POWER FROM THE NORTH: THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF ENERGY IN QUÉBEC

by

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ABSTRACT

In 1971, Robert Bourassa, then Premier of Québec, launched a major hydroelectric scheme to be built 1400 km North of Montréal. Known as the "James Bay" project, the first phase included the creation of eight powerhouses, six reservoirs and the diversion of two rivers. These transformations necessarily impacted the local Cree people; a territorial agreement partly compensated them but remains controversial to this day. While northern communities overwhelmingly bear the ecological cost of the project, the bulk of James Bay energy flows south to the industrial centers of Québec, Ontario and the U.S. The assertion then that "James Bay belongs to all the Québécois" which was meant to ease political tensions about the project begs the question, "Who *are* the Québécois" and how do the Crees fit within such a community?

This thesis explore that question by looking at the Québécois cultural production of territory and its resources in the north. If James Bay was out of reach, it was never out of view. Media and political discourses reiterated key elements of a Québécois cultural relationship to place, some of which are contained in the rural literature known as the *roman de la terre.* Several elements of this literature and its broader context were recontextualized in James Bay, particularly as they pertained to the will to occupy the land and develop natural resources. This was an important aspect of making James Bay - a land historically inhabited by the Crees - into a "Québécois" national landscape. I suggest that this process was largely rooted in representations of nature that sought to bind it with nation and national identity. Thus James Bay demonstrates the close connection between identity and environmental struggles. For the Québécois, the access to James Bay was supported by a territorial discourse that performed their own cultural past. This provoked an organized resistance from the Crees which constituted them as a modern political unit. A look at the cultural geography of the region highlights the political scales created in the accessing of resources that render their equitable and sustainable use more difficult to achieve.

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1534	Jacques Cartier plants a cross in Gaspé in the name of the *Roy de France* .
1611	First recorded contact between natives and Europeans in James Bay.
1670	The Hudson Bay Company is incorporated by the British Crown.
1760-63	British conquest of New France. 60 000 French colonizers remain.
1763	Paris Treaty. France cedes its Canadian colony to England.
1774	Québec Act. Québec gets its language, old civil law and freedom of religion.
1791	Constitutional Act. Divides Upper and Lower Canada.
1837-38	French Patriot uprisings and defeat. Main leaders executed or sent into exile.
1839	Royal inquiry into the Patriot uprisings (Durham report).
1867	Canada's Constitution Act. "One dominion under the name of Canada."
1912	Québec frontier is extended North to the Hudson Strait.
1944	Creation of Hydro-Québec.
1944-59	Maurice Duplessis is elected four times as Prime Minister of Québec. His leadership is referred to as "La Grande Noirceur" and ends with his death in 1959.
1960	Election of Jean Lesage leader of the Liberal Party. Beginning of the *Quiet Revolution.*
1962	Lesage and his government are re-elected with a mandate for the "nationalization of electricity", symbolized by their campaign slogan "Maîtres chez nous."
1967	General Charles de Gaulle's "Vive le Québec libre!" Creation of the movement for Sovereignty-Association by René Lévesque.
1968	Pierre Elliot Trudeau becomes Canada's Prime Minister.

1970	April: Bourassa elected Prime Minister. October: Political crisis which ends with the assassination of Pierre Laporte.
1971	*April: Bourassa launches the James Bay project.* *July: creation of the "Société de développement de la Baie James" (SDBJ)*
1972	Cree and Inuit people seek an injunction against the project in the Québec court.
1973	Judge Albert Malouf orders construction to cease on the La Grande complex. His decision is reversed a week later.
1974	Labour dispute leads to a riot at the LG2 work camp. The site is closed for over a month.
1974	Grand Council of the Cree is formed with Billy Diamond as Grand Chief.
1975	James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement is signed between the Cree, Inuit, and Naskapi and the governments of Québec and Canada.
1976	René Lévesque defeats Robert Bourassa to become Québec's Premier.
1979	LG2 Complex is inaugurated.
1980	First Québec referendum on separation from Canada. "No" side wins with 60% of the votes.
1982	Patriation of the Canadian Constitution and creation of a Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
1985	Bourassa defeats René Lévesque and is re-elected. During the campaign, he proposes to pursue Phase II of the James Bay project (Great Whale).
1988	Bourassa announce that construction will begin on the Great Whale river in the spring of 1989.
1990	Cree and Inuit people network with environmental groups to lobby against Great Whale. Their cause receives international attention at an Earth Day rally in New York City.

1992 New York Power Authority cancels energy buying contracts with Hydro-Québec.

1993 Bourassa resigns from his position as Premier of Québec. He dies of cancer in 1996. *Parti Québécois* elected with Jacques Parizeau at its helm.

1994 Jacques Parizeau cancels the second phase of the project "indefinitely", stating that it is no longer a priority of his government.

1995 Second referendum on separation. The "no" side wins again with only 50.6% of the votes.

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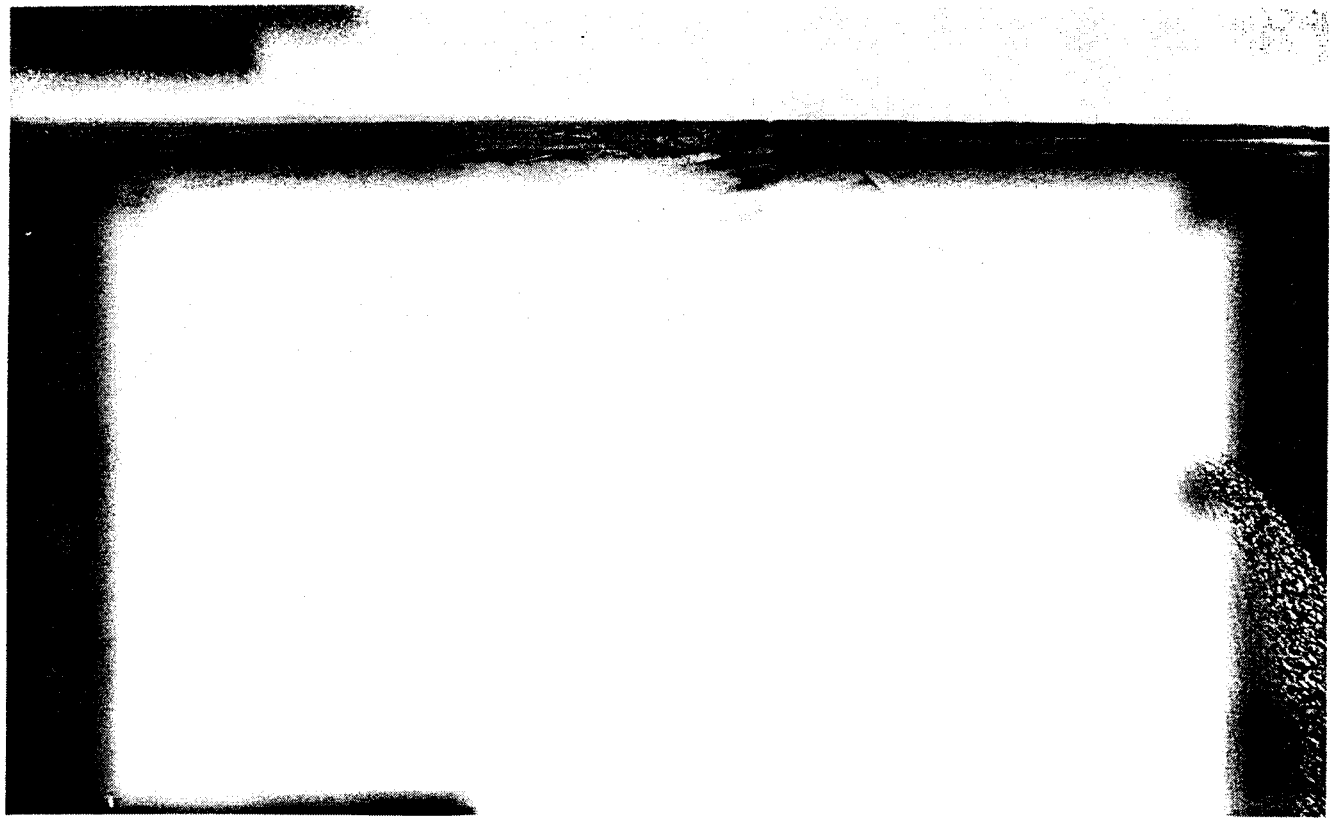

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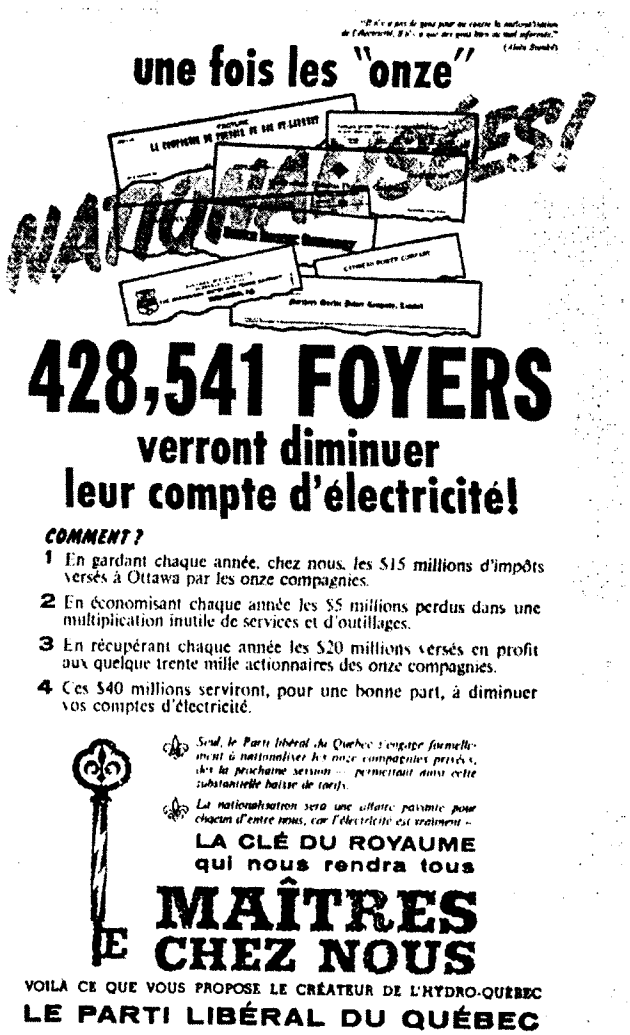

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MISE EN SCÈNE

"Il ne sera pas dit que nous vivrons pauvrement sur une terre aussi riche. Nous sortirons de notre infériorité économique. Le gouvernement, qui a un grand rôle à jouer dans ce projet, l'assumera pleinement."[1]

Robert Bourassa, Premier of Québec
James Bay launching ceremony
April 30th 1971

Opening

"The world begins today"

It has been thirty years since Premier Robert Bourassa pronounced the above words in front of five thousand ecstatic supporters, cheering for his Liberal government and the miraculous growth it promised to bring to the province of Québec. After completing his first year in power, Bourassa had gathered his party congress to look back on the beginning of his term and announce the direction his government would take for the immediate future. The audience had waited impatiently in almost complete darkness for their leader to enter the brightly illuminated stage. Having sufficiently delayed his entrance for the crowd's mood to reach its highest point, Bourassa suddenly appeared on stage at the junction of two brilliant beams of white light. Waving at his supporters who gave him a triumphal standing ovation, he left the platform to go sit in the first row amongst representatives of his own riding. Seated thus and plunged into darkness

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[1] "It will not be said that we will live poorly on such a rich land. The government, which has a great part to play in this project, will assume it entirely." Quoted in R. Lacasse, *Baie James: l'extraordinaire aventure des derniers pionniers canadiens* (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1985), p. 67.

like the rest of the audience, Bourassa and the other members of his government symbolically joined the spectators' ranks to witness, on three giant screens, a preview of the monumental show they were about to produce for the Québec population: this show would be known as the James Bay hydroelectric project.

For most Quebeckers living in the south of the province, this region was seen as a wilderness devoid of economic and social activities; this despite a history of trading relations with natives going back to the seventeenth century.[2] Electricity production had become an emblem of Québec's political strength since the government take-over of the energy sector - the so-called "nationalisation" of electricity - which had been an important precursor of a period of state expansion in the mid-twentieth century. Hydro-Québec had been created in 1944 with a mandate to provide energy to the municipalities, enterprises and citizens of Québec at the cheapest possible cost. It did so by gradually acquiring private-sector energy corporations, most of which were run by the province's anglophone business class.[3] Hydro-Québec had turned its sights on Northern water resources very soon after its creation; but, it was on the night of Bourassa's speech in 1971, when he launched the project, that James Bay entered more fully the Québécois cultural imagination as a national territory, one

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[2] The first recorded meeting between Natives and Europeans happened in 1611. In 1670 the fur-trading "Hudson Bay Company" was incorporated by the British Crown and granted a vast portion of land known as "Rupert's Land", corresponding to what is today James Bay, Hudson Bay and the Northwest Territories. HBC officials arrived in Eastern James Bay that same year to establish the first trading post in Charles Fort. Rupert's land became part of the Canadian Union in 1870 and Québec's Northern frontier was extended in 1912 to reach up to the Hudson Straight (see map). D. Francis and T. Morantz, *Partners in Furs: a history of the fur trade in Eastern James Bay 1600-1870* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), pp. 16 and 24.

[3] See C. Hogue, A. Bolduc and D. Larouche, *Québec, un siècle d'électricité* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1979), pp. 228-349.

which would hold tremendous economic, political and cultural significance for the expansion of the Québécois nation.

According to the initial plans, the James Bay development scheme was to have encompassed three phases with a projected total cost of nearly fifty billion dollars: these were the La Grande, Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert (NBR) and Grande-Baleine (Great Whale) complexes (see map). In the end, only the La Grande Complex was completed, at a cost of approximately thirty billion dollars. Its installed capacity is 15 700 megawatts (MW), and is thus capable of generating large surpluses since the provincial population of only seven million people. This is all the more remarkable since three quarters of Québec's energy is supplied by electricity and Québec's cold winters generate long periods of high demand. Although La Grande has only a fifth of the Colorado river basin, it produces about three and a half times as much energy as its generating stations. This is the result of eight powerhouses and six reservoirs on the river, and the diversion of two additional rivers: 87% of the Eastman river basin and 41% of the Caniapiscau were rerouted into the La Grande to nearly double its potential.[4]

The largest powerhouse of the La Grande Complex - originally referred to as LG2 but recently renamed in honour of Robert Bourassa who died in 1996 - currently has a capacity of 7 326 MW, which is more than twice that of the Hoover dam.[5] LG2 includes three central elements that

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[4] Hydro-Québec information brochure, *Le Complexe La Grande* (1998), p. 17. Subsequent details about the powerhouse are taken from *The LG2 Powerhouse* (Montréal: Société d'énergie de la Baie James, 1980).

[5] The Hoover dam possesses 2 000 MW of installed capacity. The completion of additional structures (known as LG2A) in 1992 places the complex third in the world in terms of size, after Guri in Venezuela (10 300 MW) and Itaipu in Brazil and Paraguay (9 940 MW). If completed, the Three Gorges project in China is poised to take

have been widely celebrated as marvels of modern technology. First, the *main dam* - two and a half kilometers long and fifty-three stories high - holds back the waters of the LG2 reservoir, which has a capacity of twenty-three million cubic feet of water. Secondly, the *machine hall* where the generators are found is located more than one hundred meters underground; measuring half a kilometer in length, it was carved straight into the granite and is the largest of its kind in the world, housing sixteen turbine generator units. It became common during its contruction to indicate its scale by saying that it was twice the size of the Chartres cathedral in France: indeed, the machine room is commonly referred to as the "Underground Cathedral", a figure of speech strongly suggesting the perceived connections between technology and divine power.[6] Scale and supernatural status are also rendered metaphorically in the third key element of LG2, which is the *spillway* mechanism adjacent to the dam and reservoir. The spillway has become the most recognizable icon of the project and is referred to as the *escalier de géant.* Its twelve descending steps - each of which is twelve meters wide and twenty meters high - are intended to regulate the flow of water when valves are open to release overcapacity in the reservoir above. The reference to giants has been a key figure in the symbolic enframing of the region by the Québécois, adding a

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the first rank. Hydro-Québec, *Le Complexe,* p. 17. In order to be consistent with the time period, I refer in this thesis to what is now the Robert Bourassa Complex by its original name of LG2 (La Grande 2).

[6] The following description offers one example: "Quand je pénètre enfin dans la salle contenant une des turbines, une telle impression de puissance illimitée s'impose à moi que je me dis que *si la technologie pouvait arriver à créer un dieu, il ressemblerait à ce groupe turbine-alternateur...* Dans un vacarme presque insoutenable, je me prends à songer à ces moulins à prières tibétains qui, en tournant, sont censés procurer au fidèle les mérites attachés à la répétition des formules sacrées qu'ils contiennent. *Quelle prière profèrent donc à leur façon les turbines de LG-2?*" P. Turgeon, *La Radissonie: le pays de la Baie James* (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1992), p. 114, my emphasis.

decisively epic tone to the construction project.[7] During the first ten years, between 1971 and 1981, a total of one hundred thousand people worked to build these various structures, with a maximum of eighteen thousand employees during the peak period prior to the inauguration of LG2 in 1979. It is this decade - and, in particular, the emphasis then established on vision and spectacle in representations of the LG2 complex - that constitutes the focus of this thesis: this period, and its predilections, coincided with important changes in Québec whose impacts still shape the national question in the province today. While the James Bay development was little more than a blueprint in 1971, the Premier wanted to make it clear from the very start that he was thinking on a grand scale and that he was about to treat the population of Québec to a truly spectacular production. Indeed, casting all ambiguity aside, the short film that presented the project to Bourassa's audience in Québec City was entitled "The world begins today."[8]

The politics of energy

For all its presumption, such an assertion was none the less consistent with the series of major political, economic and social changes that were taking place in Québec at the time, known collectively as the "Quiet Revolution." Canada's only French-speaking province, Québec has been the center of a francophone culture whose territorial grasp was significantly reduced when the English took over the colonies of New-

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[7] A similar reference is found in the Cree's "Giant Beaver Story" where Giant Beaver is a mythical figure whose travels and various actions have become toponymic references throughout the region. Brian Craik, personal communication (March 2000).

[8] Hogue et al., *Québec*, p. 353.

France in 1760. The sixty thousand French settlers who remained continued to develop a rural landscape along the St.-Lawrence river that provided a physical backbone for their culture, language and religion which connected the reproduction of a distinctive tradition with the maintenance of a rural way of life. The Quiet Revolution was envisioned as a critique and a break from this deeply sedimented ideology. It was set in motion with the election of Liberal leader Jean Lesage in June of 1960, after sixteen consecutive years of the conservative rule of Jean Duplessis.[9] A champion of nationalism strongly based in tradition, Duplessis had sought to maintain the religious and agricultural character of Francophones through social pillars such as the patriarchal family, parish life, and a cult of the past encapsulated by the rural sphere.[10] In deliberate and marked contrast, Lesage's arrival brought about the secularization of the provincial state and the deployment of a series of in-depth reforms that would gradually redefine social institutions and reshape the character of Québec society, especially for its francophone members. Starting from the premise that the state was the most effective tool available for francophone Quebeckers - or *Québécois*, as the term emerged then - to retain their language and improve their socio-economic standing in the province, Lesage and his ministers were proponents of what they called a "new nationalism" entrenched in strong government. The central plank of their second election platform in 1962 was the nationalisation of electricity. The liberals conducted the campaign under the banner of a slogan that was to

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[9] Lesage's cabinet became known as *'l'équipe du tonnerre'* and was followed by two subsequent governments before the election of Robert Bourassa in 1970. While historians identify the 1960-66 period as the Quiet Revolution in a strict sense, the "spirit" of this era is recognized to have lasted at least into the early eighties. P.-A. Linteau et al., *Histoire du Québec contemporain, Tome II* (Montréal: Boréal, 1989), p. 423.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 347.

become the emblem of the Quiet Revolution: *Maîtres chez nous* ("Masters in our own house", see Figures 6, 7 and 8). René Lévesque, who was minister of natural resources from 1961 to 1964, played an important role in Hydro-Québec's take-over of eleven private utilities across the province, a process which he viewed as the "decolonization" of the energy sector from the control of anglophone "colonial barons."[11] The nationalization of electricity was advertised as the "key to the kingdom" that would finally put the francophone majority of Québec in control of its own territory, industry and development.

These changes, and many others, led to a renewed sense of national pride and a wave of political affirmation by Francophones in Québec, whose culmination may have very well been the election of René Lévesque's separatist government in 1976, which called the first referendum on independence from Canada in 1980.[12] Unlike Lévesque, Robert Bourassa was not a separatist - but he was, none the less, a nationalist - and his policies toward resources and development were imbued with his own brand of *economic nationalism* that was in large measure fully congruent with the spirit of the Quiet Revolution. Bourassa's first action after officially launching the James Bay project was to introduce a bill to the National Assembly - known as Bill 50 - to create a corporation which would oversee all aspects of northern development,

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[11] R. Lévesque, *Memoirs* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), pp. 170-171. Although he started his political carreer as a Liberal, Lévesque founded the "Movement for Sovereignty-Association" in 1967, which became the *Parti Québécois* prior to its election in 1976.

[12] Separation was rejected in this referendum by a majority of 60%. A second referendum was conducted on October 30th 1995 under the leadership of Jacques Parizeau. This time the "No" side won by a razor thin majority of 1.2% (54 000 votes). The plebiscite saw an outstandingly high voters' turnout, with 93.5% of eligible voters casting their ballot.

whether in the area of water resources, forestry, mining, transportation or tourism. To specifically address the creation of a hydroelectric network, this "Société de développement de la Baie James" ("James Bay Development Corporation", subsequently referred to as SDBJ) created a sub-division which would be known as the "Société d'énergie de la Baie James" ("James Bay Energy Corporation", SÉBJ).[13] Throughout the 1970s, Bourassa remained firmly committed to the goal of developing and fueling the province's industrial base with what he called "Power from the North."[14] With their strong focus on electricity and northern resources, his policies strengthened the Québécois sense of territoriality to such an extent that the economy of which James Bay was to be the engine was constituted as an unequivocally nationalist one. The question of who would benefit from such a mammoth project made it rife with political conflict from its

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[13] It is important to note that Bourassa ran into fierce opposition when he sought to challenge Hydro-Québec's hold on the province's energy policies by creating the two separate institutions. Although meant to be distinct at the beginning, both became subsidiaries of Hydro-Québec which was to run the installations once they were built. Since further development has been halted in the region, the SDBJ is now defunct and the activities of the SÉBJ have been redirected to providing local and international engineering expertise for large-scale energy project. The fact that, from the moment of its creation, the SÉBJ was in some sense a phantom corporation that could hardly be distinguished from Hydro-Québec was strongly apparent during my fieldwork. Although most documents pertaining to the first phase of the project bore the sole stamp of the SÉBJ (not that of Hydro-Québec), their archives were filed with those of Hydro-Québec. I spent some time researching in the current SÉBJ resource center, but found little relevant information. From what I could gather by inquiring with the staff, most of the current employees of the SÉBJ - a small set of offices located in a Hydro-Québec building - were working on projects with no direct link to James Bay. For an overview of the debates around the creation of the SDBJ and Hydro-Québec's position when Bill 50 was introduced in the Québec parliament, see R. Leroux, "Une bataille de Titans qu'Hydro a remportée." *La Presse* (October 1979), p. 4.

