaliste n'a pas encore intégré, à savoir que le personnel est politique, que la libération collective est inséparable de la libération personnelle?*
>
> - Thomas Waugh

In chapter one, we have seen how autoethnographic expression in early Quebec cinema put forth the speaker's – or *bonimenteur*'s – individual voice to embody the collectivity and assert cultural representation. Chapter two will discuss how this tradition of the *bonimenteur* shaped the advent of a modernist auteur cinema in 1960s Quebec, as personal auteur films came to embody cultural independence, autonomy and "authentic" national cinema. Indeed, speech and the auteur figure played a key role in the development of national cinema, championing freedom of expression against political and religious censorship at home, and fighting cultural subordination within Canada. Many foundational films of that era were thus confessional, subjective works such as Claude Jutra's *À tout prendre* (1963), Gilles Groulx's *Le chat dans le sac* (1964) or Anne-Claire Poirier's *De mère en fille* (1968), narrating through a first-person voiceover a semi-fictional account of the auteur's life (or that of an alter ego) focused on intimate love stories or familial relationships.

These films aimed at representing the experience of Quebecois identity from an insider autoethnographic perspective, reprising the tradition of oral cinema that was discussed in chapter one. However, the personal enunciation and private subject matter of such films complicated and challenged traditional visions of identity, community and selfhood in the process. What I intend to discuss in this chapter is how the three films by Groulx, Poirier and Jutra were thus ground-breaking not only for their stylistic qualities, but for their productive destabilization of the

imagined community from the perspective of political dissidents, women and racialized and sexual "other" selves commenting on the films as *bonimenteurs*. In other words, I investigate how the autoethnographic auteur, being both a representative of the group and a singular "other" self, generated new ways of thinking about the political space of the nation through the mediation of autobiography and private life.

In my analysis of the films, I emphasize how they situate themselves within the genealogy of autoethnographic inscription discussed in the previous chapter to defend an idea of national cinema and cultural affirmation. However, their intimacy is also in conflict with the group, and the personal subject matter of their representation resists master narratives of identity and homogenous understandings of the community. Groulx, for example, through the fictional romantic failures of an alter ego, staged radical new ideas on decolonization and revolution in rupture with the past. Poirier, through the recreation of her pregnancy diaries, claimed the inclusion of women's subjectivity and inner conflicts on the screens of national cinema. Jutra, for his part, re-enacted a tragic love story from his past to create singular connections between Quebec's colonial status, and the existence of non-conforming sexual and racial identities struggling to live openly. The idea of national cinema as a reflection of collective identity becomes refracted by a personal experience of difference. In that way, autoethnography prolongs, subverts or complicates discourses of autonomy, emancipation and participation in Quebec's public sphere. Self-representation imagines the nation-to-become as a site of possibility and alterity, allowing a reframing of national cinema as an open-ended and intersubjective mediation of intimacy within the group, open to critical reformulations and contestations.

What I propose to do to structure this investigation is, first, to recount how the auteur's subjectivity was historically constructed as a figure giving voice to the community in a context of

resistance within the NFB. Indeed, a survey of the critical discourses and the political economy of film in Quebec reveals the auteur as an important strategic figure of cultural affirmation emerging in the 1960s within the federal organization. Secondly, this leads me to take a closer look at Groulx, Poirier and Jutra's confessional films and assess how their first-person voiceover narration and authorial style embodied cultural identity and negotiated collective representation in the process. More specifically, I analyze how the films studied in this chapter both embody an idea of national cinema and create a form of cultural critique from their respective authorial standpoints. These films rejected the master narratives of French Catholicism, patriarchy, ethnicity and/or heteronormativity of the films analyzed in chapter one, and instead propose new arrangements and modes of agency between self and the group that gave room to personal expression, desire and private experience as political signifiers.

Going from Groulx to Poirier to Jutra, I structure my argument in this chapter in relation to the level of personal implication by the filmmaker, rather than chronologically. The more implicated the auteur is in the autobiography, the more enunciation becomes subjective and unstable and challenges the assumptions of an "essential" fixed self. Groulx, for example, the least personally involved of the three, keeps a distance from the story by fashioning an alter ego which is only "a quarter" of himself (qtd. in Patenaude 6) – a reporter consumed by the problematic of national independence who is a composite of Groulx and a fictional character. With this composite character, Groulx attempts to create a "typical French-Canadian character" (6) and to show "the local man as a unique type" (*l'homme d'ici comme type unique*) (10), inviting Quebecois viewers to recognize themselves as they see on the screen "their own traits of character, their own flaws, [...] seeing it's their world, their reflection" (9) being collectively and homogenously embodied. Poirier, for her part, fictionalizes a story based on her actual journals and point of view. Her aim

is to translate a female experience often erased from the public sphere into cultural representation, using a surrogate actress and documenting the experience of other women to move her discourse further from the first-person singular to the first-person plural. As for Jutra, who plays himself as both narrator and character in the film alongside his real ex-partner, the re-enactment of their past allows for shameful secrets and taboos to resurface and work their way into public expression and self-affirmation, namely the revelation of homosexuality – illegal then – and interracial love. Over the course of this gradation which structures the chapter (going from fictionalization to indirect transposition to direct transposition), identity becomes increasingly porous and fluid, subject to political transformation, restructuration and contestation. Autoethnographic expression destabilizes master narratives of identity, gender, sexuality and race to complicate Quebec's nationalist discourse on minor identity and emancipation, extending it to a plurality of voices emerging within the collective space of cinema.

2.1 From documentary filmmaker to auteur: expressing identity in the 1960s

2.1.1 Francophone filmmakers and the issue of authorship at the NFB

Before analyzing the three films of this chapter, it is important to go slightly back in time, before the 1960s, and contextualize how the auteur figure was construed as a representative of the community – expressing the authenticity, deeper desires and subjectivity of the Quebecois people. The prevalence of the auteur originated largely amidst internal tensions within the NFB during the 1950s. On the one hand, as the NFB boomed with the advent of television, Quebec filmmakers gained more opportunities to work and to develop technical skills, as well as the possibility to explore topics and ideas that challenged Maurice Duplessis's conservative provincial regime, known for its strict censorship. Yet, on the other hand, an uneven structure of production between

francophone and anglophone filmmakers also hindered the creation of cultural-specific content by the Quebecois. Thus, cultural representation and artistic autonomy became a subject of debate in late 1950s Quebec, as newspapers and columnists frequently emphasized the need for the agency to reorganize its structure and include francophone voices and decision makers in its organization.[15]

In this context, the voice of francophone NFB filmmakers represented the Quebecois people within the public imagination and their artistic freedom therefore guaranteed the authenticity of Quebecois cultural expression produced within the agency. A metonymic relationship became apparent between authorship and collective empowerment in the public sphere. In 1957, for example, *Le Devoir* attracted public attention to the situation of francophones working at the NFB by making a case of Pierre Petel's demotion from director to assistant director soon after directing *La terre de Caïn.*[16] For Pierre Vigeant, who wrote frequently about the working conditions for the francophones at the NFB between 1956-1957, Petel's fate exemplified the lack of power and control that francophones held within the agency. Vigeant stressed how Petel was forced to accept a subordinate position and to work under someone else's direction and expressed outrage at the reason evoked for demoting Petel on the basis of "indiscipline" (4). For the journalist, this was an inacceptable treatment for the director of such "an acclaimed masterpiece" ("acclamé comme un chef-d'oeuvre") which had made him "one of the stars" ("l'une des vedettes") of the Canadian Film Awards in 1950. Vigeant's campaign mostly advocated for the

[15] Partly due to political pressures and protests on the part of francophone media and film workers, the organization moved to Montreal in 1956, the first French-Canadian commissioner, Guy Roberge, was nominated in 1957, and the division of production between English and French independent units was officialized in 1964. For a comprehensive historical overview of that period of the NFB from the perspective of Quebec, see Véronneau, *Résistance et affirmation* 17-32.

[16] See chapter one, section 1.3.2 for an extended discussion of the film.

creation of an independent studio system for francophone workers (Véronneau, *Résistance et affirmation* 31). Across the debate, authorship and the singularity of personal expression were thus constructed as figures embodying equal treatment and the right of the French-Canadian community to tell its own stories, making the auteur a capital symbolic figure of national cinema.

Around the same time period as Vigeant's series of articles, the emerging trend of direct cinema in Quebec underscored the same preoccupations regarding issues of authorship, subjectivity and agency. To give an example of this, for *Les raquetteurs* (1958), often credited as the foundational first film of direct cinema, Michel Brault was initially sent to Sherbrooke to make a simple "anonymous" news report. No director was deemed necessary for the project, just a cameraman taking a few shots and a commentary would be added afterwards (Zéau 286). Brault, however, contested these instructions and unhinged the camera from its tripod instead, deciding to participate in the event and to mediate his mobile point of view, inviting Marcel Carrière to capture sound and relay what could be heard from within the crowd. Out of an ordinary sports event, Brault's involvement subverted the neutrality of his position to turn himself into a film director, making the subjective presence of the film crew sensible to create an embodied ethnographic representation of the people. Brault's story exemplifies both the narrative of resistance tied to Quebec direct cinema and the personal level of involvement by Quebecois filmmakers to make their own independent "national cinema." *Les raquetteurs* thus launched a style and a technique of documentary filmmaking that would prove highly influential, but more importantly, it was perhaps the first film emphasizing artistic freedom and authorial subjectivity as a means of creating a more "authentic" expression of collective culture, an argument which direct cinema mobilized across the ensuing decade to legitimize its style.

2.1.2 Mediating intimacy as authenticity

Direct cinema also offered a significant technical flexibility that allowed filmmakers to create content outside of what the federal agency considered "Canadian public interest." Through this opportunity, filmmakers such as a Gilles Groulx, Gilles Carle and Arthur Lamothe diverted commissioned documentary works to create intimate fiction films and develop their personal style.[17] Carle conceived national cinema, for instance, as an individual act of resistance against the agency, whose policy of objectivity "n'est pas une tendance à l'approfondissement, mais une tendance à couvrir géographiquement le réel" (14). In other words, 1960s filmmakers expressed the desire to represent affect, emotions and personal subject matter as a means of engaging with the lived experience of the audience, positing it as as a "truer" form of national cinema than the public generalities of NFB documentaries. Authorial style and the representation of intimacy became central signifiers of national cinema thus.

In 1964, for instance, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre wrote in *Objectif* that true national cinema emerged from the freedom of artists to represent their "deeper aspirations" ("aspirations profondes") as opposed to commissioned works equated with "propagande" ("Petite éloge" 4). Reviewing *Le chat dans le sac*, Lefebvre indeed argued that the merit of a film was a matter of individual responsibility, as filmmakers like Groulx had to negotiate between what they were told to do and what they aspired to tell. Thus, the artistic merit of Groulx's singular, first-person film derived from its clear demonstration that

> toute création, bonne ou mauvaise, est l'entière responsabilité d'un individu et que l'échec ou la réussite d'une oeuvre ne peut être imputable qu'à ce dernier. Cette constatation, qui relève du sens commun, est toutefois primordiale quand on pense au grand nombre d'artistes qui se camouflent derrière un quelconque

[17] For a well documented account of this strategy, see Zéau 366.

> organisme – fédéral, national, commercial, religieux ou autre […]. ("Au niveau du moi" 57)

The prevalence of auteur cinema in the 1960s is also rooted in the general context of the Quiet Revolution. The Quiet Revolution refers to a series of reforms and political changes in the late 1950s and early 1960s that introduced a shift in mentalities, morals, hierarchy and identity within Quebec society. Secularism and individualism became dominant social and political values, signalling the end of a vision of identity based on social unanimity and tradition and the beginning of a personalist vision of morals and political pluralism (Lever 21-22). In popular as well as official language, the term "French-Canadian" was also gradually abandoned for the emerging concept of the "Quebecois people," a fact denoting identification to the nation-state as a political assemblage of citizens superseding notions of traditional culture and "race" (Lever 20).

Thus, the equation between lived experience, political expression and individual subjectivity became central to many works of the 1960s. A handful of influential confessional, semi-autobiographical films that explored questions of identity and power by staging the director's – or an alter ego's – life or identity, narrated in the tradition of the *bonimenteur*. Claude Jutra's *À tout prendre* (1963), Gilles Groulx's *Le chat dans le sac* (1964), Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's *Le révolutionnaire* (1965) and *Patricia et Jean-Baptiste* (1968), Anne-Claire Poirier's *De mère en fille* (1968) are among the most well-known examples of this trend of 1960s Quebecois auteur cinema. For film historian Yves Lever, this auteurial turn of cinema in the 1960s signaled a gap, however, between Quebec filmmakers and their social reality. Lever quotes filmmaker Jacques Godbout who viewed a rupture between, on the one hand, a period of major social and collective transformation, and on the other, the emergence of a young elite group of artists dealing mostly with "personal issues" and artistic considerations (3).

This argument fails to consider, however, how auteur subjectivity politicized the representation of everyday culture by turning the personal into the political. The intervention of the narrator as a *bonimenteur* – an embodied and manifested presence engaging with images and interpretation – embodied the potentialities of the Quiet Revolution regarding pluralism and the de-homogenization of culture. The orality of these films was indeed ambiguously positioned between public speech and the mediation of personal opinion and discourse. About Jutra's film embodying a modern form of the *boniment*, creatively dissociating voice and image to generate a multiplicity of meaning, Vincent Bouchard has written: "Ce cinéma contredit le mythe du corps qui n'avait qu'une âme – celui du peuple canadien français – en proposant, non pas un corps commun communautaire, mais des corps en action – ceux des Québécois – composés d'organes (voix et gestes)" (230). Similarly, Michèle Garneau contends that the personal and subjective expression of direct cinema and its stylistic declinations redefined the people as a plurality of bodies in motion, bodies in conflict, and bodies forming singular, provisional arrangements (200). At the intersection of modern values and the tradition of oral cinema, autoethnography has in fact introduced a critique of the very notion of "the people" as a monolithic entity. Autoethnographic works have contested the fixed definition of cultural identity that the objectifying gaze of documentary cinema and official authority had purported, and envisioned national cinema as the product of subjective frictions and differences, as an exchange based on intersubjective dialogue and conflicts of representation rather than unanimity and consensus.

2.2 *Le chat dans le sac*: the mirror as a political construction

2.2.1 Politics of the confessional voiceover

Regarding political representation, Bill Marshall wrote that synch sound technology introduced by direct cinema "completed the sound revolution of the 1920s by democratizing it" (24).[18] Yet, the diary-like format of films like Groulx's, Poirier's and Jutra's works also emphasized the political heritage of older oral cinema traditions which used non-synch sound practices to resist cultural hegemony. In 1960s confessional films, the voiceover track – often compensating for low budgets which required to shoot scenes without sound – thus creatively reemployed non-synch sound strategies to comment on the cultural reality of Quebec. The *bonimenteur*-like commentary of these films calls the attention of the audience to the meaning and cultural discourses behind documentary images of the everyday. In *Le chat dans le sac* for example, conversations and speech are crossed with messages heard on the radio and television at home and on the street, the reading of newspaper articles and proverbs and maxims looked up in the dictionary. The distancing effects of orality allowed filmmakers like Groulx to show a variety of discursive pressures shaping the reality of individual consciousness, identity and affect through media and culture, otherwise impossible to represent through direct synch sound.

In his film, Gilles Groulx even uses two different *bonimenteurs* to express cultural reality as a dialectical engagement between individuals and their social environment. The film is constructed as a docufictional incursion into the everyday life of two twenty something adults, Claude and Barbara. Claude is a francophone man, Barbara an anglophone woman. Claude is a

[18] Marshall is in fact referring to Jean-Louis Comolli's ideas on direct cinema and democracy in "Le détour par le direct I": "With the coming of sound, cinema was conquered by *the language of the class in power* and of dominant ideologies; whilst with synchronous sound, it is cinema itself which conquers language, all of language, that of everyone, that of the workers as well as the bosses" (51; translation by Bill Marshall, emphasis in original).

reporter looking for "truth" and political "action," Barbara is an actress looking for personal growth and artistic self-expression. In the film, the use of non-synch sound to express their innermost thoughts and feelings in voiceover contrasts with the use of synch sound in direct cinema style scenes showing their daily social interactions. This contrast in sound purposefully blurs the boundary between interiority and exteriority, underlining in fact their mutual shaping. The coherence of representation, meaning and truth is constantly put to test by the distancing effects of orality:

> Barbara (à la caméra): Après avoir fini l'École nationale, je vais aller en Europe et je vais rester à Paris.
> Claude (voix off) : Ici, c'est comme ça, les anglophones, quand ils apprennent le français, c'est pour aller à Paris.
> Barbara (voix off): Pas moi, Claude, tu le sais bien. D'ailleurs, je ne suis pas anglophone, je suis juive.

Across the film, each character's interior world becomes surprisingly audible to the other and subject to a dialectical and reflexive process. The deconstruction of representation in the form of dialogue favours critical reflection and distance: Claude addresses an issue subjectively; Barbara responds from her point of view. Thus, the narrative "I" engages in dialogue with an other in the film, and with the audience as well, free to decide. Voices respond to each other, but characters also address the camera and the viewer each in turn.

The recourse to a *bonimenteur*-like narration in voiceover, halfway between confession and reflexive commentary, allows Groulx to deconstruct internalized forms of discourses, opinions and impressions. In the film, this play on consciousness and speech in a diary-like format is portrayed as a liberation from previous hegemonic modes of thinking that had determined French-Canadian identity, and in which confession literally played a major role: "Barbara, j'ai grandi dans des collèges sous la surveillance hypocrite des confesseurs. J'ai reçu un enseignement qui enseigne la foi, et non la façon de penser. Tu ne vois pas tout ce que je dois comprendre avant d'agir."

Groulx's confessional film is therefore an appropriation of the apparatus (*dispositif*) of Catholic confession, which Foucault described as a mediation of power within and through the speaking subject. The deconstructive strategy of the *boniment* voiceover reflects an intention to decolonize and secularize thought and subject it to the disruptive heterogenous perspectives of modernity. The abandonment of old ways of viewing identity and citizenship and the adoption of new political and cultural affiliations (Claude reads about the Cuban revolution, the Black Panthers, Frantz Fanon, etc.) also turn the diary film into a Bildungsroman of sorts, centered on the process of subject formation and the political education of the main protagonist.

Yet, Groulx also uses his position as a confessor to direct the protagonists' thoughts towards an expression of his own point of view and preoccupations. Claude Godbout, the actor playing the lead role, is a model ("a moral type") with whom Groulx is dialogically engaged to fictionalize his own subjective thoughts within a political coming-of-age story. In an interview, Groulx explained how he cast an actor who was undecided and hesitant about his own beliefs to create such a hybrid first-person narrator, whose convictions gradually coincide with the filmmaker's point of view as the film progresses:

> Mon problème est de trouver le type moral qui va véhiculer ce que je veux dire. […] J'ai trouvé des gars aux idées bien arrêtées, mais je ne voulais pas de leur solution; je désirais que ma solution apparaisse comme la leur. C'est là que Claude Godbout est arrivé : un émotif pur, pas du tout sûr de lui, sensibilisé à la question nationaliste, mais qui évitait d'y penser, se disant qu'il n'y pouvait rien; il essayait de s'éparpiller dans le théâtre. (qtd. in Patenaude 6)

Through such a strategy, Groulx's inclinations for radical politics – presented as Claude's readings of the moment – interact with the character's indecisiveness. As a state-financed filmmaker, such a radicalism could not be voiced directly by Groulx as his own editorial opinion.[19]

[19] Indeed, his more radical, Marxist tendencies were edited out of films like *Normetal* (1959) or altogether censored by the NFB, as with *24 heures ou plus*, a 1973 film on the Quebec October crisis which the agency refused to release 1977. On this, see Zéau 296.

Instead, it becomes expressible without being a direct message through the interior equivocation and soul-searching of his character. The character played by Godbout is thus a composite fictional embodiment, halfway between the real Claude Godbout and Claude-as-a-reflection-of-Groulx. Indeed, while displaying the personality and hesitations of real-life Claude Godbout in the manner of cinema vérité, Claude, the character, acts as the double of the documentary filmmaker in the narrative as well, a vehicle for Groulx to reflect on himself and on his project. The fictional character of Claude is constructed as a reporter who, like Groulx, is also torn between accepting his employers' policy of neutral journalism, and writing revolutionary material that risks censorship. Like an NFB narrator, Claude consistently relays statistics and analysis of Quebec's social situation in voiceover. While he searches for jobs, he also interviews key writers and decision makers of the media industry like a documentary filmmaker would. Groulx even staged those encounters as actual documentary interviews to conduct a critical assessment of the industry as well as to generate a reflection on his own dissident angle of approach.

Lever discussed how this intermediary function of Claude was in fact a form of self-inscription by Groulx addressing the doubts and interrogations of his older generation (Groulx was ten years older than Godbout). As he explains, the new youth of the Quiet Revolution was actually much more confident in its activism and less anxious about anticolonial nationalism than Claude's persona makes it seem in the film in fact (144). This, of course, makes sense if we remember Groulx's earlier statement: "J'ai trouvé des gars aux idées arrêtées, mais je ne voulais pas de leur solution," combined with the fact that Godbout, who plays a variation of himself, is transformed from actor to reporter in the story. In other words, the fictional vehicle of Claude functions as a way to embody Groulx's preoccupations and self-image, while incarnating a new emerging generation already open to change and to new ideas. In *Le chat dans le sac*, autoethnography thus

meets fiction to imagine and expand the possibilities of expression through the prism of fantasy, blurring the boundaries between documentary representation, fictional staging and personal subjectivity.