[14] The expression - in French, *L'Énergie du Nord* - is the title of a book Bourassa wrote after completion of the first phase of the project, which he dedicated to Québec's youth. The book was translated into English and clearly aimed at a Northeastern American audience, the potential buyers of Québec's electricity surplus. R. Bourassa, *L'Énergie du Nord: la force du Québec* (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1985).

inception. Commenting on these conflicts, Robert Boyd, then president of the SÉBJ, stated that:

> Cette politisation de toutes les couleurs a eu deux conséquences désastreuses: elle a masqué l'objectif principal du projet - à savoir la satisfaction des besoins énergétiques du Québec - et elle a sérieusement menacé sa crédibilité... Heureusement, le temps a fait son oeuvre et la passion cède tranquillement la place aux arguments de raison. Pour notre part, nous avons toujours été convaincus que la population avait droit à une meilleure information sur le projet de la baie James. *En définitive, ce projet appartient à tous les Québécois..*[15]

In mentioning the "politicisation" of the project, Boyd was partly referring to the court injunction obtained by the Cree in 1973 to stop work on the La Grande complex, and to the negative press that ensued. The conflict that opposed First Nations people to the James Bay developers generated harsh criticism - in Québec, in Canada and internationally - from those who saw the scheme as both an illegal appropriation of territory and a serious threat to the environment. What I wish to emphasize, however, is that these conflicts should not be seen as the derailment of a project that ought to have gone smoothly simply because it "belonged to all the Québécois": that it was in some way a purely *technical* project. On the

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[15] "This politicising under every banner has had two disastrous consequences: it obscured the central objective of the project - that is, to meet the energy needs of Québec - and it seriously undermined its credibility... Fortunately, time has done its work and passion is quietly yielding to reason. For our part, we have always been convinced that the population had a right to be better informed about the James Bay project. In the final analysis, this project belongs to all the Québécois." See "Le Projet appartient à tous les Québécois." *En Grande* Vol. 1.11 (November 1975), p. 11, my emphasis.

contrary, I suggest that, through assertions like Boyd's, James Bay was not "depoliticized" but was rather rendered more intensely political since the term "Québécois" was by no means a generic or inclusive one. From the narrative of conquest in which the project was framed to the signing of an agreement with native people, James Bay showed - and continues to show - that policies aimed at economic expansion cannot be separated from the cultural becoming of a community; indeed, it is also these economic policies that shape and control the boundaries of the nation. Here the terms "community" and "nation" should not be understood unproblematically: while both imply the sharing of a common set of discourses and practices, it is important to remain attuned to the processes that create such a common basis. Culture is a powerful agent in fashioning not only the community, but also the scales at which a sense of community is shared. I suggest that it is precisely the production of various scales where meaning is shared that gives culture - understood as an active agent of the "taken-for-granted" within a particular group - an economic and political dimension. The case of James Bay is exemplary in this regard: what was portrayed on the one hand as a rationalised economic plan to exploit a territory's resources was also a platform for Québécois nation-building. This platform was built at the expanse of the local cultural ecology of the Cree, and the legitimate territorial rights that followed from it. In insisting uncritically that the project "belonged to all Québécois", the architects of James Bay avoided the more difficult question of who could share the accepted meanings of this community and accept the scale at which these meanings were - or aspired to be - circulated. An examination of the cultural and political geography of the first decade of the project can shed light on that question and show how intricately connected culture, politics

and economic development can become within the structure of the nation. Such an analysis is the main purpose of the present study.

That Bourassa never consulted with the native inhabitants of the James Bay region - the Cree, the Naskapi and the Inuit - before launching the project provoked them into mounting an organized opposition. The Cree heard about the hydroelectric project from a day-old Montréal newspaper picked up by Philip Awashish in Chibougamau. Shocked to read that the "project of the century" was to destroy vast amounts of native ancestral territories, Awashish organized a meeting at the end of June 1971 where elders and chiefs discussed a course of action: this led to a court battle and the signing of a territorial agreement with the Québec and Canadian government in November 1975.[16] Amounting to approximately eight thousand five hundred people in 1970, the indigenous population of Northern Québec has more than doubled since thanks to a recent native population boom that is widespread across Canada.[17] The main feature of the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA) was its division of the land into three categories with variable rights over each of them.[18] Its

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[16] B. Richardson, *Strangers Devour the Land* (Post Mills, VT: Chelsea Green, 1991), pp. 80-84.

[17] These numbers are derived from S. McCutcheon, *Electric Rivers: the story of the James Bay project* (Montréal and New York: Black Rose, 1991), p. 42; Hydro-Québec information brochure, *The Natural and Human Environment of the La Grande Complex* (1992), p. 55.

[18] Category 1 includes Cree and Inuit villages and lands reserved for exclusive native use (1.3% of the whole territory); category 2 encompasses public lands with exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights for natives (14.4%); category 3 corresponds to public lands where native retain their harvesting rights (84.3%). G. Beauchemin, "The Unknown James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement." *Forces* 97 (1992), p. 16. For a critical assessment of the agreement ten years after its signing, see S. Vincent et al., *Ten Years After. Proceedings of the Forum on the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* (Montréal: *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec*, 1988); R. Mainville, "Visions divergentes sur la compréhension de la Convention de la Baie James et du Nord Québécois." *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* Vol. 23.1 (1993), pp. 69-79.

implementation brought massive changes in the education, social services and economic infrastructure of the territory. The latter can be regarded in some measure as another Quiet Revolution in Québec, this time within some segments of native society. These transformations have brought Cree and Québécois people into a new relationship, where the complex and uneven colonial relations that have marked each group have been reconfigured into a different cultural and political geography.[19] Their relationship reached a point of crisis in the early 1990s, shortly after a newly re-elected Bourassa announced that the second phase of the project, Great Whale, would go ahead. In renewing their fight against the project, the Cree now bypassed the Québec government to go straight to the intended market for the surplus power of Great Whale. To do so, they forged alliances with major environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, Audubon Society and Greenpeace which helped them to raise international awareness. They were successful in their approach: in March 1992, the New York Power Authority, Hydro-Québec's biggest client, canceled a four billion dollar contract. Using the media in the 1990s as strategically as the proponents of development had done during the 1970s, the Cree were able to disseminate more broadly their own counter-narrative and thus to challenge the dominant narrative of Québécois nation-building in their territory. This shift in perspective was captured by Grand Chief Matthew

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[19] Because the Cree constitute the largest group and were more directly affected by the development than the Naskapi and Inuit, they have been at the forefront of the struggle over James Bay resources. The Inuit communities of Ivujivik and Povungnituk refused to sign the JBNQA and conflict necessarily arose between them and the Cree who accepted to negotiate. Because a full account of these complex relations is beyond the scope of this thesis, I focus on the interactions between Cree and Québécois. It must also be noted that while Cree communities are spead across the Northern part of Ontario and the Prairie provinces, this thesis refers specifically to the Eastern James Bay Cree.

Coon-Come's when he asserted that, for the Cree, "Bourassa's dream has become our nightmare."[20]

Viewing points

The view from the balcony

If the three decades that followed Bourassa's launching of the James Bay project were an important era for everyone in Québec, they also have a much more personal significance for me since they stretch almost exactly across the span of my own life. Growing up in a francophone suburb of Montréal during the 1970s and 80s, it often seemed that James Bay was the sole engine driving Québec's political and economic life; its effects were palpable in the working-class milieu that surrounded me since the project provided many of our family friends and neighbours with their regular source of income. From a child's - and at the time exclusively francophone - perspective, kitchen-table discussions yielded many intriguing details about the mammoth scale of the project, the struggle it shaped between the power of technology and the "forces of nature", the tensions it created between workers and their "bosses" or, even more intense, between whites and "Indians". Added to these oppositions, I now realize, was the question of gender. The majority of these discussions pictured James Bay as an overwhelmingly masculine work space where the presence of women seemed paradoxical and literally out of place: an imaginative geography that did not bode well for the role of women within the nation these

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[20] "Bourassa's dream has become our nightmare. It has contaminated our fish with mercury. It has destroyed the spawning grounds. It has destroyed the nesting grounds of the waterfowl. It has displaced and dislocated our people and broken the fabric of our society." Quoted in M.E. Turpel, "Does the Road to Québec Sovereignty Run Through Aboriginal Territory?" In D. Drache and R. Perin, *Negotiating with a Sovereign Québec* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1992), p. 104.

workers were supposed to be so actively building. In this casual, everyday exchange of anecdotes and popular information, James Bay emerged as a far-away and almost mythical location, richly defined through the language of those who had stories to tell.

The gradual construction of this imaginary territory, which took place during the first ten years of my life, was given an intensely physical form by the sight of a gigantic machine resting on the bed of a transportation trailer. The driver was a neighbour setting out to deliver his cargo to LG2. He had caused quite a stir by taking a detour through a succession of small suburban streets to give us all a sense of the scale of the James Bay construction site. Just as the size of a whale can suggest something of the ocean's expanse, so the magnitude of this vast block of metal summoned up an image of an almost infinite territory. For myself, and I imagine for many of the people gathered around this spectacle, the idea that such a remote destination, such a vast space, could belong to the territory of Québec required a great expansion of our imaginative geographies. The occasional *fleur de lys* that bloomed across the windows and balconies of our working-class lives were sure signs to us that a nation was in the making; the shape and contours of its space, however, were much harder to grasp. The journey of this iron limb made us acutely aware that its destination and all the resources that region contained were part of Québec's territory too since, as political discourses repeatedly assured us, "James Bay belonged to all the Québécois." And yet, as I now realize, whether the privilege of this citizenship, this sense of collective ownership, could be claimed by all the inhabitants of the geographical space known as Québec independently of language, class, race or gender was a pivot of the

national debate. For the indigenous population of the North, the politics of energy that was intended to make them proud Québécois spelled a policy of assimilation. Thanks to the economic boom that would be brought to the region, it was argued that the Cree should take the opportunity to move beyond their subsistence activities and become fully integrated into the market economy. If the Cree were now to be invited into the Québécois nation, it was under the assumption - indeed the condition - that they would adopt a "proper" framework of interaction with the land that would benefit the national economy. And so, of course, the question must still be asked with regard to James Bay and the national subjects, like myself, that it helped to produce: "Who *are* the Québécois people?"[21] Running through the present study is a critical anxiety concerning that question since the latter cannot simply be answered by saying that the Québécois are those who live in Québec. Rather, the term must be understood in the context of the cultural, political and linguistic history it bears, and of how this history produces and maintains difference within the national body.

Life experience, academic interests and cultural identity thus inform each other throughout this study. When I imagine myself back at the kitchen table or on the sidewalk where my sister and I contemplated that

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[21] The phrase is taken from an article by Sallie Marston, "Who are 'the people': gender, citizenship, and the making of the American nation." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 8 (1990), pp. 449-458. From its emergence, the term "Québécois" has generated conflict because it is seen to represent only the francophone population of Québec at the exclusion of racial and linguistic minorities, and of other French speakers who live outside the province. For those who do not speak French, "Québécois" is indeed a problematic designation because it is virtually untranslatable, thus making language the condition of entry into the national community. For a broad discussion of this question in the Québec context see, among others, M. Elbaz et al., eds., *Les Frontières de l'identité: modernité et postmodernisme au Québec* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996). For a Cree perspective on self-determination, see Grand Council of the Crees, *Sovereign Injustice: forcible inclusion of the James Bay Crees and Cree territory into a sovereign Québec* (Nemaska: Grand Council of the Crees, 1995), pp. 9-36.

giant machine, the extent to which the James Bay project inhabited our everyday life in the 1970s becomes vivid once again. Its constant presence on every media surface provided a framework for social interaction in my immediate community as well as a point of reference for other, external world events which it helped us to grasp and make sense of. Through the constant flow of text, images and everyday conversation about James Bay, I was able to envision what I would now describe as a social and geographical sphere extending far beyond my immediate surroundings. *For if James Bay was out of reach, it was never out of view.* From 1977 to 1983, the La Grande complex had a filmmaker/photographer in residence who produced more than thirty films which were shown across Québec in different venues, in addition to other video documents and slide shows. Simultaneously, an extensive campaign of public relations generated numerous brochures, pictures and company publications that were made available through traveling kiosks of information. Public relations also did much to socialize the workers themselves into a highly particular sense of their part in the project, in an effort to make them convinced ambassadors of the La Grande Complex. If these measures failed to reach all of the population, special radio and TV programs were guaranteed to extend the reach of this publicity still further. Each major stage of accomplishment was marked by an inauguration, the most important of which were shown on live television throughout the province.

This mediatizing of James Bay represented what could be understood as a form of travel writing "in reverse." Indeed, during the erection of the dams, it is not the people of Québec who traveled to the construction sites so much as the construction sites that traveled to them, thanks to the

broad diffusion of texts and images. In large measure, the media barrage of the late seventies and early eighties was a controlled response to the negative publicity the project had initially received. In addition to the injunction obtained by the Cree and Inuit in 1973, a labour conflict that escalated into a riot brought, once again, the closure of the construction site during March and April 1974. It was not until this labour dispute was resolved and a territorial agreement signed with native people that the project was somewhat rehabilitated and the development corporation free to mount an extensive public relations campaign to improve its image and regain some form of public approval.[22] Although my focus will be on this campaign and its dominant messages, it is important to remember the climate of resistance and confrontation in which they emerged, and to remember also that neither the Cree nor the Québécois constituted a passive audience. While this study analyses the dominant discourse adopted by the agents of development in James Bay, I wish to stress that the "effectiveness" of this discourse always remains in question. In fact, the excessive appeal to spectacle by Bourassa and his government is itself an indication that hegemonic control over the meaning and becoming of the project was impossible to achieve: the effort to "stage" James Bay like a theater production was meant to suggest that the project was already fully scripted and that its outcomes were known. In presenting it as such, the Liberals sought to introduce an element of control - a horizon of meaning in which the project would appear intrinsically logical, inevitable and teleological - to a series of events whose unprecedented social and

[22] For details on both set of events, see Hogue et al., *Québec*, pp. 363-370; McCutcheon, *Electric*, pp. 42-63; B. Richardson, *Strangers*, pp. 296-327.

environmental impacts would otherwise made them visible as contingent, unpredictable and hence subject to criticism.

The public relations campaign of the late seventies used various forms of outreach that were directed toward non-native people living in the South of Québec. Although organized trips did take some visitors to James Bay, their experience of that space was arguably as tightly controlled as that of others - the vast majority in Québec - who happened to visit one of the information kiosks in their schools, places of work or various public spaces. Indeed, both groups got their first impression of the mammoth scheme through the mediation of text and images, and the narrative the development corporation wished to impart to the project. Hydro-Québec's archives reveal a detailed procedure that anticipated every aspect of a visitor's stay at LG2 from the moment of their arrival. They were to be met at the local airport, taken through an identification check, then conducted on schedule from site to site until they were delivered back to the airport, usually at the end of a full day or overnight stay. Buses would ensure transportation of these groups to different viewing platforms, where the various spaces and structures on display would be interpreted for them by tour guides hired and trained by the development corporation. For the most part, these presentations consisted of facts and statistis that stressed both the unique nature of the complex and the engineering magic that made it possible, all the while reasserting the necessity of the project for the economic future of Québec. Moments in a strict itinerary that regulated what was and was not to be seen, these viewing platforms and their stock interpretations provided an experience of James Bay where the reality of "being there" could in no way ensure a

broader understanding of it. Framed in this way, James Bay was a virtual site whose visual surface alone was offered for spectacular enjoyment, while its content was withheld as much as possible from critical scrutiny. Because it was geographically remote yet politically so central, the discursive production of James Bay was a strategic affair that required careful handling by the governments and institutions involved. Indeed, I think that these representations of Québec's North for a Southern spectatorship provided me - along with other influences - with an early sense of a Québécois "people", as well as with an intimation that these people formed something like a nation through the act of collectively viewing or working for what became known as "the project of the century." In this way, the textual and visual narrative of James Bay was the binding element of my own - it has to be said, very homogenous - "imagined community" in the sense that Benedict Anderson gave to that term.[23] Without a doubt this narrative was territorial; I now understand that it was partly through this focus on a spectacular *land* and *nature* - conjoined as "territory" - that the nation's racial contours were drawn in James Bay.

Viewing the land / viewing "the people"

Notions of "land" have always supported a sense of national identity in Québec, and yet the meaning of the term has been highly unstable and subject to change. Nations and nationalisms are contextual entities;

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[23] Anderson sees the emergence of the nation as co-extensive with that of print-capitalism which reshaped European conceptions of time. The imagined world called up by the novel and the newspaper is one in which a variety of actions are performed at the same time by individuals who are not necessarily aware of one another, but can conceive that they exist simultaneously across time and space. See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), p. 26.

although they strategically represent themselves in abstract time and space, the sense of place which they articulate cannot be detached from the concrete economic and political context in which it emerges.[24] Place-based nationalisms then, and the constructions of nature they entail, can be seen as something that emerges out of these material factors. In Québec, the transition from the "traditional nationalism" crystallized in the Duplessis era toward the "new nationalism" of the Quiet Revolution offers a rich framework for tracing changes in notions of land, nature and territory as they relate to cultural identity. Each of these concepts, I argue, was reformulated in response to the societal changes brought about by a movement away from rurality toward modernity, development and state-expansion. This movement, however, is neither linear nor uniform in time and space. In large measure, the *rattrapage* (catching up) so characteristic of the Quiet Revolution became a priority because what were seen as traditional anchors of work and life for Francophones - the farm, the Church, the rural sphere - had undergone major transformations well before the twentieth century.[25] In this thesis, James Bay is a key site for analyzing how traditional French-Canadian concepts of land and nature, chiefly based in the experience of farming, rurality and an agrarian economy were resignified to support the project of a state-sponsored northern expansion. The building of an extensive energy network in and

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[24] Homi Bhabha argues that the nation constantly substitutes a heterogeneous present for a homogenous past which is also, I believe, reflected in the subsumption of a diverse territory into an abstract space: "For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of the anxiety of its irredeemably plural modern space - representing the nation's modern territoriality is turned into the archaic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism. The difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One." H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 149.

[25] For a discussion, see F. Dumont, "Quelle révolution tranquille?" In F. Dumont, ed., *La Société québécoise après 30 ans de changements* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1990), pp. 13-23.

beyond James Bay was meant to provide low-cost energy for an industrial boom that would principally benefit the southern population of the province. This expansion could not take place without the elaboration of a discourse capable of legitimizing the appropriation of resources from native people in the North, for whom the cost was disproportionately larger than the benefit. The nation, with its broad repertoire of geographical concepts and homogenizing view of the people, provides the symbolic apparatus for constructing such a discourse.

As it pertains to the Québécois, my understanding of *land* ("*la terre*") refers to the ecological base that has provided a matrix of cultural identity and economic subsistence. Numerous practices have shaped this relationship, each one altering the scale at which the land is perceived, from the field to the national territory and beyond. My initial analysis focuses on farming, more particularly its symbolic rendering within a popular form of rural literature known as the *roman de la terre.* Literally "the novel of the land", this set of works produced chiefly during the nineteenth century was a powerful vehicle for articulating the cult of tradition and the dominant idea of the time that the survival of French-Canadians in North America depended on their ability to establish and maintain a strong land base.[26] In these works, "nature" is understood as a

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[26] C. Pont-Humbert, *Littérature du Québec* (Paris: Nathan, 1998), pp. 36-37. The *roman de la terre* begins with the publication of Patrice Lacombe's *La Terre paternelle* in 1846 and is seen to end with Ringuet's *Trente arpents* in 1938. This last work effects a strong symbolic closure with the main character failing to hold on to his ancestral land, which is spelled by his exile, in his old age, to an American industrial center. The whole production includes few novels - with no more than ten major works - which makes its popularity and social impact seem disproportionate in relation to the number of books published. One way of explaining this unevenness is the fact that it became a useful ideological vehicle about the importance of keeping religion, language and land together in order to preserve a French cultural heritage in North America. The central message of the *roman de la terre* served the interests of

foundational category for the nation as the essence of Francophone identity is largely seen to reside in the rural landscape. By grounding cultural identity in nature, the *roman de la terre* presents various characters who seek to protect their heritage from change via foreign elements, since the latter posed the threat not only of encroachment but ultimately of assimilation. Nature is seen as an essential realm providing a secure anchor to language and religion. By reading James Bay in the light of the discursive categories created through the rural novel, my analysis seeks to demonstrate how traditional constructions of nature continue to function as constructions of national identity in contemporary Québec. They do so through the reiteration of a Québécois "poetics" about the land - what I also call a "mythico-poetic" framework - that has to a large extent given rise to the "politics" of energy in James Bay: that is, to the struggles fought over meaning, particularly the meaning of water, land, identity or the environment. What I wish to argue in juxtaposing the poetics of land to the politics of James Bay is that the narrative structure adopted by the dominant discourse of the nation also contributes to *determine its spatial form.* Indeed the images and texts surrounding James Bay articulated a struggle over land between Québécois and Cree in such a way that cultural geography and the production of space were placed squarely at the center of the imagined community.

While Benedict Anderson has provided considerable insight into the construct of the nation, his concept of an imagined community needs a critical reading capable of questioning how communities imagine not only themselves but also their *territory* and everything it contains through

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Québec's religious elite at a time when this elite exercised a very strong influence on the population. These points will be further discussed in Act 1.

dominant discourses. I believe Anderson's concept stops short of its goals of de-essentializing the nation without sufficient analysis of the spaces national imaginings are set against, and the mechanisms through which the imagined community territorializes itself to assure its own cultural and political survival. In the second edition of his *Imagined Communities*, Anderson revisited his concept to address more directly how the "colonial" state imagines the space of its power.[27] He did so by examining three important institutions: the census, the map and the museum. Through these institutions, Anderson argues, the colonial state was able to examine "the geography of its domain." Despite these important revisions, the role of "nature" in the imagining of communities remains, I suggest, understated, and more specifically the ways in which nature is "spatialized" in the creation of a national territory. By emphasizing the dynamic relation between nature and national imaginings, this study explores how, in a nationalist context, the social relation to the land is also connected to the production of nature.

In James Bay, the process of state-formation through economic development is one where the product of natural resources comes to the forefront as a key elements of nation-building. I argue that although the nature of "natural" resources produced through the discourse of industry is qualitatively different from the nature imagined through rurality and an agrarian economy, it retains some of its important elements: notably those that ground notions of cultural identity. In short, resources become *naturalized* in much the same way that the nation is homogenized in its recourse to nature as a foundational category. Québec's claim to the North

[27] Anderson, *Imagined*, pp. 163-164.

was established by placing resources *in nature*, which involved a process of separating them from the human sphere - that of the Cree - in which they were already embedded. In short, produced as "natural" resources thus became "national." This strategy relied on the affirmation of a dualism between nature and culture, with the Cree of course firmly locked into the first category. Representing a central feature of the *roman de la terre*, this dualism travels into James Bay although it does not necessarily do so intact. Much of this thesis endeavours to trace that movement, and also to account for what happens to Québécois concepts of land and nature once they encounter Cree understandings of these same categories. It is in that encounter that a third element comes into sharper focus - that of *territory* - which is produced simultaneously as a political and cultural entity in and through the national imagination.

Locating theories

In examining the formation of this national territory and its links to the cultural politics of James Bay energy, the *roman de la terre* provides an important indication of how culture produces meanings that become taken for granted as they are activated and actualized in social and economic policy. Postcolonial theory has examined how culture actively constitutes what we take to be material reality:

> A central concern of postcolonialism is to elucidate - to disclose, to make visible - the relations between culture and power. It aims to do so in such a way that culture is seen not as superficial, not as a screen or a cover for supposedly more fundamental (which for its critics typically means politico-

> economic) relations, and above all not as a "reflection" of the world. Culture is seen instead as a series of representations, practices and performances that enter fully into the constitution of the world.[28]

Along these lines, representations of Québec's North during the 1970s can be said to have renewed the region's importance by placing it at the center of the province's economic development at a moment when Québécois people were actively redefining their national identity. The North that was reasserted for the Québécois during this period was simultaneously a place *and* a discourse. Both were equally material and discursive, both actively created the space of the "other" and the space of the "Québécois." These categories acquire an additional layer of complexity because Francophones in Québec often refer to themselves as "Nous *autres* Québécois", thus signaling their own history of marginalization as the defeated people of the British Conquest. Through his study of Orientalism, Edward Said has called attention to the intricate ways in which discourse is constitutive of material reality as categories of meaning created in language become spatialized. Using Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, Said asserts that:

> [W]ithout examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage - and even produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.[29]

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[28] D. Gregory, "(Post)colonialism and the Production of Nature" (unpublished manuscript, 2001), p. 6.

[29] E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 3.

Similar processes can be identified in the relationship between North and South in Québec, yet it is important to remember that Said's critique of Orientalism is specifically about the construct of the Orient and should not be extended uncritically - nor be given *carte blanche* - to explain other colonial geographies. While staying attuned to its context as well as to the fact that theory often breaks down when it travels, I invoke Said's work specifically as a set of tools for understanding how colonialism constructs its objects. This process is neither smooth nor uncontested but rather characterized by ruptures, inconsistencies and oppositions, as is the passage of colonialism from past to present. The projected "decolonizing" of Québécois people through the Quiet Revolution and beyond has been marked, I argue, by a simultaneous "recolonizing" - uneven as it is - in a different language (French) and in a different space (in this study, James Bay). Relevant to this process is a simple but telling distinction: capitalism, such as it fueled the drive toward the "development" of a new region, is inherently expansionist. Its production of space and nature could admit no barrier to its advance in James Bay, as Bourassa indicated when he launched the project without consultation with the Cree. On the other hand, colonialism, even as it was intimately implicated in the Northern advance of this capitalism, was predicated on the production of barriers, of a series of constitutive differences between "us" and "them", Québécois and Cree, the colonizer and the colonized. In this imbrication of capitalism and colonialism, race and class were further intertwined while the gap between whites and natives was, conversely, further widened. The phrase I have already alluded to, which was repeated like a mantra since the beginning of the project - "James Bay belongs to all the Québécois" - was an attempt to cover over these differentiations, instabilities and gaps. Although there

has been some effort in Québec to identify this process with more precision and contest the essentialist terms of belonging in which it was conducted, much work remains to be done: I envision the present thesis as a step in that direction.

Development: ordering North and South

The spatial and discursive orderings the above expression suggests - "James Bay belongs to all the Québécois" - are determined by the colonial past of Canada and Québec; their productions of nature and space continue to entrench what is in effect a colonial present. The James Bay story is a narrative of conquest: that of nature as well as that of space, together as a new national territory. After all, other large-scale works of engineering had taken place in Québec before LG2 and would continue to do so even as it was being built. Yet, I would argue that none of these realizations was given comparable importance in the national imagination simply because they took place in areas that had long been settled and integrated into Québec's sense of its history and geography.[30] When it came to James Bay, the geographical distance between North and South was translated as a *temporal* distance;[31] seen as underpopulated - in large part even "empty" - and therefore free for the taking, the conquering and exploitation of this

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[30] Although they were also momentous events, the building of the Place Ville Marie high rise, the Québec City bridge, the Montréal metro or the Olympic stadium did not embody the same territorial element as James Bay. Only the construction of the Daniel Johnson dam on the Manicouagan river during the nineteen-sixties called forth similar epic tones and was in many ways a rehearsal for James Bay. See Hogue et al., *Québec*, pp. 299-331.

[31] For a discussion of this concept, see J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: how anthropology makes its object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); A. McClintock, *Imperial Leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995).

remote region offered a chance to write another chapter of Québec's history by inscribing new - and clearly very "modern" - markers of presence over its physical territory.

In Québec, as elsewhere in Canada, the "North" was produced and performed as a frontier of collective realization.[32] There the retreat of a raw, "wild" nature was simultaneous with the advance of culture, broadly signified through science and technology. Framing the North as virgin territory - a solely physical mass devoid of any human geography - the James Bay development scheme provided the means, at once material and discursive, to access, transform and link this "wilderness" to Québec's South, while also keeping the two distinct. The lived and imagined relations signified by these geographical markers of "North" and "South" are reminiscent of those commonly invoked at the international scale, but here the polarities are reversed. In Québec, the South is characterized by a population belt in the St.-Lawrence valley which is disproportionately dense in comparison to what lies North of the fourty-ninth parallel. Patterns of resource extraction, industrial development and standard of living reflect those that commonly determine, although simplistically, global North and South relations, with Southern Québec being significantly

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[32] The North has been broadly envisioned as a frontier of colonization in Canada in ways that are reminiscent of Turner's concept of the Western frontier in the American context. This view, however, does not account for a critical reading of Turner's "frontier thesis" which regards it as the glorification of a long-drawn process of colonial conquest and territorial dispossession for native Americans. If the frontier thesis can at all be applied to Canadian history, its critique is of course also relevant in the Canadian context. For further discussion see F. J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920); J. M. S. Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History." In C. Berger, ed., *Approaches to Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1979), pp. 63-83; W. Cronon, G. Miles and J. Gitlin, "Becoming West: toward a new meaning for Western history." In W. Cronon, G. Miles and J. Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: rethinking America's western past* (New York: Norton, 1992).

more prosperous.[33] The force of these evocations and the spaces they materialize should be enough to persuade us that they are more than discursive categories. In James Bay, the North became the pervasive icon of an imaginative geography with extraordinary performative and practical force which gave the "new nationalism" of the 1970s some of its hopeful appeal. The images it called forth - its frontiers and landscapes but also its resources, regions and the technicalities of access to them - helped to delineate the nation's inside and outside by assigning each cultural group to its "proper" place. The latter categories were also constituted by a Western understanding of development.

Building on some of Edward Said's ideas, recent theorists have examined the imaginative geographies of development and the material sites constituted through the practices these social imaginaries legitimate.[34] To see development as a discourse, these theorists argue, enables us to trace its historical and geographical specificity and to problematize why so many societies endeavoured to "develop" themselves, especially in the post-World War II period.[35] In the context of this study, a focus on the discourse of Northern development, such as it became dominant through the James Bay project, allows me to show how the Cree

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[33] Barri Cohen remarks that: "The very word 'North' (which demands its own critical commentary) is capitalized as a proper name in most native, Canadian government, land-claim, public policy, scientific and geographical texts, signifying it as an object of knowledge and surveillance in the spatio-political consciousness of Canada if not North America. The south, on the other hand, bears a lower-case, connoting that its power is dispersed across the nation, and hence dominant." In this thesis, I have chosen to capitalize both in order to indicate their mutual constitution both as concept and as place. B. Cohen, "Technological Colonialism and the Politics of Water." *Cultural Studies* 8.1 (1994), pp. 35-36.

[34] See J. Crush, ed., *Power of Development* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). The book acknowledges those who critique Said for what they see as an over-reliance on discourse at the expense of a political and economic analysis (p. 8).

[35] A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: the making and unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 6.

encounter with development also meant an encounter with a new cultural production of their environment: one which was left unmarked and thus taken for granted by a good proportion of non-natives. From a Cree perspective, however, Western development meant that "proper" river management would be determined not in relation to the day-to-day practicalities of fish population, water quality or seasonal freeze-up and thaw but in terms of water reserves, megawatts and potential surpluses. Hydro developers became the new land managers through the building of an energy network, and in that process the land itself was made new. In the Québécois nationalist framework within which James Bay was repositioned, development began to resemble a liberation discourse whereby control over land and use of natural resources were seen as legitimate means to guarantee the survival of a language and culture under threat. Here my use of the term "liberation" outside of its usual reference to the poorest of the poor is shocking but deliberate as it is meant to disclose the complex power relations that determined the way in which Québécois identity was mobilized by the project. Members of a society of European origin whose past was marked by colonial relations with the British, the Québécois were able to effectively claim and articulate a status that was at once subaltern and dominant in order to legitimate their advance into native territories. I suggest that "development", like the "nation", also provided the conceptual and geographical tool-box that supported this endeavour.

Geography of the field

City and wilderness

That the discourse of development shapes material geographies became abundantly clear to me in the process of locating "the field" and defining "fieldwork".[36] With an academic background in semiotics and comparative literature, I had come to rely on the assumption that most of what I needed to know, analyze or discuss could be found in a text. As a result, the field was a new and unfamiliar concept when I set out to do research for this project: I was unsure where to find it and, if by chance I did, what to do in such a place. I had lived away from Montréal for nearly seven years and my initial impulse once I had a proposal in hand was to go back to the city where I was born. After two fieldtrips during which the project unfolded between Vancouver, Saint-Eustache, Val d'Or, Montréal, Radisson and Fort George, with occasional glimpses of Chisasibi and a few interstitial touch-downs in native villages on the way, I realized how strongly Montréal - and eventually other urban centers located in Québec and in the United States - gathers these places to itself, and does so according to the imaginative geographies of North and South that had been produced by the James Bay project. Not surprisingly, this returned me to the text for it was only through the process of writing, and from the distance afforded by Vancouver, that I could begin the work of "ungathering", of inserting Québec's largest metropolis back into those other locations. There are many reasons for the prominence of a city in a study that explores development in a region that is commonly perceived as remote, isolated and untouched. Some of these reasons will unfold as the

[36] For a discussion of key issues related to the experience of field and fieldwork from a feminist perspective, see "Women in the Field: critical feminist methodologies and theoretical perspectives" with contributions by H. Nast, C. Katz, A. Kobayashi, K. England, M. Gilbert, L. Staeheli, and V. Lawson. *Professional Geographer* 46.1 (1994), pp. 54-102.

writing proceeds, others are more immediately linked to the fieldwork experience in itself and I need to explain these here.

From an urban perspective, the first building phase in James Bay was a media spectacle projected on a screen whose bright source of light was qualitatively different from the material spaces in which Cree people lived their lives, and where they saw their landscapes irrevocably modified by hydroelectric development. This "nature" of James Bay was produced for consumption in the South and it was the details of that production I sought to piece together during my first fieldtrip to Montréal, where I conducted archival research for a period of nine months. During that period, and in an additional two months the following year, my discomfort with the process of fieldwork never relented. As with any research project, questions of methodology arose at every turn: What angle would allow me to get to the most important questions? What was the "right" method to gather the materials that would best inform the thesis? How would I effectively tackle endless boxes of dusty paperwork without losing focus, or my mind? I wanted to trace the James Bay story, understand how the discursive building blocks came together to form the imagined geography I had known as a Francophone growing up during what was arguably Québec's most nationalist decade. My chief task was to scan newspapers and magazines on dizzying microfiches, don white gloves to dig into pile after pile of archival material, unearth pieces of paper that could come alive with meaning but more often regained the musty dark from which they had so briefly emerged. Wading through the flotsam of bureaucratic everyday, I got a very real sense of how the past is at times collected - accepted even - with little coherence or organization. Through this process,

the archivists at Hydro-Québec, the Québec National Library and the Fondation Lionel Groulx where I conducted the research were invaluable for their help but also for their optimism.

Conducting/enacting research

While it is not usual to refer to the archives as "the field", the extent to which access to documents depended on material circumstances and physical ability surprised me. Going into the archives seemed to me an embodied practice requiring not just mental but physical effort. I spent long hours in badly ventilated places, moving boxes, breathing dust, getting hungry or frustrated, needing help. I woke up early, got home late, traveled through the city to libraries, universities and research centers to find a book, talk to someone, view a documentary. I wondered about physical disability and the logistics of covering so much distance in such a small time had I not the freedom of a healthy body and the luxury of feeling safe in the public space of the city.[37] In the process, I came to realize how archives can behave very much like interviewees. While they tell some stories, they withhold others thus making our findings always partial and context-specific. In this sense, archival research *is* fieldwork. Archived texts are active agents of our research, framing and directing our encounters with useful information in the same way that speaking subjects do. Tables of contents are the small talk that signals what may be there. An unopened file forgotten when everything else has been put away redirects the inquiry, the same way a recording machine so often does

[37] Vera Chouinard and Ali Grant have discussed the issues associated with conducting academic research in a heterosexist and ableist society. See V. Chouinard and A. Grant, "On not Being Anywhere Near the 'Project': revolutionary ways of putting ourselves in the picture." *Antipode* 27.2 (1995), pp. 137-166.

once turned off. There is a privacy to boxes of documents laid to rest in unlit rooms; if the researcher is to entice them to come alive, to open themselves to a public gaze, this requires the greatest of care. The archival clerks behind the desks sometimes seemed to be the discrete guardians of memories and institutions under too much scrutiny. As I requested a picture, photocopy or box of material, I feared that I was divulging to these custodians some of my own predispositions and biases in indicating the direction of my research. This was, after all, Québec where nationalist sensibilities are ever-present and near the surface but seldom dangerously explosive. Combined with the fact that archives are not always adequately organized, that the filing process can be sketchy and uneven, I came to recognize that doing research is an experimental process, like throwing a net which may catch a few interesting objects. Yet we so often set out to capture the ocean.

These practical challenges were the easy part. Much more paralyzing was the uncanny sense that my quest was somehow prurient and that I needed to apologize for it. Through nine months of research, I created my own James Bay archive which I took with me to Vancouver and revisited for several months. During these months, I put together the skeleton of a thesis which followed me back East, this time for a much more condensed research trip. Over this shorter period, I conducted interviews with various academics who had worked with the Cree, as well as with policy advisors and environmentalists at Hydro-Québec and the Grand Council of the Cree. In addition, I conducted a focus group with eight individuals (two men and six women) who had worked in James Bay. These meetings were meant as a way to share and situate my research and find points of connection with

on-going issues concerning hydroelectric development in James Bay. Since it was not my intention to write a thesis that would be based on interviews, I did not use a tape recorder but took notes which I would transcribe and comment on after each meeting, and use as a guide for my writing. Interestingly, the absence of a tape recorder seemed to allow for freer interaction during these discussions; yet the latter also generated some surprises when people expressed their biases, even their prejudices, with disarming frankness. Though they are not analyzed at length in the thesis, these encounters provided an important layer of understanding of the James Bay project that I could not have grasped by focusing solely on the archives.

In addition to these meetings conducted in Montréal, I flew up North to visit Hydro-Québec's installations on the La Grande river, and meet with some people in Radisson and see Chisasibi - old and new since I was lucky enough to make it to the island of Fort George.[38] Throughout these travels and various encounters - *real* fieldwork as this second research trip was meant to be - I tried diligently to speak of and about my own people, the "Québécois people", even as I realized that the term Québécois had no fixed meaning which I could readily enlist for the purposes of my project. I felt at times like an "imperial traveler" meant to view the field from the

[38] Now that construction has been completed on the La Grande river, the village of Radisson continues to house mostly Hydro-Québec employees who run the installations and is the only permanent white settlement in the territory. Approximately one hundred kilometers West is the native village of Chisasibi which stands where the La Grande meets the bay; it was relocated to the mainland from Fort George island in 1987. The increase in water debit caused by the damming of the La Grande had rendered movement to and from the island difficult by keeping the river from freezing in the winter and accelerating the rate of erosion of its banks. A traditional summer gathering place for the nomadic Cree people, Fort George had become a fur trading post in the 17th century. It is now a depopulated yet intensely lived place as Chisasibi people return to their houses on the island for vacations, reunions or to celebrate various holidays.

detached perspective supposedly afforded by my grasp of Western knowledge.[39] At other times, I was right back into my *Québécitude* ("Québécois-ness"), a *pure laine* with all the labels, legacies and emotions such a designation entails.[40] This made the field of vision significantly more manageable, but it also brought about a somewhat uncomfortable sense that my research was getting too personal.[41] To complicate matters, as someone who had been studying and living comfortably in English for several years, I was also genuinely "Anglo" when interacting with that other segment of Québécois society for whom daily life is mostly conducted in English. I came to realize that - contrary to the *pure laine* - I was much more detached from my Anglo identity and thus more at ease to conduct research as a hybrid, and therefore harder to pinpoint, bilingual subject. This was ironic since in fact, territorially speaking, all of us were Québécois, whether Anglophone, Francophone or Cree. Yet, the nationalist politics surrounding James Bay are proof that this territorial basis of identification - "We are all Québécois because we live in a place called Québec" - is still on shaky ground. What I learned from all this, in a decisively applied way, is that research is performative; by this I mean that it calls on various aspects of a researcher's identities and that it is through the process of deploying these identities that research takes place.[42] In my experience then, research was not conducted so much as

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[39] M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). See also E. Said, "Representing the Colonized: anthropology's interlocutors." *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1989), pp. 205-225.

[40] The expression *pure laine* (pure wool) is often used in Québec to designate Francophones whose ancestry is thought to be directly linked to the original French settlers. It can be used in a pejorative sense to signify a lack of openness to diversity.

[41] K. England, "Getting Personal: reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research." *The Professional Geographer* 46 (1994), pp. 80-89.

[42] For a discussion of performativity in relation to gender, see chapter three in J. Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 79-141. See also

enacted as I constantly repositioned myself to hear different stories. If James Bay had been a spectacle during my childhood, research accomplished several years later allowed me to rethink, act upon and open up the very spectatorship that had partly created my own subject position as a Québécoise.

Redirecting the gaze / relocating the field

For these reasons, my approach was informed by Donna Haraway's influential concept of "situated knowledges" where she proposes that all knowledge is acquired from somewhere, thus always articulating a particular - or rather "many" particular - subject position(s). Haraway's argument was developed in dialogue with what she saw as a need to develop a feminist version of objectivity that would escape totalization and relativism, which are both ways of "being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally", a process she identifies as the *god-trick.*[43] Haraway's call to counter Western science's view from nowhere with *views from somewhere* problematizes vision and the binary oppositions it reproduces: "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn to see."[44] Given the initial

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A. Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: fieldwork and the representation of identity* (London: Sage, 1999).

[43] D. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective." In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the reinvention of nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 191. For a more geographical approach to Haraway's concept, see also G. Rose, "Situating Knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics." *Progress in Human Geography* 21 (1997), pp. 305-320.

[44] Haraway, *Situated*, pp. 190. For an elaboration of this concept and of the politics of vision, see G. Rose, "Looking at Landscape: the uneasy pleasures of power." In *Feminism and Geography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 86-112; C. Katz, "All the World is Staged: intellectuals and the projects of ethnography." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (1992), pp. 495-510.

context in which I had learned to see James Bay (what I have called "the view from the balcony"), Haraway's work and that of her critics offered some invaluable tools as I undertook this project. It encouraged me to keep drawing links between biography and research rather than to split them apart. In turning the gaze onto my own ways of seeing - what Haraway called adopting *partial perspective* - I found a site from which my research could open up and enable me to build connections. While I sympathize with the criticism positionality has given rise to - chiefly, that it can distract from the goals of research by focusing too much attention on the researcher - I strongly believe that this process did not limit but enlarge my perspective. The images of my childhood and how they molded my subjectivity as a Francophone were my first exploration into the role James Bay played in shaping the term "Québécois" as a reference of identity. I am only one subject of that era, but I was also constituted as a Québécoise through it, which connects my viewing place in a suburban neighbourhood to a larger social and political sphere. In this sphere, the Cree, the Québécois, the dams, the rivers, Bourassa, the aborted Great Whale project, the workers, the planners or myself are all important and interrelated actors.

If ethnography was involved in this research project then, it was an ethnography of myself and of the Québécois, exploring the cultural relationship to space and place that was reiterated through James Bay. My discomfort about asking the Cree to become, yet again, the providers of cultural information about land and nature was eased by making myself and my own culture's relationship to these things the engine of this inquiry. To some extent, this explains why the Cree are not as present as

they should be in this thesis. Throughout the research, I struggled with the issue of how to develop a relationship with some Cree people in which they would be more like partners in the inquiry than "informants." The elaboration of such a relationship takes time and will no doubt unfold over the course of many upcoming years of research. For me the attempt to build such a relationship was complicated by issues of academic "discipline": indeed, my interest in questions of culture did not make me an anthropologist no more than my interest in questions of space limited my role to that of a geographer. Many anthropologists have studied the Crees and worked with them, becoming some of their strongest advocates through their battle for territorial rights.[45] Although their work was an invaluable stepping stone for my research, I felt strongly that my academic background and the underlying goal of the thesis - to question the cultural politics that sought to appropriate James Bay resources "for all the Québécois" - called for a different kind of interaction with native people in James Bay: one which would be based on their agency as political subjects interacting with Québec's attempts at nation-building. But for such a relationship to evolve, the process of that nation-building in Cree land had to become clearer to me. And it was this that finally - and I think necessarily - redirected where I had imagined "the field" to be and what I should do in such a place. The agency of the Cree in giving representation to their territorial practices and defending their land was what had initially drawn me to this research. The clashing between them and other Québécois over resources in James Bay has produced new structures of government for each group as well as redefined their concepts of

[45] Among others, see in bibliography the work of H. Feit; T. Morantz; T. Morantz and D. Francis; R. Preston; R. Salisbury; C. Scott; A. Tanner.

nationality, both shared and separate. It is that interface making its way through text, people, archives and dams that constitutes "the field", and must be further understood if conflicts over land in Northern Québec are to be resolved more equitably. This thesis represents a first and partial step in negotiating this complex terrain.