2.2.2 Situating the "other": mirror, nationalism, patriarchy

What stands out regarding Claude's fictional embodiment of Groulx is also how the differences between Godbout and the filmmaker were transformed. Indeed, the part of Godbout, the actor, differing from Groulx's personality – Godbout's "dispersal" (*éparpillement*) in theater and the arts instead of politics – is made other in the film. It becomes embodied by Barbara in fact, who plays herself as a liberal, anglophone, Jewish actress, from all angles the "opposite" of Claude, and therefore an object of conflicting desires and differentiation in the film. 1960s confessional films in Quebec often involved the confrontation of a Quebecois subjectivity (most commonly masculine) with the subjectivity of an "other" character in the film. Most of these "domestic ethnographies" represented identity through a relationship with a "foreigner" or some form of "other self" portrayed in the film: Barbara, the Jewish anglophone woman in *Le chat dans le sac*; Johanne, the Haitian-Canadian model in *À tout prendre*; Patricia, a naïve French woman in *Patricia and Jean-Baptiste*; and observational footage of Czechoslovakian families edited in parallel with the Quebecois family in *De mère en fille*. These films all portrayed anxious and hesitant Quebecois characters questioning their transitional identities through the reflection of an "outsider." The presence of the outsider engaged these characters in a process of differentiation and self-reflection emphasizing the relative positionality of "self" and "other" and therefore the possibility of self-determination. In other words, this negotiation of identity and alterity allowed

the protagonists to construct their identity through a form of dialectical reflection rendered possible by the "other."

In *Le chat dans le sac*, this process of differentiation and construction, the act of looking at identity from a remove through the eyes of an other is symbolized by the figure of mirrors. Mirrors exteriorize and reflect subjectivity, informing the possibility of playing with the surface of self-representation. They create what Michèle Garneau has described in the film as a process of "self-objectivation" (*auto-objectivation*) hinting at an active subject (216). Barbara is often portrayed in front of mirrors in the film (see fig. 4). Throughout the film, the act of putting on make up, combing her hair and adopting different styles and attitudes emphasizes Barbara's true identity as an actress, a character associated with imagination and fiction distinguished in the film from truth and action. The script contains notes to that effect which prove revealing: "*Barbara se maquille devant le miroir, c'est-à-dire face à nous, en gros plan*"; or "*Séquence finale de maquillage: elle est devant sa glace – et donc devant la caméra – se maquille et parle au cinéaste*" (qtd. in Garneau 223-224). Facing the mirror, as the script reads, she is therefore opposed to "us," an entity situated in reality comprising the viewers and the camera/filmmaker. In other words, the character played by Barbara Ulrich subjectivizes Claude/the filmmaker/the "viewers" by posing as the object of the gaze, the reflection on the surface, the "other" of identification.

Fig. 4: Still from *Le chat dans le sac*: The mirror as an active space of play and self-transformation.

Indeed, Groulx believed in the virtue of national cinema to reflect the everyday experience of a people and generate identity, contending that, as he mentioned in an interview, "le problème [dans le fait de tourner un film], pour moi, est uniquement une question d'identification" and that the filmmaker's task was to " [faire] un cinéma national authentique qui correspond à l'individualité des spectateurs" (qtd. in Patenaude 9). Yet, Claude's self-presentation at the beginning of the film is hesitant and full of holes ("Je suis Canadien-français, donc je me cherche…") whereas Barbara's is unequivocal ("Moi, je m'appelle Barbara et j'aurai 20 ans le 8 octobre. Je suis juive"). Christian Poirier analyzes this contrast and remarks: "Pour Claude, l'incertitude sentimentale reflète l'indécision collective" (70). In truth, Claude's hesitation and undetermined sense of identity also allows for the possibility of transformation and change in the film, yet this is made possible by creating a sense of distinction with the other. While Barbara's gaze in the mirror is constructed as a play of surfaces ("Je me coiffe, je me décoiffe," she says with

a sense of ennui), Claude's is introspective, "looking for certain truths within himself," as he states. Barbara's identity appears as an image reflecting Claude's emptiness and lack of essence, mirroring his lack of an exteriorized, tangible self-image: she is active and he is passive, she is playful while he feels stuck, a situation which the film's drive toward "self-objectivation" thus attempts to reverse.

In that sense, feminist scholar Chantal Nadeau writes that Barbara functions as "the loudspeaker to his conscience […] serving as a counterpoint to Claude's ghosts in the measure that she is the one who will allow him to speak as he is creating himself" (199). A passage in the film makes this instrumental role of Barbara as other and mirror quite explicit:

> Claude (*voiceover*): Je ne savais même pas que tu aimais faire la cuisine.
> Barbara (*voiceover*): Tu ne m'as même jamais demandé si je savais faire la cuisine. Je suis encore pour toi une étrangère. Tu ne sais rien de moi.
> Claude (*voiceover*): Même à moi, je suis étranger.

Claude himself defines his relationship with Barbara as "le symbole d'une transition… au service de ma propre recherche"; a transition, in other words, to self-discovery, plenitude and agency. Barbara's role as a "transition" therefore consolidates an essentially patriarchal narrative of identity and nation, situating the "coincidence" between the "individuality of the viewers" and cinema within presupposed categories of ethnicity, language and gender fixated by Claude's embodiment. By the end of the film, Claude's desires have transitioned from Barbara, the "other," to "Manon-je-sais-pas-qui," a passive feminine figure glimpsed in a faraway snowy field "dont la présence ici n'est pas incompatible avec le contexte" according to Claude. Claude thus presumes that she might become a new suitable mate, without having spoken to her nor even knowing her full name.

The patriarchal posture of Claude is made clear in one of the last scenes of the film showing him looking out the window (see fig. 5) – the transparency of which signals a move beyond the

"mirror" stage and a fully constituted subject. Groulx constructs this scene through an unprecedented shot/countershot structure editing images to match Claude's gaze – who happens to catch the silhouette of "Manon-je-sais-pas-qui" then in the landscape. Claude's vision is shown in the conventional narrative style of "continuity editing" for the first time in this scene, whereas the story of Claude and Barbara had been previously shot and edited in the unhierarchized style of direct cinema. Then, the frantic and modern music of John Coltrane heard in the first part of the film is replaced with the classical gracefulness of Couperin and Vivaldi. This change in style coincides with Claude leaving the cosmopolitan metropolis (Montreal) and retreating to the countryside at the end of the film, to gather his thoughts and face the necessity of breaking up.

Fig. 5: Still from *Le chat dans le sac*: From a mirror image to a window on the nation.

Meanwhile, Barbara is not given that continuity editing treatment, which typically designates the hero in classical narrative films. She continues to talk in voice-over monologues about her relationship with Claude, facing the mirror (that is, "us"), confined on one side of the

camera. Claude, on his part, contemplates the openness of the countryside, articulating a subject-object relationship with visual space. At that moment, he is not hesitant anymore in his right to choose nationalism and "Manon." Claude's "I" has ceased to be a form of individual enunciation and the exteriorization of Groulx's subjectivity, to become the principle underlying the visual narration of the film itself. He has become a vehicle of totalizing identification, and the narrative breach opened at first by the orality and self-reflexivity of the *bonimenteur* voiceover has been closed on itself. As Bill Marshall mentions, in many regards "the 1960s discourse of decolonization in Quebec eventually opted for the assertion of new whole identities rather than the deconstruction of those fixities handed down from the past" (113).

2.2.3 Reframing Barbara as the "Inappropriate Other/Self"

Although Groulx conceived the viewers of national cinema as a single totality decoding the text in a univocal sense, cultural studies, reception studies and feminist criticism have demonstrated that viewers cannot be understood as a single homogenous subject, and textual meaning is in fact a negotiated construction dependent on historical and social contexts.[20] What resists easy categorization in *Le chat dans le sac* is, therefore, Barbara's performance as a second *bonimenteur* allowing for possible counter-identifications as feminist critique revisits national cinema. Michael Renov has argued that within domestic ethnographies, self and other are always in fact co(i)mplicated; identity is revealed as a play of positions that is inherently unstable, since "there exists a reciprocity between subject and object, a play of mutual determination, a condition of consubstantiality" (143) rendered visible by the alternation of perspectives and positionalities

[20] See for example Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse"; Mayne, *Cinema and Spectatorship*; and Klinger, "Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies."

which are necessary for each other to exist (as in father/daughter, brother/sister, husband/wife types of determination). I refer to "domestic" ethnography as "domestic," here, can signify both the "house" and the "nation." Significantly, Barbara's oral participation can thus offer counter-narratives to Claude's patriarchal and ethnic vision of the nation as an "other self."

Chantal Nadeau, for example, has interpreted Barbara's character as an "embodiment of the traditional figure of otherness, English" (199-200), but Barbara is in fact orally included in the French linguistic marker that makes the film "Quebecois." She speaks in French to Claude, to the audience and even to herself: in one scene, she begins to read a letter written by her parents in Hebrew, switching from English to French in her internal monologue: "Barbara my daughter… Ma chère fille, ta conduite m'inquiète." The audience therefore cannot unequivocally identify her as "other" as she is rather an "other self." Similarly, her Jewishness also informs an important part of the film's dramatization of Quebecois identity, as Claude expects some sort of political sympathy or alliance based on his reading of her identity. Comfortable in either Hebrew, English or French, Barbara represents an ideal embodiment of federalism, an individual for whom cultural singularity is a porous, relative boundary, subject to translation and adaptation within the space of national culture. Claude, however, would like her to embrace his form of nationalism because her "minor" Jewish identity, which he associates to the reality of historical persecution, should render her sympathetic to the necessity of fighting "cultural assimilation" and to the cause of national self-determination. In this ambiguous role, Barbara is therefore both an "other" and an "other self," resisting sameness and otherness at once. She embodies a figure which experimental ethnographer Trinh Minh-ha has called the "Inappropriate Other/Self," "affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference; and reminding us 'I am different' while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at" ("Outside In / Inside Out" 74).

However, the fact that she cannot ultimately be an "other" with whom to ally is symptomatic of the tendency of 1960s Quebec cinema to represent political action as a burden which has to be carried out and endured alone. This fact brings us back to Yves Lever's criticism of auteur cinema being cut off from the actual collective movement of the Quiet Revolution, in the sense of its inherent pluralism at stake. How the real Barbara Ulrich, a Jewish anglophone, decided to live in French and participate in Quebec's new wave cinema (even starring in one of its most celebrated political allegories) is a narrative of transgressive intercultural hybridity left out by Groulx and by the film's dualistic vision.[21] As *Le chat dans le sac* allegorized the problematic of national independence in the form of a masculine conquest of the self, Barbara is therefore excluded from the public sphere and from any political future in the nation as the "sublimated portion of otherness, the woman" (Nadeau 199-200).

Discussing her character, Groulx stated the following: "Barbara sent bien que son destin n'est pas engagé, elle n'aura qu'à choisir – rester avec *nous* ou retourner du côté anglais – mais dans les deux cas elle se conformera à une réalité" (qtd. in Patenaude 9; emphasis mine). This is constructed in opposition to Claude, whose task is "le travail de déblaiement historique, de précision que comporte l'identification" (qtd. in Patenaude 9). Yet, at the end of the film, the couple splits without Barbara "rejoining the other side" nor staying with Claude. She has created a life of her own within Quebec, taking her studies at L'école nationale du théâtre seriously, as she writes in a letter addressed to Claude toward the end of the film. "Je commence à prendre mes cours au sérieux, ou alors, je commence à me prendre au sérieux." In his statement above, Groulx consciously ignored the complexity of Barbara's cultural negotiation and hybridization of identity

[21] I speak of "transgression" indeed as Ulrich even married Gilles Groulx following their encounter on the set, which resulted in her getting disinherited by her Jewish relatives and losing a part of her generational identity. (This information was acquired from a conversation with filmmaker Richard Brouillette, a close friend of Ulrich and Groulx (Brouillette, 7 Feb. 2019).)

which is in fact "at stake" in the film as she is simultaneously "in" and "out" of both "sides." In most dialogues indeed, Barbara resists Claude's normative and nominative power: she is not (only) English, but (also) Jewish, she is not a "stranger," just someone whom he does not bother getting to know. She is not, in other words, a figure of otherness, but of alterity, resisting both patriarchal and ethnic definitions of nationalist identity.

2.3 *De mère en fille*: defamiliarizing gender and the nation

2.3.1 Pregnancy, alterity and the first-person plural of autobiography

As one of *Le chat dans le sac*'s two *bonimenteurs*, Barbara's resisting performance opens an alternative avenue of identification as the "Inappropriate Other/Self" of national cinema. In Nadeau's critical history of Quebec cinema from the perspective of women, "Barbaras-en-Québec," Barbara reappears as an overarching figure who provides a motif of identification for those who cannot see themselves reflected in the masculine imaginary of the nation. "Her chameleon performances become a rich site from which to look at the nation with a different eye," as Nadeau writes, displacing "the preoccupation with the nationalist discourse onto the potentialities of representing and addressing the nation from a subjective and intimate point of view" (200). The figure of Barbara therefore signals that intimacy and self-representation can be modes of resistance to totalizing discourses, and ways to engage with the address of national cinema from a differing perspective.

It is, indeed, through autoethnography and autobiography that important women filmmakers made their entry within Québec cinema and engaged with the medium to articulate a critical voice of their own: Anne-Claire Poirier with *De mère en fille* (1968); Mireille Dansereau with *La vie rêvée* (1972); Marilu Mallet with *Journal inachevé* (1982), or Michka Saäl with *Loin*

d'où (1989), to name a few. Françoise Lionnet argued that women's recording of their personal experience of identity, community and history within autobiography can function as an excavation of "those elements of the female self which have been buried under the cultural and patriarchal myths of selfhood" (91). Autobiography informs a "process of reflection, narration and self-integration within language […] unveiling patterns of self-definition which may seem new and strange" (92). Doris Sommer also contends that women's autobiographical inscriptions generate "the legitimate space for producing [an] excess which throws doubt on the coherence and power of an exclusive historiography" (111), or, in the case of national cinema, visual culture.

In that line of thought, Anne-Claire Poirier's *De mère en fille* is a particularly significant case of autoethnographic inscription, being also the first feature-length film (documentary or fiction) directed by a woman in Quebec (Lever 171). The film consists in an introspective, intimate look at a pregnant woman's experience of defamiliarization and change based on Poirier's diaries, which premiered to a mass audience of TV viewers on September 29, 1968, broadcast by Radio-Canada. In addition to its abundant circulation within the NFB's community distribution network, *De mère en fille* created such an impact at the time of its premiere that it was broadcast again by popular demand a few months after its TV premiere (Lever 171). Yet, it is seldom discussed in books about Quebec cinema as a pioneering or foundational film, despite its historical significance as the first female-directed feature. For this reason, and for the particular autoethnographic quality of the film and the resonance that such an autobiographical material had with its audience, the film deserves more attention and calls our attention to the masculine bias of film history, which *De mère en fille* also signified.

Poirier first used her pregnancy journals as a segment of the televised talk show *Femme d'aujourd'hui* in 1965 and for a radio show titled *Les propos d'Anne-Claire*. This iteration across

different formats of her confessional text attests to a will, on Poirier's part, to move from the particular to the collective, and mediate an embodied female point of view within the Quebecois public sphere. It is, once again, as a form of resistance to the NFB that it became a necessary story to tell. Indeed, Hélène Ouvrard, working for the NFB, recounts how Anne-Claire Poirier's pregnancy had put her in difficulty at the agency:

> Être père ne semblait changer la vie d'aucun homme de l'Office national du film tandis qu'être mère semblait devoir y remettre en question jusqu'à sa présence. On considère en effet qu'elle sera désormais moins disponible, qu'elle n'a plus besoin de travailler puisqu'un homme peut gagner sa vie, on lui conseille, à tout prendre, de tenter de faire oublier qu'elle est femme (...) et on lui donne finalement l'alternative de retourner aux versions comme producteur ou... de prendre la porte. (memo qtd. in Prévost 16)

What Ouvrard mentions above is reminiscent of the way that the agency treated Quebec filmmakers a decade earlier: threats of demotion, little initiative possible, production of content through "versions", that is, translated versions of English-speaking films. However, Poirier was faced with this unequal treatment not as a francophone this time, but as a woman.

Poirier's autoethnographic gesture therefore reprised the tradition of subjective enunciation of Quebec filmmakers, but from a feminist perspective escaping nationalism and valuing transversal connections between women. In the cinematic version of her text, Poirier performs identity through a heterogenous combination of personal writing, fictional imaginary scenes and documentary footage shot in Czechoslovakia. She asks actress Liette Desjardins, pregnant with her second child just as Poirier was in her original text, to re-enact the diaries in the present tense of her own experience, while the film documents in parallel Czechoslovakia's healthcare system, contrasting their progressivist take on motherhood, birth and gender rights with the experience of such issues at home.

In the film, the singular and transitional experience of pregnancy thus becomes a way to defamiliarize representations of identity, nation and gender. Liette's experience of her own alterity

triggers a form of self-consciousness fragmented across her everyday reality. “Je suis consciente de mon corps, et déshabituée de moi-même,” as Liette’s voiceover narrates, while touching and investigating her altered body in front of the mirror (see fig. 6).

Her pregnancy creates a rupture with the routine of everyday experience, self-image and norms that fosters a desire to re-imagine notions of selfhood, identity and gender. The mirror defamiliarizes identity through a critical prism. Significantly, the anxiety of being split between the incompatible roles of mother, worker and wife leads Poirier to contest localized expressions of gender. Czechoslovakia, where the filmmaker is looking for another, more progressive conception of work/family conciliation and equality, embodies a desire of local transformation rooted in the filmmaker’s personal history. It is imagined as a world of plenitude, “afin que la femme puisse vivre une vie de travail, une vie professionnelle sans angoisse, du moins avec une angoisse moindre que celle que j’avais connue, sans culpabilité surtout” (A.-C. Poirier 8).

Fig. 6: Still from *De mère en fille*: The defamiliarizing lens of self-examination.

In *De mère en fille*, the mediation of autobiography entails a collective form of self-consciousness positing subjectivity as plural. The film creates a passage from the singular to the plural, and from the personal to the general: “Ce n'est plus seulement un ‘je’ qui cherche à s'exprimer, mais c'est un ‘je féminin’. La voix personnelle rejoint la voix des femmes, surtout de celles qui sont aux prises avec la difficulté d'allier profession et maternité” (Prévost 16). The alterity of the pregnant body becomes host to a variety of female positionalities and subjectivities reflecting each other. Indeed, *De mère en fille* is partly the mediation of Poirier’s experience, partly of other women’s lives. “Enceinte de son second enfant, ce n’est pas en tant que comédienne que la cinéaste choisit [Liette Desjardins], mais comme personne réelle, porteuse d’un enfant et pouvant exprimer avec conviction les sentiments partagés avec les autres femmes prises dans la même situation de redéfinir leur profession et leur maternité” (Prévost 16). In terms of scriptwriting, the diary was also adapted by poet Michèle Lalonde (a mother of three), who poeticized the filmmaker’s personal writings into a stream-of-consciousness monologue favouring atmosphere and affect over specific descriptions. Lalonde’s adaptation further moved the film beyond the personal sphere and into the area of culture and literature. In other words, the autoethnographic representation of pregnancy formed the basis of a creative labor shared between Poirier, Desjardins and Lalonde. The reconstruction of the fractured form of the journal multiplied authorship, yet also united fragmented perspectives and embodiments to form a collective work.

2.3.2 The inscription of subjectivity as a passage from “other” to “author”

In *De mère en fille*, the fragmentation of representation addresses the multifaceted set of questions which mothers face, such as childcare, familial economy, work-family conflicts, body image, sexuality, intimacy, parenthood, and control over women’s bodies through medical

technology. It does so, however, without adopting a specific, determined ideological discourse. Those topics are instead integrated in the film within an introspective, impressionistic poetic narrative giving equal importance to the representation of dreams, fantasies and intimate feelings. Many critics at the time condemned this aspect of the film and accused *De mère en fille* of being too "existential," stating that this represented a narcissistic effort of representing a bourgeois, middle-class sensibility posing as common to all women, and inconsistently exploring the social themes surrounding motherhood. "Entre *Marienbad* et le film-enquête, il faut choisir!" decried at the time *La Presse*'s critic Michèle Favreau. Yet, contrary to a strict work of social investigation, the "existential" representation of the film allowed female imagination, fantasies and subjective expression to access the screens of Quebec cinema for the first time.

Rather than discussing motherhood from the standpoint of social or biological reproduction, the film conceives it as an interface of alterity and creativity engaging a traditionally male-dominated medium. The subjectivity of the diary format and its stream-of-consciousness oneirism allows Poirier to appropriate the language of world cinema from a woman's perspective. For example, the filmmaker recreates the Odessa steps sequence of *Battleship Potemkine* within one of Liette's dream, as a means to visualize the taboo fantasy of infanticide, personal fears and feelings of guilt about Liette's desire to escape her restraining role as a mother. Poirier thus appropriates the iconicity of consecrated works of "foreign" cinema to inscribe a female subjectivity alienated at home. Motherhood in Poirier's work ceases to be a purely sociological question, and rather informs the need for women's representations to be redistributed within cultural imagination.

Through the combination of documentary and fiction, *De mère en fille* creates a dialogue between Quebec and another possible reality, reclaiming difference as a means of change. The

film succeeds where *Le chat dans le sac* had failed at representing the "other" as a site of empowerment, creativity and desire, positively engaged in the process of nation building. The transposition of autobiography into film, and of personal history into collective representation, allows for surrogate other selves and alternative national contexts to fill the gaps of self-representation. The "other" subject of history and nation, the female "other," is rendered visible and challenges the coherence of a totalizing masculine representation. In other words, the relationship between body and identity that Poirier stages through autoethnography is one that is transitional and subject to change, rather than essential and universal. The fragmentation of identity across the passage from text to film represents the intersubjective potentiality of cinema rather than a threat to the "wholesomeness" and authenticity of representation. Thus, the film professes a model of community building that advocates *interdependence* rather than simple *independence;* positively affirming the coexistence of multiple identities in place of the single subject-nation of nationalist discourse. The film is feminist rather than nationalist, and thus re-imagines the nation from that standpoint, as a community shaped by the disruptive mediation of intimacy and difference.

The autoethnographic particularity of *De mère en fille* is to make the "mother" not a symbolic figure of genealogical transmission and social reproduction, but an embodiment of modernity and citizenship signalling, to reprise Nadeau, "the potentialities of representing and addressing the nation from a subjective and intimate point of view" (200). Indeed, Poirier's film attests to the correlation between the personal implication of the author and the heterogenization of the imagined community. *De mère en fille* thus signals the importance of autoethnography as an exercise in authorship for discursive "others" speaking from this position to re-imagine the relationship between cinema, identity and the nation. Poirier's film, then, was not engaged in a

process of "giving speech to the people," as was a common intent of direct cinema filmmakers for example.[22] Rather, it "claimed speech" from this conflicted and fragmented perspective and engaged from that position with representations of the imagined community to mobilize new images and new voices. In sum, Poirier operated a move from "*other*" to "*author*." This realization not only pertains to her as an important Quebecois filmmaker, but opens up a way to understand the singular experiences with enunciation and authorial subjectivity that 1960s auteur cinema created in Quebec, as a collective passage from "others" to "authors" – reframed thus by a multitude of possible critical identities.