See what you will see: Power from the North

> "But Lévesque," [the executive] kept on repeating in a voice colored by several whiskeys, "how can people like you imagine you can run Shawinigan Water and Power?"
>
> "People like you." Or better still, people like you Québécois. This was exactly the way the British and French had treated the Egyptians a few years before: how the devil did people like that think they could run the Suez Canal?
>
> "My friend," I replied, "just wait a little and *you will see what you will see.*"[46]

These are the words in which René Lévesque recounted a meeting with an anglophone energy executive shortly before Hydro-Québec took over the last privately owned utilities of the province in 1962. Lévesque's response - "you will see what you will see" - to the executive's arrogant remark anticipated what James Bay was to become: the project was literally a show. Its many installments were watched on TV and followed in the daily papers. It had heroes and villains, moments of victory as well as defeat, and brought on stage some of the most well-rehearsed themes of Western civilization; including the encounter with the rebellious other or

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[46] R. Lévesque, *Memoirs*, pp. 181-182, my emphasis.

the inevitable triumph of progress and modernization. On the day that our neighbour exhibited a mammoth machine to his neighbourhood audience, the effort of imagination that was required of us to envision this immense hydroelectric project required also a simultaneous imagining of the nation: one which rested primarily on the spectacular enframing of its territory. In that spectacle was the possibility of decolonization for the Québécois. With its state-of-the-art engineering structures that could divert and control the course of rivers, James Bay was truly a larger-than-life spectacle seemingly put on with the willful intent of showing what those who had been disparagingly known as "water carriers" were capable of doing.[47] Indeed Lévesque was right, we would see what we would see.

This dramatic unfolding was meant to reach some closure in October 1979 when the first completed powerhouse (LG2) brought together Robert Bourassa and René Lévesque, who by then had become Premier of Québec, with the latter officially setting into motion the turbines which would generate James Bay's first electricity. It seems fitting that the climax of this show never reached its TV audience: a mysterious sabotage operation broke off communication at the precise moment when Lévesque was to activate the mechanism that would symbolically turn on the giant machinery.[48] This, I believe, is significant because we cannot start to

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[47] Referring to a type of labour often performed by them in the past, the Québécois were designated as *porteurs d'eau* to indicate their low socio-economic status. The term is significant in the context of James Bay. The fact that poor, landless French-Canadians were often reduced to this kind of work frequently becomes a point of reference for showing the progress and development of the Québécois via Hydro-Québec. Channeling vast quantities of water through a state-of-the-art energy network across the province, they are still symbolically connected to their past as "water carriers" but have managed to evolve into a fully modern and prosperous society.

[48] There was an inquiry into this sabotage which was suspected of having been perpetrated by disgruntled union members. However, I have not been able to trace details concerning the result of this inquiry in the Hydro-Québec archives.

understand the spectacular politics of James Bay without staying attentive to what does *not* make it onto the screen or into the realm of public view. In the same way that fieldwork entailed creative and evolving strategies, so should the writing stay attuned to the blindfolds and biases of representations. I have tried to acknowledge these by constructing the thesis as a series of "Acts" rather than chapters. Each is devised as a window for looking at James Bay, each makes some things visible while leaving others backstage. This simple semantic shift is meant to remind the reader that even as distinct characters come to the foreground, others stand back but continue to inform how the events unfold. Geraldine Pratt has remarked that in addition to challenging ways of seeing, researchers must also look for other modes of representing their work since text tends to privilege the "indicative" mood, telling us "what is" when what motivates research is usually the attempt to push beyond the very limits of that question.[49] Thirty years of conflict over James Bay have seen a battle to produce the "truth" of that space: this also, I believe, is a limitation on what can be learned from James Bay. Although this thesis is overdetermined by text, my nod to the performative in structuring these words is meant to acknowledge their constituitive frame, their biases and their structuring absences, and thus hopefully push the debate beyond truth-making.

Much writing in recent British and North American human geography has sought to assert the role of representation in the politics of space as well as that of space in the politics of representation.[50] By framing

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[49] G. Pratt, "Research Performances." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18.5 (2000), p. 649.

[50] See H. Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974); D. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); D.

James Bay as a series of Acts where different actors, objects and events interact, my intent is also to explain how every representation of space also locates a subject position. When a Cree hunter is unable to convey, even through a translator, the size of his trapline in an exclusively white court of law, it becomes evident that the struggle over the space of James Bay was also fought on a discursive terrain; that is, over the categories that shape perception, guide spatial relations and lay the ground of subjectivity.[51] In discussing these categories, the thesis begins by retracing key moments in Québec's colonial past and then proceeds with three distinct Acts: *Act 1* discusses dominant themes of the *roman de la terre* and how they have articulated notions of land and nature for the Québécois; *Act 2* focuses on how James Bay was brought into view as a landscape of progress, prosperity and national realization under Robert Bourassa's leadership; *Act 3* examines the geography of the workcamp and the role played by representations of labour solidarity in anchoring a symbolic of "the people." Interspersed in-between these sections are portfolios that signal the importance images played in the "staging" of James Bay for a distant audience. I have gathered some key images into separate portfolios as a support for the text but also as a way to emphasize the visual intensity of the project during the initial building years. Like the Acts that compose this thesis, each portfolio identifies a dominant viewing point and suggests the role of the gaze in shaping this position. In each of

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Cosgrove and S. Daniels eds., *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); T. Barnes and J. Duncan, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992); J. Duncan and D. Ley eds., *Place/Culture/Representation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[51] Boyce Richardson describes this event and others like it in his book *Strangers Devour the Land*, op. cited.

these Acts and portfolios, I approach the cultural landscapes of James Bay not as a basis for, mirror of or commentary on the political economy of the province. For me these landscapes are closely connected to the political economy of Québec, and nationalism represents the glue, at once fluid and solid, between territory, resources and population.

When I visited the dams I was at first disconcerted by the difficulty of separating the imaginative geography that filled my head from the physical structures that I was contemplating. Although various platforms along the guided tour were meant to provide the distance of spectatorship, mental pictures merged with the actual engineering works I was seeing: there stood the *escalier de géant*, underground cathedral and modern pyramids that had so often beckoned me from my childhood TV screens. There stood the wide open spaces that disarmed me in the way they demanded to be viewed as the very wilderness I had gone there to take apart. Even more puzzling was the fact that my critical analysis of this concept could do little to shake the fear of becoming lost which I experienced when I first looked across the La Grande river to what seemed like a limitless expanse of land. I felt as though my body had turned inside out to become part of a mute landscape where everything rested, speechless. But that feeling was short-lived. Standing on the same spot a day later I realized that a constant buzzing sound pervaded the whole scene as electricity climbed the wires from the powerhouse. The only silence there had been in this landscape was in the mental picture I carried with me. My visit also encompassed the trace of familiar sites who, to my surprise, had now vanished from their initial place but were reemerging in different clothes, some of them meant for the tourist

industry. The spaces where labourers ate and slept, had a beer, thought of going South; a huge cafeteria where the rare female construction worker edged her way through a tangle of eyes; Fort George in the winter holding against a faster river now rushing away with its banks. Without a doubt these various sites born from the national imagination of Québec were now part of a new sense of place, along with its new physical geography. Consequently, this research shows that cultural geography is in some sense a physical geography, and that the academic division between them is a boundary which we must incessantly question, especially when dealing with environmental struggles.

As someone shaped for the first twenty years of my life by an almost exclusively white francophone milieu, James Bay throws my attachment to all these geographies into ambiguity. With my native language stretching thinner the further I get from home, I miss the neighbourhoods where French could be taken for granted and recognize why control over space is so often viewed as the safest means of cultural survival. These many shades of belonging are recalled in the image of the large piece of machinery that clogged up our street on a sunny Saturday afternoon. A few cars had to drive half-way onto the sidewalk and very slowly to detour around this gigantic mass out on a limb. Later, I went up to our balcony to see our neighbour turn his noisy engines on, blow his horn a few times, then move up the street while waving at us. Maneuvering with great caution, he managed to go around the block - no doubt shocking a few more residents with the size of his cargo - and reappeared facing the boulevard. Then he turned away from view to go rejoin the highway that would take him along an unfathomable distance up North, to James Bay

where - ironically enough - none of us lived. I remember being elated by the whole event and talking about it with my sister for many days to come. Yet, it left us with a curious feeling that perhaps we did not ponder long enough and which this thesis is an attempt to revive: What exactly had been the purpose of this exhibition and who precisely was it meant for?

PORTFOLIO 2

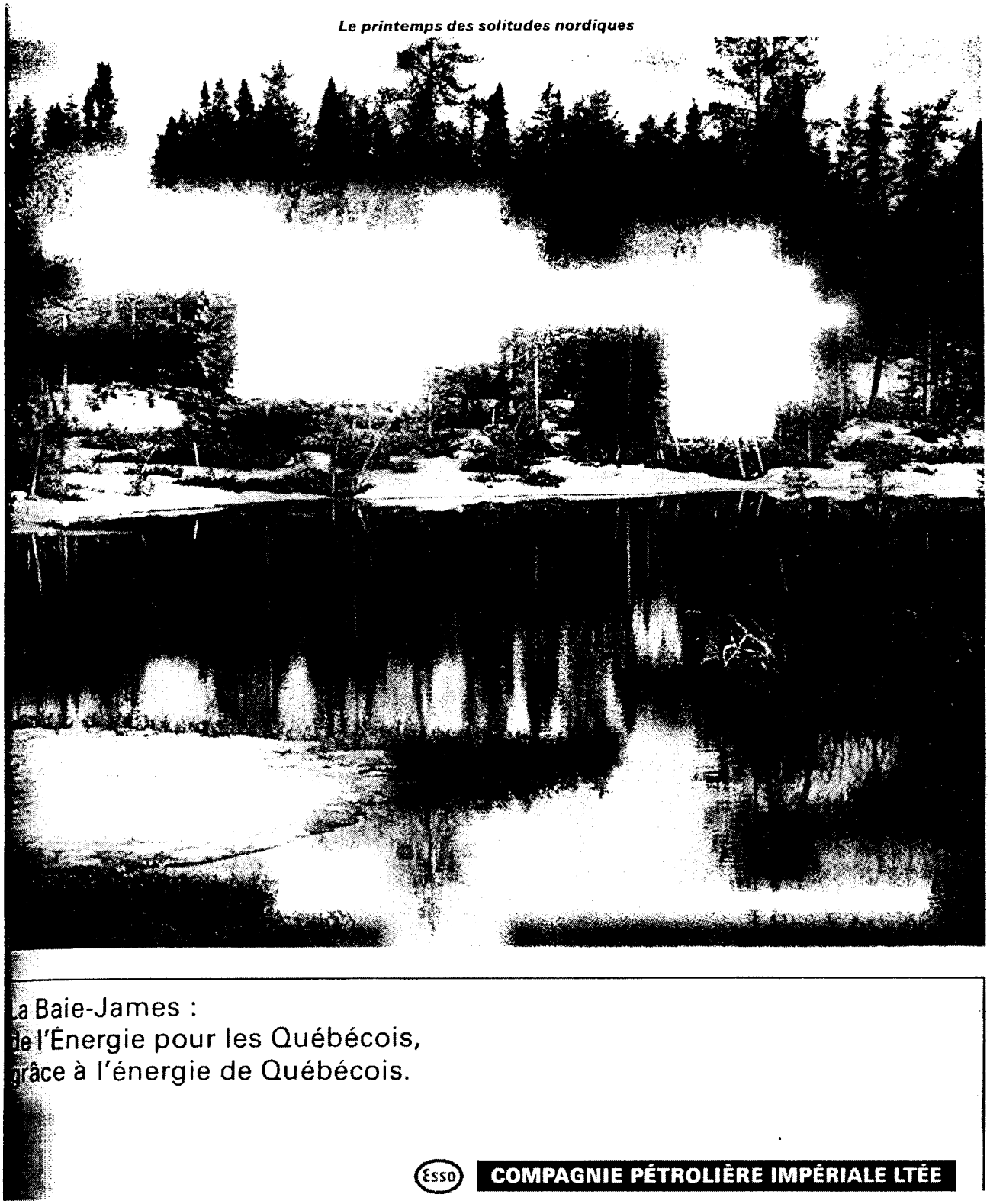

Figure 9: Power for the Québécois

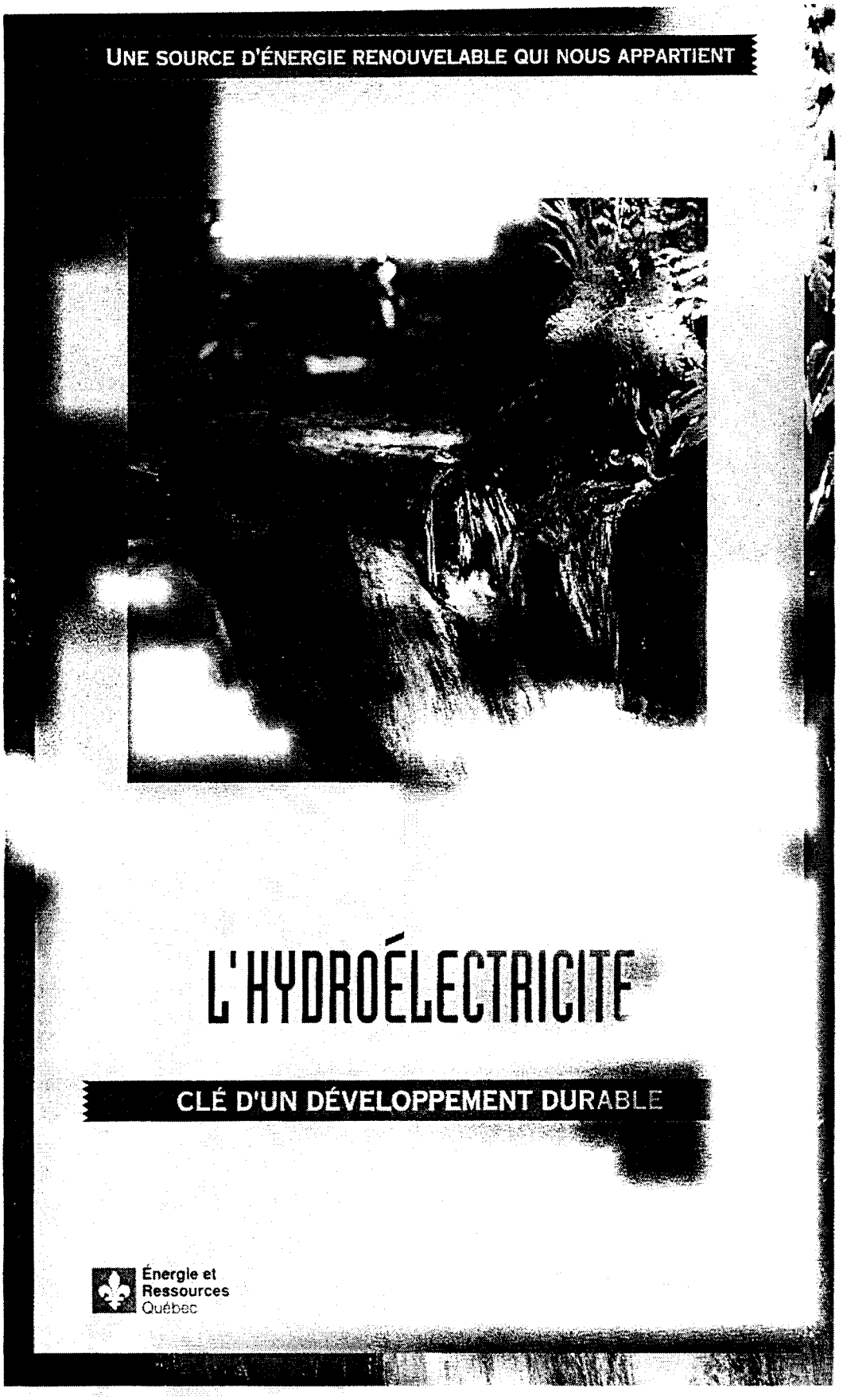

Figure 10: A source of energy that belongs to us

Laval, October 17, 1982 Vancouver, November 4, 2001

It is a cold Sunday night, I turn on the TV to see it filled with a bright landscape of rock and sky suddenly inundating the room beyond the screen. After moving over a large body of water, the camera comes to a full stop onto a grand piano which is resting, awkward, crooked and surprisingly miniature on one of the stairs of the *escalier de géant*. The familiar spillway towers above the piano, threatening to wash this pebble away by unleashing torrents of water in a second. French singer Gilbert Bécaud is undisturbed as he plays the piano and sings into a microphone. The scene looks too vast and windy for his words to be captured into this tiny device; I suspect they have long been swept up by the cold air and what I am hearing is a studio recording barely matching his moving lips. "Mister 100 000 volts in James Bay" is the title of this special program. I am mesmerized. There has never been a show like this in the cramped universe of Sunday television.

Song follows after song in this windswept stage. Bécaud looks debonair wearing a well-cut suit, hands in his pockets or holding a cigarette as he sings a duo with a young star of the Québécois music scene, Martine St-Clair. Something about a lost love, they sing with their backs turned to each other. Then it is a native child sitting alone at the piano, crying. Or Bécaud again, next to a teepee and fire, also shedding a tear as he sing about "The Indian." There is a drama unfolding here, too big for this screen and at the same time diminished by the ridiculousness of this production, only I do not understand what this drama is. A dancer stands on top of the LG2 dam taking wide leaps into the air. His bare body against the rocks makes me cringe, as do these linear cuts into the land, the giant stairs, the spillway, the dam turned into a television set. I feel uncomfortable but compelled to watch, not just the songs, but also every sponsor's message. It is late into the evening when the credits finally roll off the screen. "This special presentation was brought to you by the SDBJ, SÉBJ, the Radisson regional bureau, Nordair, Hydro-Québec..." The names flow upstream against the rocky face of the *escalier de géant* like water being sucked back into the reservoir, against the regular course of the river.

Des entrevues de **Françoise Stanton,** journaliste

«Ceux du Sud», comme on les surnomme là-haut, ces Québécois des villes confortables, ces citoyens plus ou moins anonymes, que l'on côtoie entre deux rendez vous, entre deux villes, sur les places, dans les gares, quelle idée se font-ils du Nord ?

Terre promise, Klondyke, enfer, fief indien ou esquimau, espaces glacés et mystérieux, paradis des chasseurs ? Leurs opinions sont souvent à l'image de ce qu'ils en ont appris à travers les cinéastes, les journalistes ou les hommes politiques. Quelques-uns, ceux dont le frère, le père ou l'oncle ont vécu dans le Nord, ou ceux qui s'y sont rendus, courageusement, pour y gagner leur pain, ceux-là sont riches d'émotions ou de souvenirs.

Ces opinions, nous les avons recueillies en plein coeur de Montréal auprès des flâneurs du midi au complexe Desjardins, puis auprès des Québécois en transit à Montréal et qui attendaient patiemment leur autobus à la gare de la rue Berri, enfin auprès des hommes d'affaires et des employés de bureau qui peuplent la Tour de la Bourse, ou place Victoria.

S'arrêter, écouter tous ces mots, c'est peut-être déjà commencer le Nord de demain !

Qu'est-ce que c'est, pour vous, le Nord québécois?

▪ *Géographiquement, le Nord du Québec, c'est pour moi des étendues très difficiles d'accès, très difficiles à vivre également à cause de la température. La Baie-James peut produire de l'énergie dont on aura besoin dans le futur, mais il doit y avoir également des richesses naturelles, comme des minerais, qui pourraient être fort utiles. Peut-être pourra-t-on y trouver du pétrole ?*

▪ *Il faudrait penser à ce que nos besoins soient moins excessifs, mais, malgré tout, avec l'augmentation de la population, avec la crise du pétrole, l'électricité pourra peut-être répondre en partie à nos besoins énergétiques. Le problème, c'est qu'on puisse prendre les précautions pour que ces projets ne changent pas le milieu naturel et pour que les conséquences ne soient pas plus néfastes que les bénéfices que pourrait rapporter l'exploitation de ces richesses-là.*

▪ *Le Nord du Québec ? C'est la région où il y a les mines, les ressources naturelles les plus abondantes. Les Québécois doivent prendre conscience d'abord de ces richesses naturelles, et puis les exploiter, en profiter.*

▪ *Le projet de la Baie James ? L'électricité, c'est notre principale ressource énergétique actuellement. On devrait la développer davantage. Disons que l'atome, le système nucléaire, ce n'est pas vraiment prêt à être utilisé; c'est très difficile à opérer dans le moment, et c'est très dispendieux. Puis, les déchets qui s'accumulent peuvent nuire à notre société dans le futur. Avec l'électricité, on accapare beaucoup de territoires du haut bassin, mais c'est le seul dommage qu'on fait à la nature. Du côté minier, on pourrait aussi faire un effort. Jusqu'ici les Américains s'en sont occupé. On pourrait ouvrir des villes, des villes champignons, tel qu'on en connaît aujourd'hui... Pourquoi pas ?*

▪ *Je considère que les Indiens ont autant de droits que les autres Québécois; on devrait préserver la moitié de ces territoires là, les garder à l'état naturel pour qu'ils puissent continuer à vivre la vie qu'ils vivaient avant. Les territoires qu'on a développés, au niveau de la Baie James, c'est une autre chose. Je ne pense pas qu'on puisse demander aux Indiens, parce qu'ils n'ont pas d'expérience, on ne peut pas leur demander d'administrer ça.*

(46 ans, notaire)

▪ *Dans ma tête, le Nord québécois, c'est la Baie-James, le Labrador, pas beaucoup plus... Du froid, des territoires déserts des richesses naturelles non exploitées et difficiles à exploiter. Faudra mettre du temps.*

▪ *Les Indiens ? Il faut maintenir leurs droits. Ils doivent être en très petit nombre maintenant, mais c'est comme quand on veut sauver les baleines, une certaine sorte de baleines dans l'océan. C'est encore plus important de sauver leur mode de vie que de leur fournir, comme on l'a fait pour les Esquimaux ou certains Indiens, des maisons préfabriquées. Il faut qu'on leur laisse une partie des territoires de chasse pour qu'ils puissent continuer à vivre comme ils le veulent. Ces territoires sont immenses. Comme la population indienne est assez réduite, peut-être qu'ils n'ont pas besoin de tous ces territoires. Qu'ils nous en cèdent une partie, s'ils le veulent bien, et qu'on utilise cette partie-là sans attaquer la leur.*

(38 ans, relationniste à la Bourse)

▪ *L'Indien devrait être capable de faire face aux mêmes contraintes auxquelles on fait face, nous autres. On ne s'empare pas de leur territoire, on le développe. Mais on devrait faire profiter davantage l'autochtone de ces richesses-là, le faire travailler. En fin de compte, c'est bon pour lui comme pour nous : il devrait le considérer de la même façon. C'est l'avenir, notre avenir et leur avenir... parce qu'on doit les considérer comme des Québécois, finalement...*

(36 ans, technicien en électronique)

▪ *Pour moi, le Nord, c'est la nature, la paix, la tranquillité. Pas de téléphone : parfait !*

▪ *Le projet de la Baie-James ? C'est nécessaire pour permettre au Québec et éventuellement aux autres provinces de profiter d'une richesse qui va se renouveler jusqu'à la fin des temps...*

▪ *Les Indiens devraient y avoir un certain droit: c'est leur moyen de vie. Ça dépend de ce qu'on va faire avec ces régions. Si c'est seulement de l'énergie, qu'on les dédommage pour ce qu'on leur enlève. C'est juste. Si, par la pollution ou autre chose, on peut causer du dommage à l'avenir, alors je ne suis pas d'accord.*

▪ *Quant aux animaux, ils ont des droits certainement. La nature, on doit essayer de la sauvegarder autant que possible. Mais l'homme a la priorité. Il doit faire tout son possible pour améliorer son sort sur cette planète. Les animaux ont des droits, mais l'homme en a plus.*

(38 ans, ingénieur)

Figure 11: Québec's North. What is it for you?

PROLOGUE

Appeals to the past are among the commonest of strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps.

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 3.

Any explanation of nationalism in Québec needs to take account of the fact that social and economic processes which take place all across Canada are here captured by a strong discourse of identity predicated on key events that shaped the social world of what used to be a French, then a British colony. If Lévesque's defiant warning - "You will see what you will see" - anticipated the nationalization of electricity and the "spectacle" of economic development across the province, it also harked back to complex colonial relations that have produced the space and society of Québec over a long period of time. It is those relations that so strongly contribute to the maintenance of what I have called a "colonial present" in the Northern part of the province: a present where *culture* but also *nature* have been enrolled into heterogeneous regimes of power. Through the conjunction of both, territory has forcefully emerged as the material expression of a distinct national identity for the Québécois. This identity is founded culturally through space but also economically, ideologically and politically, each category bleeding into the other to form what can be regarded as a Québécois "territoriality."[1]

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[1] "Sur le socle que dresse la réalité socio-culturelle, le territoire témoigne d'une appropriation à la fois économique, idéologique et politique (sociale donc) de l'espace, par des groupes qui se donnent une représentation particulière d'eux-mêmes, de leur histoire, de leur singularité." / "On the platform that socio-cultural reality erects for itself, territories signify an appropriation of space - which is at once economic, ideological and political (social then) - by groups that fashion a particular

Countless practices through the centuries are at the root of this territoriality, some of them figuring more predominantly than others in the collective memory. While farming was by no means the only productive activity pursued by French-Canadians in early Québec, the settling of agricultural lands and the rural way of life that developed around them have fashioned distinct cultural and material landscapes charged with a nationalist content that continues to impact Québécois identity. Such content is highly malleable and always subject to contestation, each of its articulations draws from and contributes to a multi-faceted iconography that gives meaning to place and the national community.[2] This iconography may symbolize the land but is not immobilized by it; on the contrary, it travels and is reconfigured without losing the force of its dominant meanings.[3] In James Bay, the integration of a newly developing region into the national fold necessitated the revivifying and - in a very applied sense - "transplantation" of an attachment to place, meant to foster a commitment to provide the land with the political, industrial and economic structures that could bring about its prosperity. How this attachment was envisioned and sought to secure itself to the North turned physical geography into a political territory. In the pan-Canadian context, Audrey Kobayashi remarks that:

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representation of themselves, their history, and their singularity." G. Di Méo, "Géographies tranquilles du quotidien: une analyse de la contribution des sciences sociales et de la géographie à l'étude des pratiques spatiales." *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec* 43.118 (1999), pp. 75-93.

[2] For a discussion of the links between iconography, landscape and cultural memory, see D. Cosgrove and S. Daniels, eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: essays on the symbolic representation, design, and use of past environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[3] "Les symboles de l'iconographie ne sont d'ailleurs pas rivés au sol. Ils circulent avec la diffusion des idées et les mouvements des hommes. Cette circulation des iconographies accroît encore la fluidité de la carte politique." J. Gottmann, *La Politique des États et leur géographie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1952), p. 223.

> The interests of Canadian citizens are as diverse as the landscapes of francophone Trois-Rivières, the Kahnawake Indian Reservation, Vancouver's Chinatown and Toronto's old elite district of Rosedale. Such places must be seen, therefore, not simply as cultural landscapes, but as manifestations of political objectives that cannot be accommodated without struggle and contradiction.[4]

Nowhere is this politicisation of geography better exemplified than in the struggle over James Bay resources: indeed, the Québécois fought this struggle "on the ground" with the Cree, but also simultaneously through the cultural production of the region as a series of landscapes that were at once new and familiar for the South, and highly relevant to its political and economic interests. These landscapes are the various scenes that compose this thesis and, accordingly, I too envision my analysis of them as a political project. As will become clear in the writing, the central goal of such a project is to challenge some of the more enduring boundaries of the Québécois nation and open them to the diversity of its population. Like other Canadian provinces, Québec must change and adjust to the increasingly multicultural composition of its people. From a geographical point of view, this is more easily accomplished in relation to urban space than to rural or sparsely populated areas. Cultural difference and ethnicity have started to become theorized in Québec through the space of the city, envisioning it as fragmented, multiple and crisscrossed by various identity claims that are expressed spatially. In contrast, the rest of the national

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[4] A. Kobayashi, "Multiculturalism: representing a Canadian Institution." In J. Duncan and D. Ley, eds., *Place/Culture/Representation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 224.

territory appears disproportionately blank, abstracted and taken for granted; especially the North which remains deceptively homogenous in the Québécois national imagination. The fact that Bourassa could launch James Bay without notifying its local population is a powerful example of the material implications of such homogenous constructions of space, and their consequences for native communities. While the Cree have since strongly expressed their presence on the land and reinscribed their own narratives of belonging in James Bay, the other non-urban spaces native people inhabit across Québec - whether it be the countryside, the reserve, the North, or the Great North - continue to be represented as blank in renditions of the nation as a spatio-political unit. Therefore, each act that composes this thesis represents my own attempt to give back some of the space of the Québécois nation to the multiple communities that compose it, not by speaking for them but by naming the processes whereby my own culture's relationship to space sought to represent itself as universal.

Before turning to this analysis, I need to describe some key moments in Québec's history that repeatedly flash through notions of nature, land, and identity such as they have been configured in James Bay. There has been extensive research on the historical geography of the province and an inclusive account would necessitate a more detailed discussion of the literature than is relevant here.[5] Rather, I have chosen three dominant

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[5] See, among others, the following studies about the history and geography of Québec: R. C. Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada: a geographical study* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1966); F. Ouellet, *Histoire économique et sociale du Québec 1760-1850* (Montréal and Paris: Fides, 1966); L. Dechêne, *Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1974). See also the following three volumes of the Québec historical atlas: S. Courville et al., *Le Pays laurentien au XIXe siècle: les morphologies de base* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995); S. Courville et al., *Population et territoire* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1996); C. Boudreau, S. Courville and N. Séguin, *Le Territoire* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1997).

constellations of events which I refer to, summarily, as the *British conquest and early rule*, the *nineteenth century rural ideal* and the *conquête du sol.* I approach each of them not so much as a time period but rather as an important ideological emblem of social relations and political events whose memory has been active beyond their immediate context and spatialized anew over time: a process which continually reactivates their meaning in new and different environments and allows them to become increasingly taken-for-granted. The repeated extension, recycling and re-spatializing of these meanings contributes to their decontextualisation and, in a a sense, misinterpretation; yet such is the process of remembering, with the consequence that any study of nation-building should seek to understand the past not only as a set of events but also as a set of discourses. What follows then tries to account for how the three above-mentioned sets of events are interrelated but also, and perhaps more importantly, how they have fashioned the dominant discourse of Québécois identity into the twentieth century. My intent is not to offer the definitive version of each of them but to understand how they helped prepare the ground for the production of James Bay as a Québécois cultural landscape pushing into Cree territory.

The British Conquest and early rule

From French to British America

It is difficult to speak of the conquest of New France by the English (1760-63) outside of the various ideological positions that have presented these events either as a benefit to the French-Canadian population or as its greatest evil, with various shades of meaning in between. I will address

these debates in discussing the conquest, but I need to lay out a few historical markers before doing so.

French settlement in what is today Canada was formally undertaken in 1603 when King Henry IV of France chartered the colony of Acadia, sending there, in the following year, some eighty colonists who would attempt to live through the winter.[6] A disastrous death toll - thirty-five died of scurvy that year - gravely weakened this initial implantation. French settlement did, however, move west along the St.-Lawrence river and continued to spread inland in pursuit of the fur trade: "By the 1680s, French fur traders had built posts around the Great Lakes, on the Mississippi River, and well into the Canadian Shield north of Lake Superior; farther north, the Hudson's Bay Company had established several river-mouth posts on James and Hudson Bays."[7] With fishery and fur-trading constituting the main economic activities of the colony, any agriculture that subsequently developed in the St.-Lawrence valley during the eighteenth century did so as a way of fulfilling the subsistence needs of the families in place.[8]

The establishment of a military presence was also a mainstay of economic activity in the early colonial outposts of New France as settlers were fighting battles with the Indian Nations and trying to curb the

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[6] Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval had made earlier attempts (in 1541 and 1543) to establish a colony near the present site of Québec city but with no success. See J. G. Reid, "The 1600s: French Settlement in Acadia." In J. M. Bumsted, ed., *Interpreting Canada's Past - Volume One* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 47, 51.

[7] C. Harris, "The Pattern of Early Canada." *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien* 31.4 (1987), pp. 291.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 294.

economic power of their European rivals across the territory.[9] French and English rivalries mounted as each power sought to secure its colonial bases and expand overseas trade. A decisive battle took place in 1759 on the Plains of Abraham near Québec City, with generals Wolfe and Montcalm leading the opposing armies. Montcalm's troops were defeated and Québec surrendered at that time, followed by Montréal in September of the next year.[10] This effectively underwrote the conquest of New France by the British - which was later ratified by the Treaty of Paris in 1763 - and meant that the geographical expansion and colonial hold of the French throughout the continent was severely curtailed. It has been estimated that 65 000 French colonists resided in Canada at the time of the conquest, in what was then the St.-Lawrence colony.[11] This population now forms the bulk of Canadian French speakers and - although smaller French-speaking communities exist elsewhere in Canada - has remained centralized in what has become the province of Québec. Francophones constitute the majority of the province in a proportion of approximately 80 per cent.

The defeat on the Plains of Abraham and the events that immediately ensued were followed by three important edicts by the British Crown that, for French settlers, defined the approach of the new

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[9] The "Indian Wars", as they are known, were fought with the Iroquois on the shores of the St.-Lawrence. Between 1608 and 1760, Canada experienced less than fifty years of peace. See W. J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France." In A. I. Silver, ed., *An Introduction to Canadian History* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1991), pp. 57-76. Eccles concludes his article by stating that "for the better part of two centuries war, and the threat of war, was one of the great staples of the Canadian economy" (p. 76).

[10] For details of these battles, see J. Lacoursière, *Histoire populaire du Québec, des origines à 1791* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1995), pp. 293-325.

[11] See J. Henripin, *La Population canadienne au début du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954), p. 13.

colonial government. The *Royal Proclamation* of 1763 imposed British civil and criminal law as well as the use of English as the official language. Its most significant impact was that it barred French-Canadians from holding public office and thus fully participating in the decision-making sphere of the colony. It did so because all citizens were required to pledge allegiance to the British Crown; since the Monarch was also the Head of the Church of England, this amounted, for the *Canadiens*, to a renunciation of their Catholic faith.[12] While the Proclamation of 1763 tried to enact what was in effect a policy of assimilation, the latter proved difficult to implement since the French greatly outnumbered the British in their former colony.[13] British Governors James Murray and Guy Carleton pleaded with the Crown that such an approach might lead to rebellion and jeopardize the long-term goal of fostering allegiance from the francophone population. The *Québec Act* of 1774 heeded the two governors' position by authorizing the French civil code of law, recognizing the French language as well as the Roman Catholic Church, and by generally working to accommodate French-Canadians rather than striving to assimilate them. By abandoning previous assimilationist policies and acknowledging the cultural specificity of the French and their institutions, the Québec Act effectively recognized them as a "distinct society" within the British colony. Finally, the Constitutional Act of 1791 was another determining moment of this period of early British rule: it roughly divided the British and French populations into

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[12] J. Conway, *Debts to Pay: English Canada and Quebec from the Conquest to the Referendum* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1992), p. 13. French settlers initially set their group apart from the European metropole by referring to themselves as "*Canadiens*" rather than "French." This became their usual designation until other residents increasingly adopted the term, in English and French, with Canada emerging as a nation around the time of Confederation (1867).

[13] In Québec, there were thirty *Canadiens* to each English settler. J. Morchain and M. Wade, *Search for a Nation: Canada's crises in French-English relations 1759-1980* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1984), p. 12.

Upper and Lower Canada, thus establishing the boundaries that today correspond to Ontario and Québec. The act also granted an elected assembly to each entity although a British governor and council retained some measure of power over them.[14] With this act, the French-Canadians made up 90 per cent of the population of Lower Canada with the remainder mostly British and Loyalists who had crossed into Canada as a result of the American War of Independence.

Interpreting the conquest

Assessing the impact of the conquest on the French-Canadian population has been a subject of constant debate among historians, and this, in turn, has influenced how Québec envisions its national identity. One important figure of this debate has been Michel Brunet whose book *La Présence anglaise et les Canadiens* advanced the thesis that the business and political class of New France was "decapitated" by the conquest, with the result that the *Canadiens* could not effectively pursue commercial activities in a business environment so drastically changed around them and designed to serve British interests.[15] Brunet viewed English-Canadian historians of the nineteenth century as "romantics" who maintained that the British Conquest had enabled the people of New France to receive civil liberties the French Empire would have never granted them. Among them,

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[14] J. Conway, *Debts*, p. 20-21.

[15] "This colonial people had prematurely lost its supporting metropolis. Reduced to its own resources, it was doomed to an anaemic leadership of an economically independent bourgeoisie totally devoted to its interest as an ethnic group and capable of establishing a political, social, and cultural order suited to it. It had nothing left but a few institutions of secondary importance and the relative and inert force of numbers and social instinct." M. Brunet, "The British Conquest and the Decline of the French-Canadian Bourgeoisie." In A. I. Silver, ed., *An Introduction*, p. 111. See also *La Présence anglaise et les Canadiens* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1964) and *Les Canadiens après la conquête 1759-1775* (Ottawa: Fides, 1969).

Francis Parkman maintained that: "A happier calamity never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by the British arms."[16] In his analysis of these historians, Brunet outlines the Victorian framework that colors their rendering: "[The] French in Canada were the first considerable body of an alien race to taste that liberty which is larger than English liberty and is the secret of the modern British commonwealth of nations."[17] On the contrary, for Brunet, French-Canadians were a nation who had been conquered and occupied by a foreign power, thus becoming a minority in their native land and losing their right to self-determination.[18] In the same way that the historians he challenged reflected their own social context, which was that of the Victorian era, Brunet's views on the conquest are indicative of the paradigm change that was quickly gaining ground in Québec when he started publishing his work, which was at the time of the Quiet Revolution.

The ideas advanced by Michel Brunet and other Québec nationalist historians were significantly questioned by Fernand Ouellet, who saw in them the inscription of a French-Canadian nationality before 1760 where none was in existence - or at least none comparable to that of today. Speaking of these historians, he argued that:

> The whole of their interpretation of Canada's history logically flows from this initial observation and from their idea of the nature of this nationality.

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[16] Quoted by Brunet, "The British Conquest and the Canadiens." In R. Cook et al., eds., *Approaches to Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 87.
[17] Brunet is quoting historian A. L. Burt. He also notes that Burt wrote a Canadian history textbook with a chapter on the French entitled "The Liberty to be Themselves." *Ibid.*, p. 89.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

> These interpretations have undoubtedly had the merit of awakening feelings and thus reaching people's minds. But do they reflect reality? Is emotional content a guarantee of their truthfulness? Long before me, historians have suspected not.[19]

While it must be granted that several readings could be made of the events of 1759-60, it is important to recognize that a change of government did take place which had important repercussions on the subsequent development of the colony. The political and economic changes that issued from the British takeover of Canada proved to be an important trigger for what became known as the "rural retreat" of the French, and consequently their under-representation from dominant sectors of merchant activity in Montréal and Québec City. For many, the conquest was re-lived during a period of insurrection in 1837-38 - the "Patriot Rebellion" - which was followed by a Crown report that sought to explain the cause of these events and to present recommendations based on the conclusions reached.

The Patriot Rebellion

Although the insurrection initially occurred in both Upper and Lower Canada, it lasted longer and was significantly more violent in the latter where rebels known as the "Patriotes" engaged in a series of battles spread over two years. The generation after the Conquest had seemed relatively at peace with British rule, yet the new regime generated discontent both in Upper and Lower Canada. The two provinces were facing strongly

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[19] F. Ouellet, "French-Canadian Nationalism: from its origins to the Insurrection of 1837." In A. I. Silver, ed., *An Introduction*, pp. 258-259. See also his *Histoire économique*, op. cited.

entrenched political oligarchies that remained deaf to the demands of their respective elected assemblies.[21] For Upper Canada "Reformers", the most pressing issue was a monopoly of land ownership by absentee owners, many of whom were part of a dominant merchant class that repeatedly opposed the interest of settlers.[22] Small battles took place around Toronto and the American border but, being too few in numbers and poorly organized, the Reformers were quickly repressed by the British military without widespread violence. Unlike the Patriotes of Lower Canada, the Reformers have not been widely memorialized in English Canada and their rebellion is at times even regarded as having delayed proper democratic reform. [23]

By contrast, the events that took place in Lower Canada during the same period have received a different interpretation in the French province. While both movements opposed an administration they saw as corrupt and standing in the way of the colony's development, the battle of the Patriotes also intersected with the ideal of founding a French nation in North America. The always-present fear that the long-term goal of the English were to assimilate the French added meaning to what the Patriotes were perceived to be fighting for. As an elected party with Louis-Joseph Papineau at its head, the Patriotes enjoyed broad popular support in the election of 1827. They strove to get a series of grievances and resolutions adopted by the assembly, all of which were rejected by London in 1837

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[21] They were known as the Family Compact (Upper Canada) and the Château Clique (Lower Canada). F. Ouellet, "The Rebellions of 1837/8." In J. M. Bumsted, *Interpreting Canada*, p. 412.

[22] Conway, *Debts*, p. 24.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

via Lord John Russell's infamous "Ten Resolutions."[24] Furthermore, these resolutions stripped the Patriotes of their political power as an elected party. These extreme measures laid the ground for the insurrection which, like that of Upper Canada, was met with little success and eventually resulted in failure. The confrontations - chief among them those of Saint-Eustache, Saint-Denis and Saint-Charles - were significantly more violent. They ended in the burning of villages and farms by the British military and led to the hanging of twelve men among the ninety-nine who had been accused of treason. Of those who remained in prison, fifty-eight were sent in exile and the rest were eventually pardoned.[25] The most controversial trial and execution was that of the Chevalier De Lorimier. On the night before his death, he wrote a political testament where he stated that he was dying without remorse since he had desired nothing but the good of his country. He ended with words that in some way anticipated the nationalist movement of the next century: "Vive la liberté, vive l'indépendance!"[26]

The Durham Report

The political project of the Patriotes remains ambiguous since the Rebellion did not broadly unite the population of Lower Canada into clearly expressed common goals. The difficulty of identifying and interpreting the context of their motives and the reasons for the failure of their

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[24] See G. Filteau, *Histoire des Patriotes.* (Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Aurore, 1975), pp. 159-191.

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 437-440.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 438. The desire to keep the memory of those events alive in Québec is exemplified by the release of two movies on the Patriotes in the last two years: *Quand je serai parti vous vivrez encore* directed by Michel Brault (1999) and *15 Février 1839* by Pierre Falardeau (2001).

insurrection has not prevented them from occupying a central place in the nationalist imagination of Québec. From this perspective, the Patriotes fought the last battle for the creation of a French nation in North America: their repression in 1838 is seen an important cause of the supposed political apathy that took over the French population and endured until the re-emergence of a strongly militant nationalist movement in the mid-twentieth century. This claim is partly supported by yet another change of policy toward the French enacted in the wake of an inquiry into the Rebellion that was commissioned by the British Crown. Named after its author, the "Durham Report" (published in 1839) assessed the political climate that prevailed in the two provinces and recognized the need for reform. What Lord Durham identified as the root of the rebellions was to have a tremendous impact on Francophones:

> I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found a struggle, not of principles but of races; and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.[27]

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[27] R. Coupland, ed., *Report on the Affairs of British North America (The Durham Report)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945), p. 15. Adopting a usage that was common throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Durham's use of the term "race" for what is today more generally understood as "culture" gives us a sense of how French and English were strongly perceived not only as separate but also incompatible entities, a notion that was supported and reinforced by their respective religion and class position. In a novel entitled *L'Appel de la race* (*The Call of the Race*), one author of the *roman de la terre*, Lionel Groulx, also regards the cultural differences between French and English as biological traits but seeks to revalue the French as the "nobler" race and the one chosen by God. I will discuss this novel in Act 1.

Seeing that the problems of the colony resided in the inequalities between the two populations, Durham concluded that the only way to solve them was through the rapid assimilation of the French to the English. Regarding Lower Canada, he viewed the transformation of its character as an urgent matter and he advised the Crown to design and implement a strict program to make it an English province in the shortest possible delay.[28]

Durham's recommendation was legitimated through a harsh portrayal of Francophones, one where class differences between the French and English which had emerged in the colony over time were presented as essential cultural attributes. His report contained two sections - "The French Canadians" and "The English Immigrants" - which strongly entrenched into his text the dualism whereby colonialism constructs its "other" by representing the colonized as the negative image of the colonizer.[29] In this dual framework, the French were an "uninstructed, inactive, and unprogressive" people who clung to "ancient prejudices, ancient customs and ancient laws." Durham blamed the British government for this state of affairs since it had left "the mass of the people without any of the institutions which would have elevated them in freedom and civilization." As a result: "they remained an old and stationary society in a new and progressive world"[30]

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[28] Britain sought to implement Lord Durham's recommendations to anglicize Canada through the Act of Union of 1840. The territories of Upper and Lower Canada were to be united into a single colony with a democratic assembly where each province would have an equal number of seats. See Coupland, *Report*, particularly the last section "Conclusions and Recommendations", pp. 124-183.