2.4 *À tout prendre*: autobiographical transgressions

2.4.1 Intimate confessions vs. the fiction of official identity

The passage from "other" to "author" informs the stakes of Claude Jutra's *À tout prendre,* an autobiographical work in which the auteur is even more directly implicated. Less of a popular or unifying project than *De mère en fille* in terms of reception, *À tout prendre*'s transgressive subject matter (amongst other things, adultery and the revelation of homosexuality, at the time a criminal offence in Quebec) nonetheless deeply challenged even more deeply the representation of identity and its limits within Quebec cinema. Through self-representation and forms of autofiction, the film envisioned autoethnography and orality as a means of engaging with hegemonic narratives of the nation and subverting them. As it gained in critical influence over the years, *À tout prendre* came to be considered a "foundational work" of Quebec's modern national

[22] On this, see V. Bouchard's section on Pierre Perrault and the values of speech and community in direct cinema (ch. 5: Pour la suite du monde, "Une nouvelle esthétique") or Froger's concept of documentary filmmaking as an act of giving (*don*). For a criticism of this posture of the direct cinema filmmaker as a "voice-giver," see Trinh, "Documentary Is/Not a Name" (695).

cinema – the Cinémathèque québécoise celebrating its 50th anniversary with a special dossier for example – epitomizing the function of the auteur as a mediator between personal discourse and collective imagination and values.

For obvious reasons, the discovery of Jutra's hidden life as a pedophile 30 years after his death tarnished that reputation and resulted in Jutra's name being banned from public spaces. Here however, I want to discuss the historical significance of the film as its autobiographical "coming out" of homosexuality, at the time, influenced generations of viewers in Quebec. Thomas Waugh has written, for example, that *À tout prendre* was, in Quebec, "[le] seul rayon de lumière qui filtre à travers la porte du placard, six avant Stonewall, [l']unique moment de lucidité dans les années de notre oppression et de notre auto-oppression" ("Nègres blancs, tapettes et 'butch'" 23). It is on this reception that I want to focus as an example of autoethnographic inscription influencing the possibilities of expressing identity at the time for a whole imagined collectivity of viewers.

To give a short summary of the story, *À tout prendre* is the autofictional story of Claude Jutra which recounts his failed relationship with Haitian-Canadian model Johanne Harrelle. The relationship ended with an abortion and the couple separated seven years prior to the film's production. Jutra plays the role of Claude, a "Bohemian" filmmaker and middle-class intellectual multiplying love affairs, unable to commit and prizing his hedonistic individual freedom above all else. Johanne, who also plays a variation of herself in the story, is a married woman with the same values as Claude. As she becomes pregnant with their child, their relationship starts to fall apart. Claude escapes what he views as the entrapment of fatherhood and the conventional conjugal life, although he is filled with regrets and a persistent feeling of guilt. Throughout this story which ends tragically and plays out as a sort of melodrama, the two characters make a confession to each other that unites them at first before driving them apart. Claude is gay (or, at least, bisexual) and Johanne

is not an "exotic" foreigner, as Claude thought she was, but a black orphan born in Quebec, unable to make sense of her origins. Claude and Johanne, in sum, harbour secret identities that prove to be incompatible with traditional representations of nation, sexuality and race.

This conflict in Claude and Johanne's identity is addressed through the singularity of Jutra's personal style. Autobiographical re-enactments are dubbed with an ironic, self-deprecating voiceover narration for example, which often contradicts itself or complicates the comprehension of situations viewed on the screen (Claude's "secondary" inner voices often contest his own explanation of events and introspective conjectures). Through sound effects and aural montages, Claude's narrative voice is multiplied, generating multilayered dialogues and arguments between his various inner voices. The playfulness and liberty of such autobiographical transposition stresses identity as an imposture and a caricature, making Claude and Johanne's "otherness" the objects of contested discourses and imaginary representations disputed by the text.

Jutra's film also signals and complicates the allegorical tensions between sexuality, nation and race. In an article entitled "Cinéma et sexualité" written for *Parti pris* in 1964, Denys Arcand discussed this allegorical tension, which informed a large part of cinema's exploration of private subject matter in the 1960s, in relation to *À tout prendre*. Arcand, who had just made his first student film in 1962 – a direct cinema-influenced student film about sex and innocence entitled *Seuls ou avec d'autres* – argued that sex was the subject matter par excellence of any authentic national cinema. For Arcand, sex captured the people's true subjective tastes and desires, and daring to represent it was therefore a form of significant self-assertion:

> À partir du moment où les cinéastes auront oublié leur maman pour déshabiller sereinement leur voisine qui s'appellera Yvette Tremblay ou Yolande Beauchemin, en plein soleil et avec une grande angulaire bien en foyer sur la caméra, à partir de ce moment-là, nous pourrons envisager, comme Jean Renoir, un cinéma libre en même temps que férocement national. Un cinéma de joie et de conquête. (97)

In Arcand's discourse, national cinema, being a cinema of "joy" and "conquest," entailed the representation of sexual desire in a traditional heteronormative and patriarchal perspective. Truth, nation and desire are embodied in his view as "women to undress" and to visually possess, from a straight male perspective embodying sovereignty, freedom and joyful self-realization.

For Arcand, watching "our own" objects of collective fantasy – called Yvette or Yolande – on the screen equated with a liberated expression of national identity, bringing him to criticize Jutra's film severely. Indeed, the main protagonist Claude is, according to Arcand, "comme bien des canadiens-français [sic] de trente ans, cultivés et sensibles, à qui il faut systématiquement des femmes noires, jaunes ou rouges, en tous cas 'étrangères' pour connaître des liaisons enivrantes" For Arcand, this testified to, as he writes, "un refus inconscient de coïncider avec son moi collectif" (96). Arcand appeared dubious and "skeptical" regarding *À tout prendre*'s representation of homosexuality as well, questioning whether it could represent "une forme solide d'activité sexuelle et de quelle manière sa pratique pourrait être liée à un état spécial d'affirmation de soi-même" (97). In other words, homosexuality was interpreted as a "weakness" of character (being not "solid"), a lesser form of manhood – a trope of homophobic panic within Quebec's nationalist discourses of the 1960s that Robert Schwartzwald has called "the fear of federasty." As Schwartzwald shows in his influential article "Fear of Federasty: Quebec's Inverted Fictions," this trope commonly embodied federalism as a "weak" and "homosexual" masculine identity, made to desire and embrace the figure of another man (embodying colonial authority) rather than that of a woman (embodying nation, reproduction, lineage). Fear of federasty, in other words, explains Arcand's perception of Claude's homosexuality as dubious and reflecting a "colonized" mind.

Arcand's review and Schwartzwald's critique thus reveal how representations of difference such as homosexuality and interracial relationships were often judged as politically "deviant,"

criticized as forms of narcissism or self-indulgence in the context of Quebec's desire for collective affirmation. Yves Lever's analysis of the film's reception, 30 years after its release, continued to argue indeed that negative reviews could not be imputed to, as he wrote, "le contexte d'un Québec encore pudique et moralisateur," quoting *À tout prendre*'s entry in the *Dictionnaire du cinéma québécois* written by Pierre Jutras and Michel Sénécal (qtd in Lever 78). "L'insuccès du film, je le vois plutôt dans le décrochage complet du réel collectif québécois" (78). Yet, the problem with that statement is that Quebec's public sphere was, indeed, prude and moralizing, and made no room for these "divergent" identities to coincide with collective consciousness. Writing for the 50th anniversary of the film in 2013, lesbian filmmaker Jeanne Crépeau reminds the reader that this alleged "disengagement" from the collectivity can rather be understood as a reflection of the violent erasure of the other at the time: "Jutra nous propose, en pleine Révolution tranquille, une épopée tragique de l'intime qui tient lieu de pamphlet. En 1964, on peut rouler en Vespa pas de casque, mais l'homosexualité est une offense criminelle" (18). Lever's colleague Thomas Waugh has also written many articles detailing the erasure of gay identities from public culture, his analyses showing numerous times how homosexuality has been portrayed as an allegory of invalid or sterile national identity in Quebec.[23] In opposition to Lever's hypothesis, it could be argued that Jutra's need for autofiction and personal filmmaking rather stemmed from the "collective reality" of Quebec being an exclusive form of representation.

Contrary to Arcand and Lever's critique of its "narcissism" then, Jutra's autoethnographic expression engaged with questions of collective emancipation, yet from an intimate, uncommon angle. At a certain moment in the film, for instance, the narrator expressing his existential dread

[23] See, for example, Waugh's analysis of the heterosexual couple as allegory of nation and humanity in Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's *Jusqu'au coeur* (1968) in *The Romance of Transgression in Canada*, ch. 3. See also Waugh's survey of homosexual characters in Quebec cinema in "Nègres blancs, tapettes et 'butch'; les lesbiennes et les gais dans le cinéma québécois."

in the voiceover declares: “Notre prison ne nous quitte pas, elle se déplace autour de nous” as the character walks in front of a graffiti reading “Québec libre.” The narrator pauses and then adds : “Il est peut-être temps de passer à autre chose.” The “prison,” here, refers to Quebec’s status within Canada, but also to Claude’s closeted sexuality, as a voiceover confession later states that the “secret” of his preference for men had been “sequestered” within him since a time before he could remember. At the heart of the film, both national and intimate dimensions of identity thus co(i)mplicate each other. Claude’s marginalized, nay, outlawed identity within Quebec society, becomes associated with his colonized status as a Quebecois, in a reversal of Schwartzwald’s concept of the “fear of federasty.” Thus, individual and collective freedom are intrinsically connected in the film and negotiated by autoethnographic expression.

The confessionality and intimacy of Jutra’s autobiographical film therefore problematizes and pluralizes the narrative of Quebec’s awakening to political self-consciousness. *À tout prendre* posits the nation as a necessarily heterogenous network of relationships, one in which pluralism and the possibility of conflict and difference troubles the sameness of identity, yet as a generative rather than destructive force. Reflecting on *À tout prendre*’s 50th anniversary, critic Marie-Claude Loiselle wrote that the film’s main innovation was indeed in asking “comment faire de l’Autre celui qui participe à l’*invention d’un peuple* – d’un peuple toujours pluriel, comme le dirait Deleuze?” (34) In other words, *À tout prendre* appears foundational in retrospect for its sensitivity to the inherent heterogeneity at stake behind the notion of the “people,” which the discourses of national cinema typically constructed as a single homogenous entity.