[29] Not surprisingly, Albert Memmi's *Portrait du colonisé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985) was widely read by militant nationalists in the 1960s for whom the Quiet Revolution represented a period of decolonization where these dualist images could be overturned.

[30] These various quotes are from, Coupland, *Report*, pp. 22-23.

In contrast, the English immigrants were seen as "exhibiting the characteristics with which we are familiar, as those of the most enterprising of every class of our countrymen." Thanks to their "active" and "regular" habits, they had succeeded in displacing their "inert and careless competitors of the French race" from the most profitable industries of the colony. This was viewed by Durham not as an invasion but as the creation of welcome opportunities: "the English cannot be said to have encroached on the French; for, in fact, they created employments and profits which had not previously existed." The fact that Durham did not question the inequalities that existed between the two groups was made visible in his failure to consider it an injustice that the so-called opportunities created by the English confined the French to the toughest forms of labour: "The more skilled class of artisans are generally English; but in the general run of the more laborious employment the French Canadians fully hold their ground against English rivalry."[31]

Durham's dualistic portrayal of the two "races" acquires a geographical dimension when it becomes clear, in the report, that the cultural characteristics of the French - understood, according to the common nineteenth-century usage, as "racial" - preclude them from making the best use of the land and of its resources. Biased, sketchy and incomplete as the report may be - and has been recognized to be both by Anglophones and Francophones in Québec - what it accomplished at the time for securing British rule in Canada cannot be underestimated: as a text, it reiterated and gave renewed force to a set of colonial meanings where the category of the "French" functioned as the inferior other of the

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[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-27.

category of the "English." Looking ahead, the imaginative geography of James Bay created a similar binary opposition as native people were represented as the "other" of the Québécois nation; a point which will become clearer as the thesis unfolds. For now, what needs to be understood about the Durham report is the importance of discourse - particularly its production of taken-for-granted meanings - in colonial constructions of race, and the way in which these constructions impact material geographies. They do so largely because, in colonial discourses, constructions of race so often operate simultaneously as constructions of nature. One of the main functions of the dualism entrenched in the Durham report is to position the English as the one of the two groups who can successfully effect control over the territory and bring forth its potential for maximum prosperity. This they can do best because, unlike the French, the English can overcome and "normalize" nature. Consider these two renditions of each culture's farming ability, which I quote here in their entirety. Speaking about the French, the Durham report estimates that:

> Along the alluvial banks of the St.-Lawrence, and its tributaries, they have cleared two or three strips of land, cultivated them in the worst method of small farming, and established a series of continuous villages, which give the country of the seigniories the appearance of a never-ending street. Besides the cities which were the seats of government, no towns were established; the rude manufactures of the country were, and still are, carried on in the cottage by the family of the *habitant*; and an insignificant proportion of the

population derived their subsistence from the scarcely discernible commerce of the province.[32]

For his part, the English farmer:

> [C]arried with him the experience and habits of the most improved agriculture in the world. He settled himself in the townships bordering the seigniories, and brought a fresh soil and improved cultivation to compete with the worn-out and slovenly farm of the *habitant.* He often took the very farm which the Canadian settler had abandoned, and, by superior management, made that a source of profit which had only impoverished his predecessor. The ascendancy which an unjust favouritism had contributed to give to the English race in the government and legal profession, their own superior energy, skill and capital secured to them in every branch of industry. They have developed the resources of the country; they have constructed or improved its means of communication; they have created its internal and foreign commerce."[33]

These descriptions envision land management skills as cultural attributes which are *given* - as though genetically embodied - rather than acquired. In the terms set up by the comparison, the French appear disorderly, unresourceful and unsystematic whereas the English stand for organization, planning and industry. Restating one of the most basic, overarching dichotomies of colonialism - that of nature versus culture - the inability of the French to bring rational order to the space of the colony

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[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22. See footnote number 41 for a definition of the *habitant,*
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

means that they cannot properly tackle its "wilderness" to effectively bring it into the realm of culture, and thus financial prosperity. It comes as no surprise then that the report intensified the already important dialectic between culture and space for French-Canadians, which continues to produce the symbolic and material content of nature, land and territory well into the twentieth century. Following the Durham report, the challenge of resisting assimilation for the French would increasingly hinge on their ability to produce a nature - and therefore a physical space - they could control and symbolize as their own national sphere. Again, Lord Durham's imagination of the space of the colony gives us a sense of this struggle which involves both physical and cultural geography:

> The possession of the mouth of the St.-Lawrence concerns not only those who happen to have made their settlements along the narrow line which borders it, but all who now dwell, or will hereafter dwell, in the great basin of that river. For we must not look to the present alone. The question is, by what race is it likely that the *wilderness* which now covers the rich and ample regions surrounding the comparatively small and contracted districts in which the French Canadians are located, is eventually to be converted into a settled and flourishing country?[34]

In the context of the Durham report and its powerful reiteration of cultural stereotypes pertaining to the French and English, I want to propose that much of the rural ideology of the nineteenth century and the landscape it

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 151, my emphasis.

contributed to mold in Québec can be understood as a form of response to the above question.

The nineteenth-century rural ideal

Rurality and religious ideology

> [D]ans des conditions d'oppression (comme en comporte en particulier la situation coloniale), il n'est pas rare de voir surgir, dans un climat d'effervescence collective, des mouvements religieux de salut qui constituent une autre forme de protestation à côté de la révolte armée et parfois la précèdent, l'accompagnent ou en suivent l'échec.[35]

To a large extent, the rural ideal of the nineteenth century associated the continued occupation and expansion of the areas Francophones had settled in the St.-Lawrence valley before the events of 1760-63 with the survival of the French language and culture. If survival was always a material imperative for French colonists, living with policies of assimilation meant that it also came to be defined in cultural terms as a result of the British conquest; a process which the Durham Report could have only exacerbated. The Catholic Church took a leading role in the effort to preserve French-Canadian identity by anchoring it in a traditional - i.e. rural - way of life. In that process, the geographical environment of the

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[35] "In oppressive conditions (as can be found particularly in a colonial context), it is not rare to see the emergence, in a climate of collective effervescence, of religious salvation movements that constitute another form of protest next to armed revolt and sometimes precede it, accompany it or follow in the wake of its failure." G. Dussault, *Le Curé Labelle: messianisme, utopie et colonisation au Québec 1850-1900* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1983), p. 43.

country was made to bear a set of specific moral ideals which also provided the backbone of a nationalist territoriality. The French military and political leaders who left Canada as a result of the conquest were gradually replaced by a local elite largely made up of religious figures who took on a substitute role for the state: in essence, the clergy became French-Canada's governing class and, by the end of the nineteenth century, strongly exercised that role. Under the leadership of the Church, the resilience of the *Canadiens* was viewed in teleological terms: as a linear evolution toward the pre-determined end of re-creating the French nation in North America. Consequently, nineteenth-century rural ideology was as firmly anchored in the soil as it was in a Catholicism that took the mantle of national religion. The intersection between nationalism and religion would produce strong overtones of messianism whereby the god of an oppressed people who were "poor francophone Catholics" fought alongside them against the "rich anglophones Protestants.[36]

Sylvie Vincent has illustrated another aspect of the dynamic between nation and religion by arguing that, faced with the dual difficulty of maintaining horizontal links - politically, economically and culturally - not only with France but also with Britain, French-Canadians developed vertical links with a Catholic heavenly father, but also with an earthly mother and her various attributes as "nature", "nation" and "land."[37] In pointing to the complex gendering of land through religion in nineteenth-century Québec, her analysis alerts us to the fact that the national landscapes these concepts helped to shape were also heavily gendered. One

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[36] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[37] S. Vincent, "Terre québécoise, première nation et nation première: notes sur le discours québécois francophone au cours de l'été 1990." *Discours et mythes de l'ethnicité* (Montréal: ACFAS - Les Cahiers scientifiques #78), pp. 227.

aspect of this geography is expressed in the importance of the family in the rural sphere. From 1831 to 1961, the French-Canadian population grew from 553 000 individuals to over five million.[38] This prodigious increase is known as the "revenge of the cradle", a demographic phenomenon in which the Church played a considerable part by maintaining the Catholic moral environment capable of fostering such a population boom.[39] The idea of a "revenge" in terms of demographic presence is another reference to the conquest and the subsequent policies that sought to assimilate the French. Here the role of the Québécois mother in maintaining a distinct cultural heritage was an important part of the traditional nationalist discourse. This role reverberated socially and spatially through the tight form of organization that existed around the parish, which was facilitated by the structuring of the land base along the form of the *rang d'habitat.* As a land pattern, the *rang* is characterized by narrow fields usually running perpendicular to the St.-Lawrence; this division ensured that every farming family could have equal access to the river and enjoy a property with roughly the same topography as that of its neighbours.[40] With each *rang* running parallel to the river and land holdings cut through them on a perpendicular grid, houses would be close to each other at the end of their

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[38] As a frame of reference, demographers Henripin and Péron mention that, between 1760 and 1960, the total world population was multiplied by four whereas French-Canadians saw they numbers increase by a factor of eighty. J. Henripin and Y. Péron, "La Transition démographique de la province de Québec." In H. Charbonneau, ed., *La Population du Québec: études rétrospectives* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973), p. 24.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[40] H. Miner, *St.Denis: a French-Canadian parish* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 21-24. For a discussion of the genealogy and adaptation of this land pattern in New France, see L.-E. Hamelin, *Le Rang d'habitat: le réel et l'imaginaire* (Montréal: Hurtubise, 1993). Hamelin's analysis is at once empirical and interpretive and thus constitutes a rich example of the connection between physical and cultural geography in the St.-Lawrence valley. See also, Harris, *Seigneurial*, op. cited.

respective fields and linear clusters would develop to form a village, often stretching between church and school. By closely binding farming and community relations, the geometry of the land can be said - using the feminizing of nature common in the rural/religious discourse of the time - to have "nurtured" its descendants.

Leaving the land

Despite this strong connection between nature, nation and religion, the nineteenth century also saw both "mothers" and "mother-country" losing many of their children to the attraction of other environments existing beyond the original homeland of the Laurentian valley. Indeed, the Church's efforts to embed the French population in the soil of Québec did not mean that the tension between movement and stability that had characterized so much of the French presence in North America was resolved. Part of that tension is explained by the fact that the colonizing sphere of the French was significantly reduced as a result of the conquest, an issue which is encompassed in the concept of *L'Amérique française.* In relation to the ideal of a "French America", Québec could easily appear the mere fragment of an empire that used to stretch from the "Atlantic to the Rockies and Rupert's land to the Gulf of Mexico."[41] From the initial days of the colony, the extensive involvement of the *Canadiens* with fur trading had allowed further advance inland as well as contact with native people, and made mobility an important aspect of the relationship to space. In its strong emphasis on place and place-making, the rural ideal can be said to

[41] S. Courville, *Rêves d'empire: le Québec et le rêve colonial* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2000), p. 7. See also, C. Morissonneau, "Mobilité et identité québécoise." *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec* 23.58 (1979), pp. 29-38.

have outlined a contrast between the figures of the *coureur de bois* and *voyageur* (traveler) and that of the *habitant* (farmer), thus staging the dilemma between two modes of interaction with the land and their potential outcomes for the nation.[42] Here the question of what geographical space - the open horizon of the *coureur de bois* or the bounded sphere of the *habitant* - could serve best the establishment and expansion of a francophone homeland was a central issue. Although the intersections between these various spatial imaginaries and practices are multiple and deserve further discussion, what is important to retain for the purposes of this study is that, through the nineteenth century and beyond, the role of the rural in claiming and consolidating a French-Canadian nation in North America entailed the discarding of other conceptions of nature yielded from other experiences of space. The same process takes place in James Bay but with different kinds of "natures" - and their attendant archetypal heroes - competing for a different space. The Church's disapproval of those figures who blur the boundaries - both spatial and cultural - of the nation seeks to guard against the divergent productions of nature these figures

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[42] The *coureur de bois* was a fur-trader who circulated in the back country establishing and negotiating trading relations with native people, and using their knowledge to circulate through the territory: as a result, he was perceived to be a hybrid figure whose way of life took him across cultural boundaries.
Often envisioned as a utopian figure in the Québécois nationalist imagination, the love of mobility and adventurous spirit of the *coureur de bois* offered the possibility of reconquering the lost territory of New-France. As for the *voyageur*, he was generally a man hired to travel with a discovery mission to portage across land, carry supplies and accomplish other physical labour involved in the expedition. French-Canadians were often chosen to fulfill that role because of the territorial knowledge and cross-cultural ties they had previously developed as *coureurs de bois*. Finally, the *habitant* often stands in sharp contrast against these two figures for his lack of mobility. The term refers to the French farmers who helped to mold the agricultural landscape of Québec and connotes the traditional way of life associated with it. The verb *habiter* means to live in and/or to occupy a given space; more than a farmer, the *habitant* was also someone who *occupied* the land, shaping and being shaped by it through language, religion and culture. These various colonial archetypes have been fictionalized in song, myth and literature.

threaten to oppose to a traditionalist nationalism which is hard at work binding nature and nation inside the rural sphere, and producing the kind of rational nature the French, according to Durham, were so severely lacking.

And yet the biggest threat to the maintenance of tradition in the rural countryside came, in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, from quite a different space than that of the wilderness or the vast expanse of the American continent. Indeed, it was the space of the city which exercised an even stronger pull away from the rural sphere. The concentration and rapid growth of the French population along the initial axis of the St.-Lawrence yielded a tremendous demographic pressure on the region and created the need for an expanded land base. Single farms could not sustain alone the large French-Canadian family: if the first-born son could hope to take over the ancestral land, those among his siblings who did not enter a religious order faced the limited options of either settling a new agricultural property, looking for work in Montréal or Québec city, or emigrating across the border toward the industrial centers of the United States. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Québec was "literally overflowing... its agriculture was being transformed; new lands were more and more remote from the central areas of the province; and urban growth was still uneven and could not absorb the excess population of the countryside. It was the city, however, that was now the attraction."[43] Between 1840 and 1930, Québec suffered what seemed like a

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[43] S. Courville and N. Séguin, *Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century Quebec* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1989), p. 15. For a discussion of the various factors that converged to cause this migration, see A. Faucher, "Explications socio-économiques des migrations dans l'histoire du Québec." In N. Séguin, ed., *Agriculture et colonisation au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1980), pp. 141-157.

true "hemorrhage" of its French-speaking population as nearly one million people relocated in New England.[44] The Church's negative view of these departures was powerless to stop them, and powerless also against the change of values and lifestyle this emigration brought about. Exodus on this scale posed the danger of diluting the French population and, for the Francophone elite, made the political imperative to "cling to the land" all the more pressing.

La conquête du sol

Although the Church did try to follow the flow of emigration to help recreate the social structure of the parish in the United States, the opening of new farming land within Québec was envisioned as a more effective solution to the dual problem of dispersion and assimilation caused by the exile of Francophones. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the spreading of the population from its Laurentian core to settle many different areas: on the north shore, settlers headed into the back country of Montréal and Québec City, and in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean; on the south shore, they reached into the Eastern Townships, up the Ottawa valley, and into the Lower St.-Lawrence and Gaspé area.[45] One of the leaders of this colonisation was the Curé Antoine Labelle (1833-1891) whose relentless support for the clearing of new land made him a central protagonist of this movement during his lifetime, but also beyond. His memory was frequently evoked to support subsequent colonization projects, notably in the wake of the Great Depression of 1929 when the

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[44] Courville and Séguin, *Rural Life*, p. 15.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Québec and federal governments sought to alleviate unemployment in the cities by sponsoring the move of previously urban families, and farmers also, onto new land. The Abitibi-Témiscamingue, which is situated directly south of James Bay, was transformed by this "return to the land" movement which lasted roughly twenty years from the nineteen-thirties to the fifties. Two separate plans were put into effect specifically aimed at assisting those who sought to establish themselves on colonisation lots, but many of them had only mixed results. Although they were put into effects several decades after the death of Curé Labelle, these programs can be regarded as a projection of his own work in that they strongly called upon a religious and heroic discourse to enlist potential settlers, and encourage them in their endeavour.[46]

In 1868 Labelle was appointed priest of a parish north of Montréal (Saint-Jérôme) and, though he remained in that function until the end of his life, the impact of his activities was felt across the province. Among his numerous works he led a successful campaign for the building of a railroad between Montréal and Saint-Jérome; founded a colonizing society for the establishment of new parishes; traveled to Europe twice to recruit settlers; and was named assistant-minister of a newly created Québec Ministry of Agriculture and Colonisation, all the while working for industrialization

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[46] Filmmaker Pierre Perrault has documented this important period in a movie trilogy produced by the Canadian National Film Board: alternating interviews with the local population of Abitibi with promotional films taken from the archives that extolled the virtues of opening new land, Perrault takes a critical look at the way people who were publicly celebrated as heroes of colonization were subsequently left to their own devices in a region ill-suited for agriculture. These movies are entitled *Un Royaume vous attend* (1976), *Le Retour à la terre* (1976), *Gens d'Abitibi* (1980, with Bernard Gosselin). See also "Les plans de colonisation et la consolidation du monde rural: 1930-1950" in O. Vincent, dir., *Histoire de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1995), pp. 235-281; S. Courville, "Emparons-nous du sol!" in *Le Québec: genèses et mutations du territoire* (Sainte-Foy (Québec): Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000), pp. 235-290.

and expansion of his own parish which acquired city status in 1881.[47] What was most remarkable about Labelle was the evocative quality he was able to give his mission by conveying it in utopian and messianic terms. He was a colorful and convincing speaker who represented his cause in words that could strongly mobilize people and governments. What Labelle essentially captured and embodied in his speeches was the "national messianism" that had pervaded the Church's ideal of establishing a homeland for the French. With Labelle, this ideal was unmoored from its Laurentian core and sent into other geographical directions. The priest, however, was firmly looking to the North, a sphere which he viewed as untouched and therefore ready for the expansion of Francophones. In supporting the settlement of several parishes in the upper reaches of the St.-Lawrence valley, he also significantly expanded another territory which would give James Bay its evocative power: this territory was the imaginative geography of the North. In a letter where Labelle admitted the intentions of his program, he stated:

> Nous les *enfants du Nord*, nous les fondateurs de ce futur empire de l'Amérique du Nord, nous les hommes désignés à renouveler en Amérique les faits glorieux et célèbres de la vieille France, nous qui devons conquérir sur les Philistins anglais cette terre de l'Amérique par notre vigueur, notre fécondité, notre habileté, et par ces secours d'en-haut... Un jour nous serons nation indépendante et cette nation sera gouvernée par les hommes qui l'ont fondée... L'immigration française va devenir ruisseau, rivière et fleuve dans les temps

[47] G. Dussault, *Le Curé*, pp. 36-37.

à venir et c'est alors que la revenche de Montcalm sera accomplie par la voie pacifique de la force native de la race française sans même brûler une cartouche. Ce sera la plus grande victoire que jamais nation ait accomplie: *conquérir nos conquérants.*[48]

Labelle's dream of "conquering the conquerors" can be understood as a dynamic, political response to the colonized position of the French in their native land following the defeat of New France. Furthermore, the "reconquest" by the British after the insurrection of 1837-38 - which, in the nationalist memory, had been sealed by the Durham report - was being challenged by a reconquest of the land. The slogan that determined this movement was unequivocal about the imperative of territorial possession: "Emparons-nous du sol!"[49] Half a century later, the catch phrase under which the Liberal conducted their campaign for the nationalization of electricity - "Maîtres chez nous" - contained strong echoes of this imperative; only this time, I contend, the cultural meaning of land was expressed through the imagination of its natural resources, more specifically water. In both contexts, the North functioned as a utopian sphere as well as a frontier of regeneration.[50] Like all utopias, it was an

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[48] "We children of the North, we founders of this future North American Empire, we the men designated to renew in America the glorious and famous acts of old France, we that must conquer this land of America against the English philistines through our vigor, our fecundity, our skills, and through help from above... One day we will be an independent nation and this nation will be governed by those who founded it... French immigration will become a stream, a great river in the years to come and it is then that Montcalm's revenge will be accomplished, without firing a single shot, through the peaceful way of the French race's native strength. This will be the greatest victory any nation has ever accomplished: *to conquer our conquerors.*" *Ibid.*, p. 90, my emphasis.

[49] Morissonneau, *Terre*, p. 65. The expression translates, roughly, as "Let's take over the land!"

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 105-124.

ambiguous territory. For Labelle and for the other religious leaders who supported his program, its mythical force was sustained by the fluidity and endlessness, or so it seemed, of its physical contours. Indeed, the area designated as "the North" would change with the vision of each of its proponents. In his book *Terre Promise*, Christian Morissonneau identified key builders of this myth whose Northern imaginaries refer to geographical spaces of extremely diverse proportions: whereas Labelle is a proponent for the lower reaches of Québec, Ontario and the Prairies, Edme Rameau de Saint-Père envisions the whole of Canada; Jean-Chrysostome Langelier and Arthur Buies nearly the entirety of Québec; and Guillaume-Alphonse Nantel and Testard de Montigny limit the frontier to a small fraction of the French province.[51] Although they envision different spaces of colonisation, these myth builders use a common symbolic: represented as a virgin region, the North is viewed as a space where descendants of New France could fulfill their providential mission of establishing a catholic nation in the American continent. Produced as a wilderness, it demands to be normalized and brought within the horizon of European meaning and civilization. Translated into discourse by the national messianism of religious leaders - and into practice by the spatial expansion of the French population - the decisive question posed by Durham in his report is brought into sharp focus, as is the underlying geographical imperative of the British conquest, the rural ideal and the *conquête du sol*: "By what race is it likely that the *wilderness* which now covers the rich and ample regions surrounding the comparatively small and contracted districts in which the French Canadians are located, is eventually to be converted into a settled and flourishing country?" I suspect this is a question that Premier

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-147.

Robert Bourassa, like Labelle, sought to answer. Indeed, looking not so centrally at the forest but at the major rivers in James Bay, Bourassa too saw a wilderness that should be converted into a flourishing country.

As I have tried to show in this discussion of three dominant reference points in Québécois memory - which can now emerge more clearly as in fact two reference points, that is, "British conquest" and "Conquête du sol" - the colonial past reappears into the present not because of an unbroken link between them but because this past has been encapsulated in such a powerful geographical imaginary, i.e. the idea of the North. This imaginary is, as I have indicated, in no way linear nor static yet there is no doubt - as several researchers in Québec have demonstrated - that it has played a central role in Québec's social, economic, and political becoming. Like all myths - or should we continue to call it that given that it has been so extensively materialized - the imaginative geography of the North is an emotional construction, built from those moments of history that appeal most strongly to identity and political convictions, and have the power to will these convictions into existence. The James Bay development project gathered this power by using the performative force of spectacle, by "putting on a show" and gathering its audience under the rubric of "all the Québécois people" to whom the resources of the North unquestionably belonged. If that much can be granted, Bourassa, I suggest, was Lévesque's best ally by focusing his leadership not on "separating" Québec from Canada but on expending its governmentality further North since separation is first and foremost a shift in spatial relations. Although Bourassa claimed that through hydro development "the past was no longer

determining the future",[52] he too was taking on the English and daring them to "see what they will see": which was that the Québécois could manage the land and, in doing so, manage themselves as a people. But in order to transform the wilderness into their own settled country, they would have to define the terms of that country's nature. I now turn to an analysis of the *roman de la terre* in order to explore what these terms might be.

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[52] Bourassa, *La Baie James*, p. 133.

Montréal, June 12, 1981 Vancouver, April 25, 2001

My classmates and I get on the bus early for a field trip that will bring us to the Olympic stadium where the "Floralies" are taking place. Our teachers have been talking for weeks about this special event where vegetation from around the world is to be fitted and displayed inside the velodrome. The place is crawling with children like me brought in to see this exhibition. The green racing tracks have sprouted a circuit of plants and flowers, each one outdoing the other with shapes and colors we hadn't known ever existed in nature. I move erratically around this loop with my friends, admiring the various microcosms, taking note of the flags and descriptions planted to delimit the greenery. Exotic natures occupy their booth generously in a tangle of textures and smells. Others hold back in restraint, raddled and pruned into geometric gardens. Since this is our geography lesson for the week, there is homework to be done. We draw words and pictures to distinguish tropical from temperate, Amazonian from Arizonan, and to remember the countries each environment belongs to. Filling the pages of our notebooks, we come to the end of our tour to something called "taiga." I draw a stick figure for a tree and a dotted rock to indicate what the display tells me is "lichen." This space seems bare, not green enough, and rather unstable with its boggy soil rippling like waves - although what I am standing on is merely a photograph. Everything looks as though it is waiting to take on a more definite shape; trees in mid-growth, bogs heavy with water, the uncertain contours of lichen patches - this environment waits to be firmed up and finalized. Along this tour, my mind has collected shells, flowers and fruit from each display. Not knowing what to take from such a place, I cannot form an understanding of it. I look for a clue by moving over to the edge of the booth where I read the name "James Bay" next to the insignia of Hydro-Québec. Suddenly, a light comes up. The exhibit around me becomes crisscrossed with electric lines, and the strange nature of James Bay is rendered as familiar as my living room.

ACT 1

ROMAN DE LA TERRE: WRITING NATURE AS NATIONAL IDENTITY

Au cours des deux siècles qui s'écoulent depuis la Conquête, le Québécois tente sans cesse de séduire et d'épouser son territoire au point d'en paraître l'efflorescence ou la germination. "Avoir des racines", "prendre racine", "se donner des racines" et, à l'inverse, "se sentir déraciné" sont plus que des métaphores littéraires; ils portent un sens strict rendant compte de la suprématie du lieu sur l'être: avant d'être quelqu'un on doit être de quelque part. Lieu de ressourcement et d'enracinement, le territoire donne ainsi au Québécois l'illusion d'une existence concrète, d'une immersion dans le réel, au moment même où la réalité de l'histoire lui échappe.[1]

Luc Bureau, *Entre l'éden et l'utopie*, p. 161.

[1] "In the course of the two centuries that follow the Conquest, the Québécois repeatedly attempts to seduce and wed his territory to the point where he seemingly blooms or sprouts from it. 'To have roots', 'take root', 'give oneself roots', and, on the contrary, 'to feel uprooted' are more than literary metaphors; they bear a strict meaning demonstrating the supremacy of *place* over *being*. Before being *someone*, one must be *somewhere*'. A place of regeneration and rootedness, the territory gives Québécois people the illusion of a concrete existence, of an immersion into the real at the very moment when the reality of history escapes them."

Recent academic debates have called attention to the ways in which nature is not external to the human sphere but is the product of a complex set of relations between societies and their environments. Along these lines, Margaret FitzSimmons has proposed that geographers and other social scientists should "[t]ry to see Nature, like History, like Geography, and Space, as a material, practical and conceptual reconstruction and reification of what are essentially social relationships."[1] As a narrative of the land and of life on the land, the *roman de la terre*, which was written over a hundred years from 1840 to 1940, embodies in its constructions of nature many of the socio-economic relationships that made the rural sphere so central to French-Canadian cultural and economic survival. In this Act, I want to show that in "discursively delimiting"[2] nature, the *roman de la terre* also helped to create the channels of its transformation through capital and technology. Indeed, the traditionalist nationalism the *roman* encapsulates has not merely produced a discourse of identity in Québec, it has also provided the backbone of economic policies meant to lift

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[1] M. FitzSimmons, "The Matter of Nature." *Antipode* 21 (1989), p. 107. For an exploration of those debates, see also, among others, N. Smith, *Uneven Development: nature, capital and the production of space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); B. Braun and N. Castree, eds., *Remaking Reality: nature at the millenium* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); W. Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: rethinking the human place in nature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996); D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the reinvention of nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); P. Blaikie, *The Political-Economy of Soil Erosion* (London: Methuen, 1985).

[2] Braun and Castree, *Remaking*, p. xi.

the Québécois from their inferior socio-economic standing in the province; even when these policies erected themselves in opposition to the old world of the *roman*, and the society it claimed to represent. This was particularly evident in how the Quiet Revolution - of which James Bay is a product - used and expanded the state to improve the status of Francophones, but it is also true of the movements of colonization that sought to counter the pull of exile and the pressures of unemployment by encouraging colonization, during Labelle's time and beyond. Each of these periods of social mobilization called upon various ideas of nature, traditional and modern, which functioned to anchor national identity while fostering territorial expansion and economic development.

Following the Patriot Rebellion and Lord Durham's infamous judgment that French-Canadians were a people "without history and without literature",[3] rural novels - along with other narrative forms - opened an important discursive space where the social and economic life of Francophones, as well as their relationship to the land, could be signified. A hybrid between fiction, moral pamphlet and social commentary, the *roman de la terre* stands in sharp contrast to the modernism of French European novels written at the same time, which the Québec religious elite saw as the expression of a degenerate culture who had lost both faith and morality as a result of the French Revolution. In its prose, the *roman de la terre* aimed to create an inspirational "realism" in which French-Canadians could see themselves and their values represented. This programme was consolidated and popularized by the "École patriotique" whose leader, the

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[3] Quoted in C. Pont-Humbert, *Littérature du Québec* (Paris: Nathan, 1998), p. 32.

Abbé Casgrain, spelled out the principles writers should aspire to in the following terms:

> Si, comme il est incontestable, la littérature est le reflet des moeurs, du caractère, des aptitudes, du génie d'une nation, si elle garde aussi l'empreinte des lieux où elle surgit, des aspects de la nature, des sites, des perspectives, des horizons, la nôtre sera grave, méditative, spiritualiste, religieuse, évangélisatrice comme nos missionnaires, généreuse comme nos martyrs, énergique et persévérante comme nos pionniers d'autrefois... Ainsi sa voie est tracée d'avance; elle sera le miroir fidèle de notre petit peuple...[4]

With its idealist turn of phrase, Casgrain's declaration suggests that the *roman de la terre* can hardly be a "realist" rendition of peasant life: rather, it uses the narrative framework of the novel to epitomize an agriculturist ideology.[5] As I have already suggested, this ideology can be

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[4] "If, as it is incontestable, literature is the reflection of the customs, character, aptitudes and genius of a nation, if it retains also the imprint of the places where it emerges, of their nature, sites, perspectives, and horizons, then ours will be grave, meditative, spiritual, religious, evangelical like our missionaries, generous like our martyrs, energetic and resilient like our pioneers of before... Thus its direction has been traced in advance; it will be the faithful mirror of our small people..." Quoted in M. Servais-Maquoi, *Le Roman de la terre au Québec* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974), p. 9.

[5] Michel Brunet defines this ideology in these terms: "L'agriculturisme est avant tout une façon générale de penser, une philosophie de la vie qui idéalise le passé, condamne le présent et se méfie de l'ordre social moderne. C'est un refus de l'âge industriel contemporain qui s'inspire d'une conception statique de la société. Les agriculturistes soutiennent que le monde occidental s'est égaré en s'engageant dans la voie de la technique et de la machine. Ils dénoncent le matérialisme de notre époque et prétendent que les générations précédentes vivaient dans climat spiritualiste. Selon eux, l'âge d'or de l'humanité aurait été celui où l'immense majorité de la population s'occupait à la culture du sol. Avec nostalgie et émoi, ils rappellent le 'geste auguste du semeur.'" / "Agriculturalism is first and foremost a general way of thinking, a philosophy of life that idealises the past, condemns the present and is suspicious of the modern social order. It is a refusal of the contemporary industrial age based in a static view of society. The agriculturalists maintain that the Western

regarded as "geographical" in that it contributed to shape a space that is both discursive and material, that of the rural. Casgrain himself registers that link by stating that literature is pervaded by the *sites* where it emerges, its *nature, perspectives* and *horizons.* However, Casgrain attributes a "mirror-like" function to literature whereas I wish to emphasize instead the ways in which, as a vehicle of cultural meaning, the *roman de la terre* is implicated in *productions* of space. While my analysis focuses on this body of literary works, it is important to note from the outset that the *roman de la terre* is part of a broad social, spatial and historical context that defines a French cultural relationship to the land in Québec, and cannot be taken to stand over and above the other elements that form this complex landscape. What can be understood as a "Québécois sense of place" emerges from a diversified set of practices - whether farming, fishing, logging, mining, traveling, trading, hunting - and discourses - historical writings, newspapers, religious pamphlets, colonization brochures, folk tales, monographs, paintings, etc. The *roman de la terre* follows more than two hundred years of settlement and agricultural expansion, in and beyond the St.-Lawrence lowlands, during which a very distinctive regional culture has emerged. In this long story of people and land, rural literature should be regarded as the tip of a much larger iceberg. However, my choice of the *roman de la terre* as a focus of analysis is motivated by two important factors: firstly, as a popular form of

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world became lost by following the path of technology and of the machine. They denounce the materialism of our era and maintain that preceding generations lived in a spiritual climate. According to them, the golden age of humanity was when the vast majority of the population cultivated the soil. With a great deal of nostalgia and emotion they evoke the 'august gesture of the sower.'" M. Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée canadienne-française: l'agriculturisme, l'anti-étatisme et le messianisme." *La Présence anglaise et les Canadiens* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1964), p. 119.

literature, the *roman de la terre* presented narratives that were easily accessible to a broad readership. Their simple plot-structures allowed some of these stories to be adapted into other narrative formats whether to be printed into newspapers, broadcast on the radio or, later in the twentieth century, shown on television and turned into films. Secondly, it is that accessible, malleable quality of the *roman de la terre* that allows for the constant reactivating of the various symbols, characters and messages it stages and gives life to. The gallery of characters and situations it contains can be said to possess a signifying power within Québécois society that is sometimes surprisingly independent from the original texts. In that sense, the *roman de la terre* is contained by the larger socio-economic landscape of nineteenth-century rural Québec - and everything that led to the production of that space over three hundred years - at the same time as it contains that landscape within itself and makes it readily available for further recontextualizing. Popular, accessible and richly evocative, the *roman de la terre* represents a prime tool for the production of "taken-for-granted" meanings.

If literature does not simply "mirror" but also contributes to shape the geography it emerges out of - in this case, that of the rural St.-Lawrence - this geography is perhaps not as "traditional" as it might appear at first glance. The *roman de la terre* is, quite literally, the "novel of the land." This land is written as both eternal and subject to change, an ambivalence which fiction is able to accommodate. In "writing the land", the *roman de la terre* fashions a discourse that aims to bind the rural sphere closer with the national community. As my discussion of James Bay will further demonstrate, this community is also bounded by its "national"

economy. Consequently, the Québécois agricultural landscape of the nineteenth century, and beyond, is as much an ideological production as it is the result of economic processes and territorial expansion. The rural ideal was concretized by the literary form that articulated it as much as it was through the morphology of its parishes, fields and farmhouses. While much discussion of the *roman de la terre* has centered on how the genre anchors a nationalist ideology by narrating the connection between people and land, the ways in which the spatial aspect of this connection is articulated in text have not, in their turn, received sufficient attention. And yet it is precisely this articulation that can provide clues for understanding Québec's strategies of territorialization and economic development in the twentieth century. In its various stages, the *roman de la terre* can be regarded as an artifact carrying its own traces of the evolution of what became a dominant discourse of territorial belonging in Québec, the most recent installment of which, I suggest, can be found in James Bay. If the Québécois have transformed that Northern space by remaking broad stretches of it into landscapes of (hydroelectric) power, this transformation was set in train long before the drawing of plans and the building of dams. By reinforcing the cultural meanings of land and nation, the *roman de la terre* produced a specific Québécois territoriality whose concepts of nature are as flexible as text, sometimes contradictory, always ambiguous, and flexible enough to be rewritten to fit each new economic context in which they need to be deployed.

An archetypal narrative?

The book that inaugurated the *roman de la terre* as a genre was entitled *La Terre Paternelle.* It was published in 1846 by Patrice Lacombe

and narrates the life of a French-Canadian family on the land they have inherited through an unbroken succession of ancestors. In the opening lines, the writing scans the natural environment of this "paternal land" before narrowing its perspective on the family, more precisely the father, who enjoys ownership of this land: "La paix, l'abondance régnaient donc dans cette famille; aucun souci ne venait en altérer le bonheur. Contents de cultiver en paix le champ que leurs ancêtres avaient arrosé de leurs sueurs, ils coulaient des jours tranquilles et sereins."[6] In accordance with the traditional framework of a tale, this idyllic scene is soon to be disrupted. One son leaves the ancestral land to be a *coureur de bois*, the other receives the farm from his parents but brings it to ruin by neglecting his agricultural duties to engage instead in commercial ventures. The family must leave the countryside to live in the city where father and son earn a living as "water carriers" (*porteurs d'eau*); Lacombe grasps their hardship by describing how the men become sheathed in ice as the cold temperature freezes their breath, covering their head with "frost and small icicles."[7] This misery is compounded by the death of the eldest son in the winter whose corpse, significantly, must be kept in a mass grave until the soil is no longer frozen. For a "child of the soil", as the family is referred to in the first chapter, a worse fate cannot be imagined. In despair, the father pleads with the cemetery's guardian to lend him a hoe so he can dig a grave: "la terre ne manque pas ici, je vais creuser moi-même la fosse à

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[6] "Peace and abundance reigned in this family; not a single worry would alter their happiness. Happy to cultivate in peace the field which their ancestors had showered with their sweat, they were enjoying happy and serene days." P. Lacombe, *La Terre Paternelle* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1972), p. 43.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 85-86.

mon fils, dans quelque petit coin."[8] The tale does end on a happy note, however, when the youngest son comes back from his travels and - like Ulysses whose wife recognizes him thanks to a scar on his body - is acknowledged by his mother who sees around his neck the medallion of Jesus and Mary she had entrusted to him upon his departure. Thanks to the son's savings and to the kind of happy coincidence only found in tales, the family is able to buy back their ancestral farm and live happily ever after. Before concluding his story, the narrator inserts a commentary that captures well the moral position of the *roman de la terre* toward literary modernism: "Laissons aux vieux pays, que la civilization a gâtés, leurs romans ensanglantés, peignons l'enfant du sol, tel qu'il est, religieux, honnête, paisible de moeurs et de caractère..."[9] If France - spoiled by civilization - can no longer stand as the "old country", the *roman de la terre* is intent on recreating this ideal realm in the "New World."

Lacombe's narrative can be regarded as an archetype of the genre and yet, like all archetypes, it is not simply copied so much as used as a point of reference for variations on its themes. It would be reductive to assume that subsequent examples of the *roman de la terre* do not complicate this idyllic narrative or critically reflect on it. The full production of the genre encompasses few major works yet each one adds another dimension to the rural ideal: from the more didactic "realism" of the early books, novels written in the nineteen-thirties and forties develop a critical, even cynical, look at peasant life, sometimes challenging its most

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[8] "[T]here is no shortage of land here, I will dig my son's grave myself in some small corner." *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[9] "Let's leave these novels full of blood to the old countries that have been spoiled by civilization. Let's depict the child of the soil as he is, religious, honest, peaceful in his customs and character." *Ibid.*, p. 118.

fundamental values. When Dr. Philippe Panneton publishes *Trente Arpents* - under the pseudonym of Ringuet - in 1938, he effectively marks the end of the genre by presenting a protagonist who is subjected to transformations in the land, rather than nurtured by a static, timeless environment. That protagonist, however, holds on to an agriculturist view of the land when nothing in his experience remains to support it. In this way, Ringuet forces us to rethink rurality as a set of beliefs rather than as the unmitigated social reality it is often assumed to be for Francophones in nineteenth-century Québec. More than the narrative itself then, it is perhaps the dominant view of the *roman de la terre* and of rural Québec prior to the Quiet Revolution that has become "archetypal" as many social scientists in the province have recently suggested.[10] Indeed, there is a significant amount of "modernity" in the "tradition" depicted in these rural novels and, in turn, more than a little bit of "tradition" in the "modernity" the Quiet Revolution was supposed to have brought about. An analysis of how these two spheres are intricately laced can start to shed light on why Robert Bourassa - the ultimate apologist for modernity, technology and progress for the Québécois - chose so frequently to call upon archaic notions of the land and its people in speaking about the North, and about the James Bay project.

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[10] See for example the following studies: S. Courville, *Entre ville et campagne. L'essor du village dans les seigneuries du Bas-Canada* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1990); G. Bouchard, *Entre l'Ancien et le Nouveau Monde* (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1996); G. Paquet and J.-P. Wallot, *Lower Canada at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century: reconstructuring and modernization* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, Historical Booklet no. 47, 1988); G. Bourque and J. Duchastel, *Restons traditionnels et progressifs* (Montréal: Boréal, 1988); M. Fournier, *L'Entrée dans la modernité. Science, culture et société au Québec* (Montréal: Saint-Martin, 1986).

In order to bring the *roman de la terre* into dialogue with Bourassa's geographical - and more specifically "northern" - imagination, I want to survey those concepts in the literature that are explicitly spatial. Although land and nation dominate this discursive landscape, they also morph into or draw their contours against various other spatial concepts, to say nothing about how their masculine and feminine characteristics are rarely stable. My intent is not to "clean up" or categorize the broad range of spatial signifiers in the *roman de la terre* but to interrogate them about the role of nature in binding together these ideological formations. The reason for this interrogation is that, both within and beyond the pages of these books, nature functions as a larger signifying realm into which the nation and its various geographical concepts fold. Whether represented as a wilderness, an ordered agricultural landscape or the "unnatural" nature of the city, each of nature's incarnations in the *roman de la terre* has spiraled far beyond the printed page at the same time as it has constituted a commentary on the changes transforming the francophone homeland, which have increased in intensity since the turn of the century. In an effort to contain my discussion, I have selected four texts - *Maria Chapdelaine*, *Trente Arpents*, *L'Appel de la Race* and *Jean Rivard* - which speak more directly to the production of a rural nature bracketed by what is represented as two extremes - that of the wilderness and that of the city - but this should not be taken to imply that other works are silent on this matter. My approach to these novels is thematic rather than chronological as my main purpose is to highlight and establish links between their respective writing of nature as national space. As I hope to show, it is eventually this act of writing which provides an eminently useful

framework for marketing hydroelectric development and for making James Bay, a Cree land, into a Québécois landscape.

Maria Chapdelaine

Published in 1916, this novel by Louis Hémon has been translated into several languages and is one of the most widely read books about Québec. Hémon was originally from France and traveled in Québec meeting and living among the settler communities he then sought to depict in his writing. Set in a fictional, isolated location in the vast North, "Péribonka du bout du monde", *Maria Chapdelaine* deploys various characters who embody the type of the "défricheur" which had already been crystallized in 1874 by another *roman de la terre* entitled *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (which I will discuss later). The *défricheur*, a term which can be roughly translated as "land clearer", is an heroic male figure who stands at the frontline of colonization by penetrating into the territory and opening new farmland. To do so, he typically must confront a "wild" nature and force it to bear fruit through agriculture: this is usually illustrated by the struggle he wages against the forest, patiently pulling out one tree after the next with a minimum of tools. Consequently, the wilderness always stands in the margins of the *roman de la terre* and the gradual advance of a civilizing force is the very condition of this narrative. This arduous process seems to pit humans against nature according to the Western view of its externality, yet this is challenged in the literature by the usual description of the *défricheur's* task as "faire de la terre" (making land).[11] The *roman*

[11] Hémon gives the following characterization of this task: "Faire de la terre! C'est la forte expression du pays, qui exprime tout ce qui gît de travail terrible entre la *pauvreté* du bois sauvage et la *fertilité* finale des champs labourés et semés." / "To

de la terre then stems from an interesting contradiction in its general portrayal of nature which is at the basis of the rural ideal: although it typically regards the agricultural landscape as the timeless and unchanging country of god, each one of its narratives painstakingly traces the process through which the human hand actively produces and transforms that sphere.