Heterogeneity and conflicting narrative perspectives are indeed the driving forces of *À tout prendre*’s inventiveness. The film’s voiceover narration reprises the oral strategy of the *boniment* and engage with images through a plurality of possible meanings. As I mentioned earlier, Claude’s

inner voices are indeed multiplied and echoed across the film. A scene during which Claude mentally discusses with his various personalities when looking at himself in the mirror is telling:

> Voix no 1 (avec de l'écho) : Je me dérobe toujours…
> Voix no 2 (audacieuse) : Bah, je suis jeune. J'ai le temps.
> Voix no 1 : Ma jeunesse!
> Voix no 2 :*Rires*
> Voix no 3 (normale) : Ma jeunesse…
> *Choeurs*
> Voix no 3 : Quand le bonheur aura donc flambé sans jeter la moindre lueur autour de moi.
> Voix no 4 (suppliant) : C'est ma dernière chance, je le sens…
> Voix no 3 : Le moment de jouer le tout pour le tout, afin d'expédier honorablement ma jeunesse, et de me débarrasser enfin de tous ces personnages en moi, qui sont ce que je ne fus jamais, et qui me hantent.[24]

As Michèle Garneau writes, the voices form a "pack" (*une meute*) (210), contradicting each other and complicating interpretation. A constant play between the confession and the obfuscation of truth is at stake within this particular vocal arrangement, which resists narrative cinema's closed system of meaning and manifests the performer as a source of open-ended signification. This ambivalence between self-expression and self-contradiction through layers of distancing effects mark Jutra's autoethnographic project as a process of destabilization and de-essentialization of identity. The contradictory voices address viewers through irony and reflexive commentary, but also allude to an identity silenced from collective representations and emerging in the process.

The de-essentialization of identity and self-representation is also staged through the the racial "other," Johanne. Johanne also has a secret to confess which mirrors Claude's: she is in fact a Quebecoise orphan, not a Haitian woman. During her confession, she reveals to Claude that she has been lying about her backstory since childhood to better her chances of being adopted by a

[24] Here, I reproduce Thomas Carrier-Lafleur's enlightening transcription of the stage directions, that he recreated for this particular scene in his article "La pureté et la coexistence," based on material found in the film's original press kit.

Quebecois family, looking to adopt a foreign child. Similarly, Claude's relationship with Johanne gives him the appearance of fitting with the conventional identity of his (white and heteronormative) society, which clearly demarcates "self" and "other" divided between major and minor identities. Yet, like Claude regarding sexual orientation, Johanne is in fact an "other" self, that is, an irreducible insider/outsider missing a coherent narrative that could coincide with Quebec's collective self-image. Thus, through their respective confessions, Claude and Johanne's binary opposition reveals itself to be a reciprocated fiction, a myth of origins concealing their imposture: Johanne, the Black woman, fakes being "other," while Claude hides his own alterity. In other words, Claude and Johanne's recourse to confession implies a regime of discursive power at play within the performance of public, "official" identity, which autoethnographic expression renegotiates. "Ainsi, par un singulier renversement, il s'avère que l'Autre ici, n'est pas tant Johanne que Claude […]. D'ailleurs, ce qu'il *avouera* à sa mère et au père Simon, c'est l'histoire d'amour – non exclusive – qu'il vit avec une femme noire, et non pas 'qu'il aime (aussi) les garçons'" (Loiselle 33; emphasis hers).

In Jutra's autoethnographic film, confession functions not only as a form of enunciation intimately bonding auteur, character and audience through the voiceover. It also ritualizes the coming into consciousness and representation of internalized relations of power that are at play within the private dimension of identity. In a "manifesto" published to counter criticism of the film's "narcissism" and apoliticism, Jutra emphasized the ethnographic quality of his film by comparing its act of channeling private torment, "la [conjuration] des démons personnels," to a public rite of passage: "un rite de passage, une initiation, une cérémonie sur la place […]. Cela se doit d'être public comme une coulpe, omme un sacrifice mystique, comme une prise de possession, où le rythme et la danse permettent la transee" (1). Indeed, in the first frame of the film, the

filmmaker dedicates the film to French ethnographer Jean Rouch, with whom he had worked on the film *Le Niger, jeune république* (1961). Rouch most likely influenced Jutra's ethnographic vision through films such as *Les Maîtres fous* (1954), documenting the possession rituals of a small community in Ghana violently exorcising symbols of colonial power, and *Moi, un noir* (1958), a stylized ethnographic film about Abidjan's new urban youth, narrated in a subjective fictional voiceover by one of its protagonists.

In *À tout prendre*, Jutra manifests an ethnographic gaze attentive to rituals and subjectivity, as in the scene of Johanne's confession for example. In the beginning of the sequence, Johanne first brings Claude to an Afro-Caribbean night club, where she stages and performs her exoticism by dancing for Claude (which recalls the context of their first encounter at the beginning of the film, when she danced and performed a song in Creole for a white audience during a party). Sitting clumsily in the back as one of the few white person in the room, Claude watches Johanne "shine on the dancefloor," powerless.

> Claude (à Johanne): Tu es bien ici, tu es dans ton élément.
> Claude (voix off): Toute cette peau noire autour de nous dégage une chaleur étrange. L'oeil de Johanne en est tout brillant. Trop brillant. [...] Elle a décidé de plaire à tout le monde, ce soir, dût-elle en le faisant me déplaire jusqu'à la rage. Il y a du défi dans l'air. Notre première bataille est engagée et la victoire, assurément, sera pour elle.

As Claude narrates the scene in the form of a ritualized "battle" between the races, the shift in power of Johanne's "victory" prepares the stage for a confessional revelation which contradicts the stereotypes that were performed. As they return home, Johanne's confession follows, in a reversal of her previous behaviour in the club. The room is quiet and, there, sitting by the bed, she reveals being a "regular" Quebecoise and confesses to having constructed this imagined exotic identity over the years, forced by the orphanage to do so to make for a more convincing and legitimate backstory, and increase her chances of being adopted. This revelation destabilizes the

common narratives of exclusive and "authentic" identity that were at stake in the club scene, and signals the inconsistencies and fabricated nature of self-representation. Autobiography and cinematic intimacy becomes autoethnography, then, as it creates a form of counter-ritual exorcising personal ghosts, and addressing the mechanisms of identification and subject formation of culture that are applied to create a self-image.

Thus, Jutra's type of subjective and intimate filmmaking in *À tout prendre* differs significantly from Groulx's vision of a "national cinema that coincides with the individuality of the viewers." Indeed, instead of auteur, viewers and film "coinciding," *À tout prendre*'s autoethnographic inscription calls into question the normative constituency of this "entity" forming an imagined community – what Waugh calls, borrowing from Michel Houle, "'nous le monde ordinaire', une entité populiste qui se retrouve inconditionnellement dans les films du jour" ("Nègres blancs, tapettes et 'butch'" 14). Discussing *Le chat dans le sac*, Groulx imagined an ideal national cinema in which, as he stated, a "farmer" could recognize himself in the character of the intellectual played by Claude Godbout, as long as the latter is "authentically" portrayed as French-Canadian and both therefore share "the same character" (Patenaude 9). With *À tout prendre*, Jutra asks a different question: if viewer (farmer) and protagonist (intellectual) are related, why should they necessarily be the same, however? In Jutra's case, mediating the details of the auteur's intimate life disrupts the pretension to "self-coincidence" of national cinema. It complicates the bond of identity and sameness between the auteur-performer and the viewer, through a personal story that resists easy categorization, and transforms what is commonly known as the "other" into a differing variation the "self."

2.4.2 The mirror as a space of plurality

As in *Le chat dans le sac*, the figure of the mirror also traverses *À tout prendre*. It posits, however, identity as an image open to interpretation and negotiation, rather than the reflection of an ontological truth designating an authentic, single body beyond the surface. A scene early on in the film shows the mirror as a contested space of plurality, with which the filmmaker engages playfully and violently. Claude dresses up before going to a party and, as he narrates in voiceover that he hates such social events, a series of fantasized versions of himself appear in the mirror: Claude the biker, Claude the officer, Claude the gangster, shooting his gun at the mirror (see fig. 7). Once again, critic Yves Lever views this sequence as a symbol of the film's narcissism and disconnection from the social or political realm:

> La première séquence où il passe beaucoup de temps devant le miroir – et presque la même scène revient à la fin – donne le ton à l'ensemble : Claude est tout entier centré sur lui-même et ne voit tous les autres que par ce qu'ils lui apportent; il a beau tirer au révolver dans le miroir, il ne le traverse pas, comme chez Cocteau, et ses débris ne le ramènent qu'à lui-même. (78)

Fig. 7: Stills from *À tout prendre*: Various identities cohabiting in a state of tension.

In view of the singular editing of the scene, however, Lever's argument misses Jutra's true focus. Rather than being self-centered, the filmmaker posits the self as plural. The mirror scene and its montage do not allude to Cocteau's vision of poetic transcendence, but to alternate other

selves competing for representation. Jutra plays with the mirror as an imaginary, fictitious surface, a screen. Contrary to what Lever states, the fragments of the mirror do not bring Claude back to himself, but to his inability to reconcile the plurality of his fragmented self with his official, public self-image. Jutra plays with cinema's illusion of reality to reflect on the performative "illusion" of public existence and social self-presentation as a space of normativity. However, the mirror and the cinematic image also becomes, following that logic, a surface of play to invent a new self escaping determinism, or in other words, a way to dismantle conventional relations of meaning and create new ones.

The ambiguity and flexibility of identity is also represented through the tone of the film, in which categorical expectations of style and genre are confounded, and comedy and drama are blended indiscriminately. At the end of the film, for example, Claude attempts suicide by drowning. The narrative voice, then solemnly reciting a poetic soliloquy about death and liberation, suddenly gargles as Claude dives in the water. The voice is comically chained to the body at that moment to create surprise and disrupt the dramatic tension. In Jutra's point of view, the drama of identity becomes thus grotesque and farcical. As the suicide sequence addresses the impossibility for Claude of getting rid of his guilt following Johanne's abortion, and the loss of his comforting heterosexual bourgeois fiction, the director purposefully moves away from the melodramatic conventions that could have contained the transgressiveness of the story within accepted moral boundaries. The drama is not settled into a cathartic resolution, and the undecidable posture of irony adds to the transgression and feeling of ambivalence. In *À tout prendre*, the private configuration (*dispositif*) of autobiography thus performs a carnivalesque reversal of values allowing "deviant" identities to access a public form of representation. The playfulness and self-reflexivity of its autoethnographic expression deconstructs the audience's presuppositions, as well

as the principles of logic, order and categorization that govern the meaning of cinema as a form of cultural (re)production.

Despite recognizing the pioneering quality of *À tout prendre*, Thomas Waugh criticized Jutra's choice of coming out in the film through the voiceover. Jutra's coming out, indeed, "n'est qu'un reflet sonore qu'on enregistre dans l'intimité du studio de son et non, publiquement, sur le plateau" ("Nègres blancs, tapettes et 'butch'" 23). Yet, the intimacy of the autobiographical setting, its "home made" and private quality is exactly what allowed this confession to emerge and to challenge social conventions and marginalization in 1963. In the shooting of Johanne's confession, for example, the potential for "complete" intimacy of the apparatus inverted the role of public and private spaces in the distribution of knowledge: "Johanne [complètement seule] s'est confessée à la camera pendant que nous prenions un café au coin de la rue," recounts camera operator Jean-Claude Labrecque, detailing how he and Jutra left the set through the window ("Au hasard des humeurs de Claude" 11). The bedroom had become the space of communication, where the revelation of social identity is captured by film, and the café a space of distraction separated from truth. The scene had to be shot a second time, and while the crew stayed on the set this time around, the spatial staging of the shoot operated an equally significant chiasmus: Jutra stayed alone with Johanne and asked Labrecque to remain *hidden in the closet* while she "came out" (Labrecque, "Le secret de Johanne" 20). The confessional configuration of the film inverted the power dynamic regulating the expression of identities across private and public spaces, giving the possibility to communicate a form of selfhood commonly erased from the group.

Additionally, Claude's confession in voiceover came into being as a compensation and countermeasure to the limitations of self-financing a private and personal autobiographical project. The confessional voiceover appeared as an inexpensive solution to the financial impossibility of

shooting the whole film through classically structured scenes with sound. The confessional voiceover became a way, however, to disclose what no re-enacted dialogue could reveal: the shame and taboo of homosexuality, interrupting the coherence and meaning of scenes through the voiceover. Jutra's mind, concealing "an identity sequestered from a time more remote than his very first day" became the link tying all the fragments of the film together. As V. Bouchard writes: "Le propos du film se déplace. Le '*re-happening* amoureux entre copains' devient une introspection et une confession audiovisuelle. Jutra choisit de filmer sa conscience pour relier les différentes séquences déjà filmées, sa voix venant au moment du montage et du mixage faire ce lien" (227). Jutra's story of his coming out was thus rewritten from an unspoken place of absence within the story, a space of shame and self-censorship revisited and turned into a motif of speech.

In sum, Jutra's voiceover in *À tout prendre* transgressed an internalized restriction to compete with the "official" version of the story and to threaten the illusion its coherence. A crucial example of this is when Claude-the-narrator becomes physically embodied by Claude-the-character, fusing the two identities at the end of the film, upon deciding to pay for Johanne's abortion and end the story. At that moment, the character is reading one of Johanne's letter out loud, when he interrupts himself to address the camera and begins to relate the rest of the story, in character, already knowing what will happen next. In that sequence, the character has therefore become the narrator, and the narrator has become the character, suddenly intruding in the story that he narrates. Claude has become his own literal double, addressing the camera directly for the first and only time in the film. This sequence is fundamental in Jutra's project as the voice therefore acquires a body, and the identity of the body becomes contested between narration and action, present and past, guilt and self-expression. Claude the narrator-character announces, then, that only two hundred dollars will allow him to pay for Johanne's abortion and end the story. Yet, this money

in fact allowed Jutra, the filmmaker, to revisit and rewrite his own personal story; the sequence shows Claude going to the bank while in fact what is shown is footage of Jutra applying for a loan to produce the film, seven years after the events (Garneau 214). "Va, à tout prendre, je sais que la somme de 200$ pourrait tout arranger," Claude declares, addressing the camera. The sentence alludes to the abortion (the past), yet also to the title of the film that we are watching (the present). The materialization of the narrative voice into an embodied form addressing the camera allegorizes the autoethnographic attempt at rewriting a past self out of a space of exclusion and illegality, and into a space of expression and legitimacy. Abortion is turned into creation, and shame into authorship.

I insist on this sequence to conclude my analysis of the film as it consists of a figure which Gérard Genette has called, in the field of narratology, a "metalepsis." Metalepsis is defined by Genette as a permutation through which a narrator crosses a threshold that they should border and contain (244). In terms of cinema, it relates to the crossing of the screen as an imaginary border into the "actual reality" of the audience (Kaempfer and Zanghi, VII). In *À tout prendre*, the physical intrusion of the narrator into his own story signals the point from which autoethnography becomes a transgressive reinvention, rather than a faithful reproduction of the self. Autoethnography obfuscates the "autobiographical pact" implicit within autobiography (Philippe Lejeune's concept of identity between author, narrator and character) in favour of self-transformation, through an autofictional gesture generating new configurations. Indeed, the intervention of the auteur within his own story fuses categories of time and space that could not previously coexist. This, for scholar Thomas Carrier-Lafleur writing about Jutra and the concept of autofiction, is the difference between the autobiographical *project* and the autofictional *gesture* (4). Unconcerned with accuracy and faithfulness, the autofictional gesture amounts to moving

forward rather than looking backward. It is a transformation of the self rather than a transcription of the past. Thus, the autofictional gesture of Jutra merges the past with what could not exist, actualizing the potentiality of repressed identities. Claude can be Quebecois and gay, just as Johanne can be Black and Quebecoise, in an alternate version of their reality which is in fact the film itself.

In that sense, *À tout prendre*'s autoethnographic gesture was a defiant embodiment of identity in 1963, unthinkable within nationalism's narrative of collective and homogenous self-coincidence. Jutra's autoethnographic film allegorized, on the contrary, the independence of a nation-to-invent as a space of possibility for a multitude of different identities demanding participation and representation. Its autobiographical inscription signals, in sum, the passage from *other* to *author* which is the fundamental movement of this genealogical paradigm of Quebec's film history. Such a paradigm posits the recognition of difference, the valuing of agency, and the right to self-representation as the founding narratives of Quebec cinema, narratives which, across time, can be reopened, reframed and appropriated by "others."

Fig. 8: Still from *À tout prendre*: Claude peeping from the inside out.

Conclusion: The Imagined Community in Dialogue

Throughout this thesis, many examples have confirmed the existence of an autoethnographic tradition in early Quebec cinema. As I have shown, the unstable conditions of production incited filmmakers to work outside of the studios, within minor genres such as documentary and ethnographic cinema. The lack of a local infrastructure led filmmakers, often working alone and with limited means, to involve themselves personally in the work, in close contact with the topic represented. This involvement of the filmmaker was reflected in the first-person narration of the films that I have chosen to study, which stemmed from an oral tradition of film exhibition emphasizing the speaker as an embodied participant and member of the group. The first-person narration therefore marked the film as a local production, distinct from the language of classical, "foreign" cinema, and gave value to the filmmakers' discourse.

From there, the thesis has explored the role of this speaking "I" figure in the shaping of an imagined community within Quebec cinema. My historical analysis showed how the notion of perspective had been traditionally emphasized within Quebec documentary filmmaking, as a key element of its production of knowledge and discourse. The paradigm of autoethnography implies that the purpose of making ethnographic cinema in Quebec was in great part to articulate subjectivity and perform it as cultural truth. The films that were analyzed in the thesis were not only films produced in French, but films that embodied distinctive attributes of culture and nation through the figure of an author-character saying "I." This way of making "personal" cinema allowed filmmakers like Pierre Petel and Arthur Lamothe, for example, to challenge the hegemony of English Canadian representations which defined the content produced for most Canadian communities prior to the creation of an autonomous French production branch at the NFB in 1964.

To say “je” for those autoethnographers implied that national cinema was necessarily an embodied act of communication and participation within the community, not only a French version of “Canadian” cinema. Building a Quebecois cinema was not a matter of showing images of Quebec, but more importantly to give voice to a community as an embodied, speaking subject on screen, resisting marginalization.

Although Quebecois autoethnography favored individual expressions of selfhood and identity to embody and promote a culturally specific point of view, the coincidence between “I” and “nation” of early Quebec films also situated a totalizing vision of the group. In their view of Quebec as a coherent and distinct people which they “incarnated” on the screen, Tessier, Proulx, Petel and Lamothe’s autoethnographic strategies in turn embodied master narratives of history, tradition and culture. In their films, Petel and Lamothe mediate their personal experience of nature and space using a language that evokes the sublime and the mythical for instance, in keeping with Quebecois modern nationalism asserting control over its territory and resources. Decades earlier, Proulx and Tessier represented their own affective and genealogical inscription in the community to justify the continuation and expansion of traditional ways of life through settlement and colonization. In all those films, the filmmakers’ “I” associate its individual perspective to master narratives of conquest, settlement or tradition in an attempt to embody and perform its constitutive myths. Petel acts as the heir of French “discoverer” Jacques Cartier navigating uncharted territories and therefore “discovering” and founding the nation through cinema.Tessier, championing an archetypal vision of French-Canadian identity, illustrates his thesis by filming his own father at work in the fields, showing an embodied and emotional portrait of the ancestors’ way. Thus, resisting marginalization through autoethnography and claiming voice and identity also entailed

the production of hegemonic visions performed as "lived experience," maintaining dominant ideological values among the community.

As was seen saw in chapter two however, with the liberalization and democratization of Quebec during the Quiet Revolution, autoethnographic expression shifted toward less monolithic and totalizing forms of embodiment. In a context of accrued civil and individual freedom during the 1960s, the tradition of self-inscription by the filmmaker indeed led a new wave of auteurs to engage the deeply personal with the political, and to question the coherence of collective self-representation through intimate portrayals. In the three films that were discussed, *À tout prendre*, *Le chat dans le sac* and *De mère en fille*, the speaking "I" thus became confessional and autofictional. Confessional enunciation gave voice to a plurality of imagined, fantasized or repressed other selves. The desire for an authentic national cinema as the site of a free expression of identity blurred the boundary between documentary and fiction, the private and the public and explored potential new identities within. For Groulx, this meant the exploration of a new radical youth claiming independence; for Poirier, it meant the voice of a female subjectivity no longer made other – using her diary as a source of creative empowerment; for Jutra, it meant a queer expression of selfhood becoming synonymous with the liberation of national cinema and its artistic and poetic potential of expression. Their films asserted new possibilities of "becoming Quebecois" that echoed the unresolved question of national self-determination while imagining national cinema as a site of self-expression, in which collective and personal life were therefore becoming intertwined and contiguous.

Throughout the 1960s, autoethnography thus revealed identity as an unstable process of negotiation between the personal and the collective open to a variety of singular reinterpretations. Poirier's recourse to subjective language, for instance, expressed not only her position as a Quebec

documentary filmmaker working for a Canadian federal institution, but also her position as a woman in the male-dominated cultural environment of Quebec. In *De mère en fille*, the expression of gender subjectivity therefore reprises and complicates the narrative of cultural identity and self-representation of Quebec cinema. Her double experience as an "other" within national cinema brought her to challenge and expand the "imagined community" by engaging her personal, intimate voice with a tradition of public speech to include women's subjectivity within representation. This posture of Poirier is similar to that which Trinh Minh-ha has called the "Inappropriate Other/Self" of the autoethnographer, affirming both belonging and difference as well as transgressing the border between ethnographer and subject, interiority and exteriority, to reframe the group's knowledge of itself ("Outside In / Inside Out" 74). Across the wave of confessional films of the 1960s, a "distinct" and coherent collective identity was therefore simultaneously embodied and challenged by the inclusion within public discourse of the auteur's "inappropriate" personal point of view.

Autoethnography, in other words, aimed at an intimate form of knowledge to reinvent and unsettle constructions of identity, community and alterity through intimate address. However, it would be presumptuous to pretend that 1960s Quebec cinema did not construct itself across a binary "us" and "them" either implicitly or explicitly expressed. As discussed through Jutra, Groulx and Poirier's films, figures of "foreigners" and "others" served the purpose of casting and exploring the desires, anxieties and fantasies of the main protagonist and "alter ego" of the auteurs. Johanne, Barbara, or the Czechoslovakian women filmed by Poirier all triggered the main character's desire to "become other" as a promising horizon of experience and alterity, yet they also triggered processes of differentiation and identification within a national, ethnic – and, in the case of Jutra and Groulx, gendered – framework in the films. These characters opened and closed

a gap within identity by being mirrors to the auteur's self, instead of agents who fully destabilized the borders between self and other and the coherence of concepts of identity and ethnicity. As Alisa Lebow writes, autoethnography proceeds to individual reinterpretations and reinventions of concepts of ethnicity and identity, yet they are always re-inscribed into pre-existing cultural narratives during the interpretive process (158). A personal discourse is never free of its cultural determinations and positions; hence the importance of the national framework to discuss these films, reminding us of "the ways in which a national hegemony may be constituted, but also how it is made constantly provisional" (Marshall 13-14) within Quebec cinema.

There lies indeed the paradox of autoethnography, informing on both the legacy and the limits of national cinema understood as a gesture of "collective" self-inscription and self-representation. On the one hand, the autoethnographic paradigm has directed our attention to a tradition of first-person cinema as a site of resistance, an assertion of cultural difference and agency appropriating dominant modes of discourse. Yet, on the other hand, the first-person also signaled rhetorical strategies of identification that reinstated the borders between "self" and "other" through discourses of authority and control over representation. In the films of Tessier and Proulx and in those of Jutra and Groulx, the "I" is oscillating between asserting difference and asserting identity. Obviously, however, between Tessier and Jutra, the meaning of "difference" and "identity" has greatly shifted. For Tessier, identity and difference embody the refuge of tradition and the cultural specificity of a traditional way of life; for Jutra, difference and identity allow him to claim sexual and artistic freedom as a valid expression of subjectivity, as it echoes the quest for collective self-representation of national cinema.

In sum, claiming autoethnography as a "tradition" of Quebec cinema could entail a new way of studying the history of film in Quebec as it informs us of the shifting relations between

power, community and selfhood in constant negotiation between the minor and the major. The concept of national cinema within a subnational space such as Quebec embodies singular, resistant points of view as much as it signals, in many cases or aspects, the temptation to recreate hegemonic visions of ethnicity and nation. Autoethnography characterizes a body of work that keeps the trace of a tradition of minor identity politics claiming representation, a site which has been constantly challenged by new voices and identities appropriating "national cinema" as a potent space of expression. Autoethnography, as I have concluded in chapter two, is a move from "other" to "auteur" within the social and cultural space of the nation, and this could lead us to study how the genre has been a site of cinematic creativity for auteurs reimagining social bonds, cultural narratives and identities well beyond the 1960s – auteurs who remained the "others" of Jutra and Groulx's narratives for example.

Indeed, since the 1960s, this tradition has been further appropriated by many "others/auteurs" – women, migrant, LGBTQ or First Nations filmmakers, for example, who have used film to inscribe themselves in the narratives of national cinema while disrupting some of its hegemonic representations in the process. One could begin to envision this lineage by studying, for example, the hybrid documentary works of Marilú Mallet and Michka Saäl, who have both challenged the notion of national cinema as a fixed site of patriarchal origins and identity as migrant women filmmakers, while producing work that remained in dialogue with a local tradition of oral and subjective first-person documentary. In *Journal inachevé* (1982), for example, Chilean refugee director Marilú Mallet films her everyday life and conjugal conflicts (over, in fact, how to film and what to film) to create and inhabit a space that resists categorization and retrieves agency and subjectivity. However, while Mallet's film received scholarly attention in the past (see for example Nichols; Longfellow), little has been written about Saäl, who passed away during the

writing of this thesis and whose work deserves more critical attention. Indeed, Saäl has created original forms of hybrid autobiographical representation to transform her position as an exiled Tunisian director living in Quebec into a creative and critical standpoint, one which questioned the limits of documentary, identity and national cinema. In her debut short film *Loin d'où* (1989), for example, Saäl recounts in voiceover an episode of her childhood during which she lost her way home. The story is illustrated through particular Quebec imagery such as snowy landscapes, the streets of Montreal and car plates with Quebec's motto "Je me souviens." Saäl therefore projects in the collective cultural space of Quebec a memory that has different roots and points of origin than the French and English master narrative, blurring the referentiality that the notion of "collective memory" entails.

Saäl's work is also of great interest in its assertion that personal history, being a fragment of collective identity, entails the need to film others and their stories as well as *potential* other selves. In *Loin d'où* for example, the body of another migrant woman, Nadine Ltaif, is used as a surrogate to physically express and embody Saal's poetic voiceover. The relationship between Michka and Nadine becomes the central subject of a feature-length documentary, *L'arbre qui dort rêve à ses racines* (1992). The film, while staging their friendship as an autofiction, also investigates the web of intercultural relationships that have constructed Montreal as a migrant city, through various ethnographic testimonies. The intimacy between Ltaif and Saäl, at times ambiguously affectionate and erotic, is shown in parallel to the testimonies of migrants in a way that infuses ethnography with representations of desire and affection. Saäl's representation of alterity tied with desire could be worth exploring along the framework articulated within this thesis, as it in fact characterizes autoethnography as a work of cultural creation, invention and transgression, rather than objective knowledge. More importantly, Saäl's filmography shows the

much-discussed concept of "vivre-ensemble" as something that cannot amount to a generalized or neutral representation of difference, but one which necessarily involves and crosses life stories in meaningful, embodied and desiring relationships. Such a conception of citizenship could appear as the aesthetic and political work specific to autoethnography, which would therefore justify devoting more academic and curatorial attention to the concept of autoethnography applied to the field of "national cinemas" specifically.

What future studies could focus on as well, then, is how autoethnography emphasizes the body as an autobiographical site of representation and subversion resisting the generic, ethnic and gendered categorizations of national cinema, and expanding its representative possibilities. The underground video works of AIDS activist and community organizer Louis Dionne such as *Le bain de M. Soleil* (1994) prove to be of particular interest in that respect and would benefit from the attention of Quebec film historians and critics. Indeed, Dionne's diary of his sexual encounters in the parks of 1990s Montreal merged sexual representation with the tradition of oral cinema, as well as pornography with ethnography, to destigmatize and demystify AIDS/HIV+ for both gay and straight audiences (the latter creatively embedded in the film, for example, as Dionne shows the reaction of his straight neighbour to the video in a frame within the frame). As Dionne himself had recently been diagnosed with HIV+ at the time of filming, his own autobiographical experiment triggers conversations around safe sex, knowledge and freedom in the film that moves from the particular to the general. Dionne also films his actors only from the waist down to preserve everyone's anonymity, including Dionne himself. The lower body, typically the site of stigma, fear and shame for AIDS/HIV+ survivors, becomes in the film the site of knowledge, meaning and pleasure. This way of framing representation and discourse allowed the filmmaker to fight the

ostracization of ill bodies from public representations and conversations, turning them into a site of meaning open to encounter and exchange.

Beyond what Lacasse posited in relation to "oral cinema," the "oral" and local appropriation of the medium in *Le bain de M. Soleil* is also "corporeal." It retrieves speech for a community that is different and marginalized through physical and sexual, rather than linguistic or cultural difference. *Le bain de M. Soleil*, then, could help to show how autoethnography has also been able to adapt the oral tradition of national cinema to explore and politicize the physical dimension of identity, its points of resistance, coincidence and divergence from the "common" experience of the imagined community.

Consequently, one last thing that could be explored further is the way that such personal engagements with media technology can reimagine the cultural memory and visual cultures of underrepresented communities. The case of filmmaker Érik Papatie, an autoethnographer and auteur who came to cinema through the Wapikoni Mobile initiative (a mobile film lab travelling to First Nations and Inuit communities) is a compelling example of such creative remediations of community narratives and visual culture. Often portraying himself as a media handyman repairing broken devices or reusing obsolete apparatuses, Papatie's autofictional work playfully combines individual representation and video archives of the Anishnabe community of Lac Simon. In *Souviens-toi* (2011), for example, Papatie receives strange signals from his radio which leads him to discover a VHS tape in a garbage bin; the community is gathered to watch the tape, revealed to be old footage from Papatie's childhood, leading the community to comment on the times past and on what Lac Simon has become. This revisiting of archival home footage also becomes tied to a desire to create new images; finding the tapes incites Papatie to pick up a camera and continue to tell the story of Lac Simon for future generations, seeing the precarity of a memory which is often

discarded or threatened to be forgotten. In *Dans l'entre-temps* (2018), Papatie reuses the trope, again finding a camera and a pile of old tapes next to a dumpster. Finding the last remaining VCR of Lac Simon that can play them, he is then "magically" transported within the reality of the archival footage contained in the tapes (which are the same home movies as in *Souviens-toi*.) All video transmissions and interactions in the community then become "jammed," as this footage interrupts young people's video games, CCTV transmissions or TV broadcasts in the local seniors' home.

In most of his films, then, Papatie's recycling of media can "magically" help him to teleport and travel in time and in space, a metaphor of the potential of autoethnographic cinema to reconnect Indigenous cultures with a sense of identity, history and interconnectedness across their fragmented and marginalized media culture. Indeed, in Papatie's work autoethnography plays the role of mediation between past and present, as well as technology and tradition, and self and others, borrowing from film genres and cultures in an innovative and local appropriation of the medium. Papatie's autoethnographic work has allowed him to expand his presence beyond the limits of the Lac-Simon reservation, while remaining specifically inscribed within the community. In addition to his more formal cinematic work with Wapikoni, he has created multiple YouTube channels, for example, that expand and play with dimensions of his auteur persona and personal idiosyncrasies: his love of dogs roaming about the reservation, or his fascination with obsolete technology found around the community form threads of his online video production and become ways to multiply connections between himself and Internet followers interacting with his work. Within Quebec cinema, Papatie has also "crossed-over" as his own character, playing himself as an eccentric media handyman in Robert Morin's film *3 histoires d'Indiens*.

In sum, Papatie, Saäl and Dionne's filmography exemplify the reconfiguration and complication of the imagined community that is proper to autoethnography as a form of cultural creation. These three filmmakers show how orality and self-representation destabilize the concept of Quebec "national cinema," inviting us to speak of Quebec *cinemas* instead. Through the paradigm of autoethnography, the notion of a "culturally-specific" national cinema indeed becomes a diversified, contested, pluralized and de-essentialized constellation of communities in dialogue. Autoethnography gives body and voice to a singular experience of difference that simultaneously represents and invents itself in the cultural space of national cinema.

Autoethnography as a foundational paradigm of Quebec cinema leads us to understand collective identity in film as a theme of performance and negotiation, ultimately deconstructing the solidity of the concept of ethnicity. This constant renegotiation leads us to conceive the problem of identity and national cinema not from any fixed point of origin, but to rather focus on its material and political conditions of expression at any given moment. To stay coherent with Quebec's film history implies a focus on the terms of representation and perspective that defined the local film culture, its innovative characteristics and political values, and to remain critical of its totalizing tendencies. In conclusion, the "foundation" of Quebec national cinema might not reflect an essential historical *moment* so much as an unfinished *process*, one which does not tell the story of an ethnic or national group, but rather of a claim to speech and to autonomy in a complex postcolonial space, perpetually renegotiated by the people. This, as I hope to have shown, is the legacy of the autoethnographic genealogy of Quebec cinema, and the purpose of transmitting, criticizing and reopening such a genealogy in light of present and future realities, with new stories to be told and new voices to be heard.

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