"Making land": wilderness versus rural nature

Because it is not yet fully rural, the environment Hémon describes is far from ideal. The Chapdelaine live a long way north of the agricultural belt of the Laurentian region and further still into the woods, away from the small village where settler families like them have painfully carved a few farming properties against winter and wilderness. This distance is conveyed early in the novel as the title character Maria returns from a trip to visit relatives who live south. When the last signs of human occupation vanish and the horse-drawn carriage taking her home enters the woods, she stops being interested in the landscape since the latter is apparently frozen in time:

> Il n'y avait rien à voir ici; dans les villages, les maisons et les granges neuves pouvaient s'élever d'une saison à l'autre, ou bien se vider et tomber en ruines; mais la vie du bois était

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make land! This is the common expression in this country which expresses every bit of harsh work that lies between the *sterility* (poverty) of the wilderness and the *fertility* of fields that have been plowed and sowed." L. Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine* (Montréal: Bibliothèque québécoise, 1990), p. 44, my emphasis. For a discussion of the "externality of nature", see Smith, *Uneven*, op. cited.

quelque chose de si lent qu'il eut fallut plus qu'une patience humaine pour attendre et noter un changement.[12]

In this space removed from the slightly more established farmland of Peribonka, the family is also removed from the church and thus further from god. The nature they are confronting then is not god's nature until it has been made into a rural landscape. For Maria, the inability to attend mass every Sunday reasserts her environment as a wilderness and has her wondering if this could bring "bad luck" to them.[13] This distance is a constant concern for the mother also, who dreams of returning to one of the *old* parishes that line the upper reaches of the St.-Lawrence valley. Thinking about the village her daughter has just visited, she ponders out loud how such a place with "flat terrain, square fields and strong straight fences" would have pleased her and admits regretting that her husband should wish to push always further into the woods rather than settle for a clear piece of land in the south.[14] Hémon describes the father's impulse as follows: "C'était sa passion à lui: *une passion d'homme* fait pour le défrichement plutôt que pour la culture."[15] The discrepancy he sets up between the mother's ideal living space and that of her husband makes each of these environments the mark of a specific gender: if wild nature is male, rural nature is in turn a female entity, i.e. domesticated. Contained in this dualism is also the Québécois opposition between North and South

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[12] "There was nothing here to see; in the villages, houses and barns could be built up from one season to the next, or become empty and fall into ruin; but life in the woods was something so slow that one would need more than a human patience to wait and note a change." *Ibid.*, p. 34.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[15] "It was his own passion. The passion of a man made for land-clearing rather than for agriculture." *Ibid.*, p. 44, my emphasis.

which will be sharply intensified once James Bay becomes the latest incarnation of what I have referred to as the "myth of the North."[16] When father and sons have laboured to tear more trees from the soil and make the land ready - "nu comme la main" - for the plough, the mother celebrates the beauty of their achievement in words that idealize the tamed countryside as a sensual and feminine nature. Interestingly, her vision of nature is also contrasted from that of urban dwellers which is "fake":

> Elle célébra la beauté du monde telle qu'elle la comprenait: non pas la beauté inhumaine, artificiellement échafaudée par les étonnements des citadins, des hautes montagnes stériles et des mers périlleuses, mais la beauté placide et vraie de la campagne au sol riche, de la campagne plate qui n'a pour pittoresque que l'ordre des longs sillons parallèles et la douceur

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[16] The same spatial division along gender lines would be expressed during the building of LG2 by the fact that a majority of men "went up North" to the construction site while women were envisioned to be staying at home in the South. This idea was reasserted by Corinne Lévesque who accompanied her husband to LG3 during the referendum campaign. In a speech addressed to the workers, she acknowledged the role of female labourers in James Bay but also evoked, speaking to the majority of men in the room, that archetypal female figure "who is raising children, who is faithfully and courageously assuming the responsibilities of the household, that woman you think about so often and who is waiting for you." Corinne Lévesque saw herself as a spokesperson for spouses left behind and reminded her audience that these women were also doing their part "with the same courage, the same difficulties and the same hopes" and that it was thanks to them also that Québec was gradually being built. Her speech suggests that, for women, the display of heroic qualities is associated primarily with the home rather than in the unbounded space of the North. Indeed, even the female work force in James Bay was described in terms of their social reproductive functions: "Chaque jour vous assurez vaillamment l'administration, le secrétariat, la nourriture, le service quotidien de tous, de façon modeste, anonyme souvent, mais en assurant au chantier tout entier le plus indispensable soutien." See M. Tremblay, "Corinne Lévesque émeut les travailleurs de LG-3." *Journal de Montréal*, May 1st, 1980.

des eaux courantes, de la campagne qui s'offre nue aux baisers du soleil avec un abandon d'épouse.[17]

This strict dualism between two impulses - that of the sedentary mother versus the nomadic father - and their respective nature - god's rural land in the south versus the "savage" wilderness of the north - is made more complex by the fact that it is their *daughter* who functions as the novel's protagonist. Unlike her parents, Maria does not strongly endorse either one of the natures they stand for, at least not until the end of the book. Her indecision, which provides the central dramatic element of the narrative, is adeptly staged by Hémon: having reached the age when she can marry, Maria meets three different men whom she will consider for a husband. Each potential lover embodies one of the dominant lifestyles that characterized French-Canadians at the turn of the century. François Paradis represents the nomadic *coureur de* bois who refuses to "always scratch the same piece of dirt": having sold the family farm after the death of his father, he goes north to work in logging camps and serve as a guide in the fur trade.[18] Eutrope Gagnon is the model of the *habitant*: humble, stable and hardworking, he is deeply rooted in place and patiently pursuing his lonely task of clearing a piece of land where he hopes to raise a family. The third prospect is Lorenzo Surprenant who, like François Paradis, rejects the life of the *habitant*; yet unlike the *coureur de bois* Lorenzo has chosen a different geographical trajectory, and therefore an

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[17] "She celebrated the beauty of the world as she understood it: not the inhuman beauty, artificially created by the amazement of city people, of high sterile mountains and perilous seas, but the placid and genuine beauty of the country with its rich soil, of the flat countryside whose only picturesque quality was the order of long parallel furrows and the sweetness of fresh water, of the country that offers herself to the sun with a wife's abandon." *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 50.

opposite way of life, by emigrating south to the United States and working in a factory. Maria meets him when he is back in Peribonka to sell his father's property so as to permanently establish himself away from Québec. In these three characters, Hémon captures the contrary forces that became the object of so much concern during the period that followed the Durham report and lasted into the twentieth century - a period frequently characterized as a form of "*survivance*" (survival) - since they were seen to seriously determine the ability of French-Canadians to maintain and expand their rural homeland.

Choosing rural nature, choosing the nation

In typical romance fashion, Maria's heart immediately goes for the adventurer François with whom she falls in love in the spring. But Hémon's novel is hardly a romance and the story takes a tragic turn when he gets lost in the woods and dies without ever returning home. As she mourns him through a long winter, Maria questions her attachment to the place of her birth, a country so harsh and "barbaric" that those who get lost die without rescue.[19] Through Maria's mourning and the dilemma she faces between the two other men who want to marry her, it becomes apparent in the novel that, in line with the usual symbolizing of the nation as female, the protagonist stands for the Québécois nation. Although she considers following Lorenzo Surprenant to experience the "marvels" of the city - lit up streets, magnificent stores, an easy life filled with small pleasures - a voice reminds her of the beauty of the land she wants to run

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

away from. Hémon gives us a description of an idyllic landscape where a luxuriant and fertile nature willfully submits herself to the labour of man:

> L'apparition quasi miraculeuse de la terre au printemps, après les longs mois d'hiver... [...] Le bétail enfin délivré de l'étable entrait en courant dans les clos et se gorgeait d'herbe neuve. Toutes les créatures de l'année: les veaux, les jeunes volailles, les agnelets batifolaient au soleil et croissaient de jour en jour tout comme le foin et l'orge. Le plus pauvre des fermiers s'arrêtait parfois au milieu de sa cour ou de ses champs, les mains dans ses poches et savourait le grand contentement de savoir que la chaleur du soleil, la pluie tiède, l'alchimie généreuse de la terre - toutes sortes de forces géantes - travaillaient en esclaves soumises pour lui... pour lui.[20]

Already associated with the nation, Maria can become nature - and also a "slave" according to Hémon - by marrying and bearing children where she herself was born. Throughout the narrative, "nature", "nation" and "woman" become fused as one and the same entity once François, who threatens the stability of the French by his lack of commitment to place-making, vanishes. In choosing the familiar (signified by Eutrope Gagnon and the agricultural labour of the rural) over the unknown of exile (Lorenzo Surprenant and the industrial labour of the city), Maria reasserts

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[20] "The almost miraculous apparition of the land in the spring, after the long winter months... [...] The cattle finally released from the barn running towards the fields and feasting on new grass. All the newborns of the year: the calves, the chicks, the lambs frolicking in the sun and growing from day to day like the hay and barley. The poorest of farmers would sometimes stop in the middle of his yard or field, hands in his pockets and savour the great satisfaction of knowing that the warmth of the sun, the warm rain, the generous alchemy of the land - all sorts of giant forces - worked like submissive slaves for him... for him."*Ibid.*, p. 190-191.

rural space as her own country. It is significant that she does so against the space of the wilderness (François) and that of the city (Lorenzo). Her final decision comes to her as she sits through the night by the bed of her dead mother and resigns herself, although not without regret, to the fact that she too is capable of living a similar life bound to a traditional man, and therefore to religion, language and land. Simple, stable and patient like the nature/nation she represents, Maria heeds the voices telling her that: "in the country of Québec, nothing must die and nothing must change."[21] Hers is a serene, if not joyful, resolution offering hope that the city will be kept at bay, and that the wilderness will be taken over and transformed into an ideal country for the descendants of her race. Or will it? For despite Hémon's portrayal of Maria as the voice of traditional agriculturism, the attentive reader will recall that, when she entered the woods with her father at the beginning of the book, "a city" of trees opened before her: "Les maisons qui depuis le village s'espaçaient dans la plaine s'évanouirent d'un seul coup, et la perspective ne fut plus qu'une *cité* de troncs nus sortant du sol blanc."[22] In this image, the trees appear to stand as an obstacle to land clearing but they can also be envisioned as a resource connected to the industrial economy of the city. As it pertains to the complex dynamic between tradition and modernity and its production of space in Québec, the author's use of an urban metaphor to describe the wilderness can be regarded as an invitation to situate the *roman de la terre* within a broader geographical sphere.

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

[22] "The houses, which had become sparser in the plain as they moved further from the village, vanished at once and the perspective become that of a city of naked trunks emerging from the white ground."*Ibid.*, p. 33.

Trente Arpents

Written two decades after *Maria Chapdelaine*, in 1938, Ringuet's *Trente Arpents* handles some of the same themes but brings them to a much less heroic conclusion. Throughout the narrative, the city figures more predominantly as another kind of wilderness pushing against and threatening to undo rural nature. The central character is a farmer named Euchariste Moisan whom the story follows through the various stages of his life on the farm, which are portrayed as different seasons, starting with the spring and ending in winter. Once he has taken over his uncle's farm, Euchariste marries a neighbouring girl and, quickly after their first child, the two seem fully integrated to the rhythm and order of the nature around them, which assigns each gender its particular tasks. Significantly, the introduction of this gendered order is seen as the result of man having given up haphazard hunting and fishing activities to yoke himself to the rhythm of the land:

> Et cela suivant l'ordre établi depuis les millénaires, depuis que l'homme, abdiquant la liberté que lui permettait une vie de chasse et de pêche, a accepté le joug des saisons et soumis sa vie au rythme annuel de la terre à laquelle il est désormais accouplé. Euchariste: les champs; Alphonsine: la maison et l'enfant.[23]

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[23] "And this following the order established since thousands of years, since man, abdicating the freedom afforded to him by a life of hunting and fishing, accepted the yoke of seasons and submitted his life to the yearly rhythm of the land to which he is wedded from now on. Eucharist: the fields; Alphonsine: the house and child." Ringuet, *Trente Arpents* (Montréal: Flammarion, 1991), p. 48. This view of hunting as an unplanned and unpredictable activity was predominant during the court battle by the Cree that led to an injunction to stop construction on the La Grande river. In order to establish a legitimate claim to the land, the Cree had to prove that hunting and fishing were not haphazard but highly structured and reliable means of subsistence in their communities. See H. Feit, "The Ethno-Ecology of the Waswanipi

When the initial changes associated with marriage and birth have taken place in the short span of a few months, Euchariste trusts that the remainder of his life will be a repetition of the same: "les jours à venir passeraient sans apporter autre chose que le travail quotidien calqué sur celui de la veille, et les saisons calquées sur les saisons précédentes."[24] Yet this is not so. With its central character fully attached to the land at the very beginning of the novel, the story unfolds through the seasons as a gradual undoing of this physical anchor. This painful process begins in a dispute with a neighbour who buys a piece of land from Euchariste where the respective property of each man meet. The farmer sells it for what he thinks is an advantageous sum but soon discovers that his neighbour has fooled him into a dishonest transaction. The piece of land in question contains ochre, a substance he can sell at a high price to make paint. Euchariste's financial loss is illustrated by the fact that his soil is carted away by strangers who have a more lucrative use for it than agriculture, which is to manufacture paint. In a key scene, he realizes the wound inflicted on his property as the land is cut open and the ochre-rich dirt taken away by the bag full: "il vit un trou béant à flanc de côte, une plaie vive où saignait la terre chargée d'ocre rouge. Il resta ainsi un moment figé, son coeur reflétant la blessure de sa terre, de la vieille terre des Moisan violentée par un autre..."[25] Suddenly a portable resource because it

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Cree: or how hunters can manage their resources. B. Cox, ed. *Cultural Ecology: readings on the Canadian Indians and Eskimos* (Toronto: McClelland and Steward, 1973), pp. 115-125.

[24] "The days to come would pass without bringing anything else but the daily work copied from that of the day before, and the seasons copied from the preceding ones."*Ibid.*, p. 67.

[25] "[H]e saw a gaping hole on the hillside, an open wound from which the land, charged with red ochre, was bleeding. For a moment he remained transfixed, his

is valuable outside of its immediate environment, the soil is rendered vulnerable to the intrusion of foreigners who can appropriate it, provided they possess the right capital. The thought of his land uprooted in this way is as shocking as it is inconceivable to the *habitant.*

Blood and soil: losing a cultural anchor

And yet the old man must conceive of it as he is faced with the fact that not only his soil but also his son can be taken away if the money is right. This symbolic bleeding of the land is particularly painful to the central character because it follows the recent departure of his favorite son to the United States where he has elected to work in a factory rather than stay on the land. This is a decision which the farmer clearly cannot comprehend nor accept since it negates every term of belonging he stands for:

> Un Moisan désertait le sol et le pays de Québec et tout ce qui était leur depuis toujours pour s'en aller vers l'exil total; vers un travail qui ne serait pas celui de la terre; vers des gens qui parleraient un jargon étranger; vers des villes lointaines où l'on ne connaît plus les lois ni du ciel des hommes ni du ciel de Dieu.[26]

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heart bearing the blow to his land, the old land of the Moisan assaulted by another..."*Ibid.*, p. 171.

[26] "An heir of the Moisan was deserting the soil and the country of Québec, all that had always been theirs, toward a complete exile; toward a form of labour that would not be that of the land; toward people that would speak a foreign language; toward faraway cities where one knows neither the laws of man nor the laws of God." *Ibid.*, p. 164.

In drawing a parallel between the bleeding of the land and the loss of a son to a doubly foreign space - that of the city and that of another country - Ringuet illustrates how place and national identity are inextricably bound for the farmer in the rural environment. The novel takes a decisively critical and pessimistic view of this when the main character himself is severed from that bond by his own progeny. After the departure of Éphrem to the United States, his second son Étienne takes over the farm. Various events unfold which consolidate Étienne's control of the ancestral land, and his resolve that his father cannot stay there anymore and should be sent to live in the United States with his first son. In the rural context where departure of the children was usually the ultimate threat to the family farm, the fact that Euchariste does have an heir to the land but is forced into exile by that same individual constitutes a particularly strong blow to the old farmer's world view that blood and soil are melded together. The impossibility for the character to maintain a bond with the place of his birth even as his descendants become stewards of the ancestral farm is a serious challenge to the belief, so central to the rural ideal, that the land could safeguard tradition and cultural identity by anchoring it geographically. If this ideal is lost for good when Euchariste - with his wife now deceased - begins his journey to the city, in fact its unraveling starts long before within the space of the farm itself which, despite the character's belief, is not immune to the forces of change.

Indeed, the uprooting of the farmer from the universe he knows starts when a fire leaves nearly nothing unscathed on his property; once again the land is bleeding as a torrent of "bloody light" runs from the

windows.[27] The task of rebuilding is managed by Étienne who accuses his father of causing the fire and thus seeks to undercut him at every stage of decision-making. In this confrontation, Ringuet stages the generation gap that is slowly pushing father and son apart as the latter shuns Euchariste's desire to rebuild everything exactly as it was, envisioning more modern structures instead: "La grange serait recouverte non pas de bardeaux de cèdre, *à l'ancienne mode*, mais bien de tôle avec un comble à la française. Quant à l'étable, elle aurait des fondements et un plancher en béton..."[28] For the old farmer, the erection of new buildings transforms the land to the point where it becomes unrecognizable to him: "la figure même de la vieille terre des Moisan lui en était devenue méconnaissable. Il ne se sentait plus chez lui."[29] Ill at ease in the new barn, he turns to his fields in an effort to find himself at home, or simply to find himself.[30] This is in vain since the land is insensible and even turns against him by refusing to provide the strength and renewal it so willingly gives, like a mother, to other members of her creation: "vieilli, usé par elle à soixante ans, il eut voulu que le seul contact de cette terre suffît à lui redonner force et autorité, à faire monter en ses membres défraîchis un peu de la sève que si généreusement elle dispensait aux sarrasins et aux mils tout comme au chiendent et à l'herbe à poux."[31] When Euchariste finally leaves the farm

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

[28] "The barn would be topped not with cedar shingles, *in the old style*, but with an aluminum roof with a French-style gable. As for the stables, their foundation and floor would be made of concrete..." *Ibid.*, p. 192, my emphasis.

[29] "[T]he very face of the Moisan's old land had become unrecognizable. He did not feel at home anymore." *Ibid.*, p. 195.

[30] "Espérant se retrouver chez lui, se retrouver lui-même." *Ibid.*, p. 195.

[31] "[A]t sixty, old and used by her, he would have wanted that the sole contact with this land (*la terre*) suffice to bring back his strength and authority, to bring up into his tired limbs a bit of the sap that she so generously dispensed to the buckwheat and millet, as she did to the couch grass and the poison ivy." *Ibid.*, p. 196. Here Ringuet

on the journey that will take him to join his son in the United States, he seems like an empty shell of himself. So strongly is his identity rooted in the land that departure amounts to a loss of self: "c'est à peine s'il se rendait compte que c'était bien lui, Euchariste Moisan, qui partait ainsi."[32] The fact that the character is unable to grasp the reality of his departure is a suggestion of the extent to which he has been unaware of his own belonging to the land, upholding it and living by it quite unconsciously:

> Rien qu'à voir l'étable, il se figurait l'état du troupeau et son rapport; s'il n'en respirait point en esprit l'odeur chaude, c'est que jamais sa conscience n'avait réellement perçu cette odeur où il était né, où il avait journellement vécu; cette odeur qui imprégnait son corps, ses vêtements et son esprit même.[33]

All the ardent rhetoric of the religious elite - even that of the Curé Labelle - could not spell a more emotional plea about the connection between nature and national identity than the simple image Ringuet gives of his farmer bidding good-bye to the farm. Even nature is not quite herself on the day of this departure by bringing rain in February.

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seems to makes an allusion to the Greek myth of Anteus: son of Poseidon (water) and Gaïa (earth), Anteus is made invincible from a direct contact with his mother, the Earth. In his struggle with Heraclites, Anteus purposefully collapses to the ground when he feels his strength diminish. By drinking his sweat, his mother Gaïa revivifies his blood. When he discovers Anteus' recourse, Heraclites lifts him off the ground and chokes him in the air. In his book *Entre l'Éden et l'Utopie*, Luc Bureau refers to this myth to explain Québécois territoriality. See Bureau, *op. cited*, p. 158-161.

32 "[H]e barely realized that it was him, Eucharisted Moisan, who was leaving in this way." Ringuet, *Trente*, p. 219.

33 "Just looking at the stable, he could assess the state of the herd; if he did not mentally take in its warm smell, it was because his conscience had never really perceived this odor in which he had been born and had lived on a daily basis, this smell that permeated his body, his clothes and his very spirit." *Ibid.*, p. 225.

Unnatural nature: the experience of exile

In his exile, the farmer attempts to recover his sense of identity through several sad attempts at recreating the natural environment of his past life - notably by planting a small garden - all of which end in failure. The last part of the book is where Ringuet reasserts the contours of what Euchariste has lost by repeatedly contrasting it, and also linking it, with the new urban space where he finds himself. This is perhaps most powerfully done in a scene that takes place moments after Ephrem picks up his father at the train station where the farmer struggles to reconcile the face in front of him and the clumsy French he hears with the memory of his son. After what seems to the farmer a roaring drive with buildings apparently throwing themselves at him, the two of them reach the top of a hill where they get out of the car to contemplate the landscape below them. Adjusting his gaze, Euchariste discerns as far as the eye can see a blackish field with hundreds of perfectly parallel rows running through. He is immensely pleased to find this piece of cultivated land in the middle of the city and touched that his son would have him take notice of it. But Euchariste is in for a surprise that once again shocks his traditional perception of nature: what he thinks is a well-plowed field is really the roof of the "Sunshine Corporation", a massive industrial plant where his son is employed manufacturing lamp bulbs.[34] Looking at this "metal field", the old farmer sees a sterile meadow where men, including his son, are forced to work away from the sun's light while ironically manufacturing it. In this scene, Ringuet captures another dimension of Euchariste's experience of exile, which is that he moves from "natural" to "manufactured" nature in his transition from the country to the city. And

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

yet, like Maria entering a hybrid "wooded city", Euchariste must realize that the distance between the two is not so clear-cut: as Éphrem proudly announces, under the roof of the Sunshine Corporation thousands of workers make those same electric bulbs that had lit up the old farm kitchen back home. In this industrial landscape then is contained that very traditional sphere he always thought would be fundamentally denaturalized by the introduction of the new: "Moisan regardait cette aire métallique et inféconde qui subitement avait évoqué sa terre lointaine et la cuisine tiède où l'on se rassemble à cette heure particulière et si douce d'entre travail et repos où les lampes s'allument..."[35] Although father and son seemingly belong to two different places and two different time periods, Ephrem's labour finds its way into this most intimate of rural sphere, above the little social world of the kitchen table where families gather and traditions, so the understanding goes, are kept. If nature can be transformed and manufactured for the Sunshine Corporation, what fate will be reserved to the French identity that was molded and nurtured by it? As *Trente Arpents* shows, these questions cannot be expelled from the orbit of the rural since the latter also belongs to the space of modernity; yet expelled they were and quite effectively by the religious discourse that perpetuated a static view of the land. In the next section, I want to look at a key proponent of this discourse who, in his essentialist rendering of nature, fashions a broad set of rhetorical tools that represent the Québécois nation as a timeless and homogenous entity.

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[35] "Moisan was looking at this metallic, sterile surface which suddenly had evoked his distant land and the warm kitchen where people gather at this hour between work and rest, so special and so sweet, when the lamps are turned on..." *Ibid.*, p. 231.

L'Appel de la Race

The persistence of a traditionalist view of the land in Québec can be explained by the fact that such a perspective is useful to the strengthening of the national community, and becomes indispensable in the maintenance of a legitimate claim to territory; especially in the process of its expansion such as was the case in James Bay. In *Trente Arpents*, the fact that nature *as well as* the farmer seem to lose their essential self on the day of his departure is a good example of the discursive potential of nature in giving a fixed meaning to that most dynamic of categories, which is national identity. As I have tried to show, both Hémon and Ringuet's novels flesh out their characters by describing the kinds of nature they identify with. Depending on their positioning in relation to the rural sphere, these characters express different degrees of "French-Canadianness." Maria and Euchariste are extreme in this regard: their national identity is their geography, their sense of place is the very definition of rural nature. More than the "faithful mirror" of a people as the followers of the *École patriotique* would have it, the *roman de la terre* is an exercise in deploying the broad rhetorical register of nature to fashion the image that should appear in the mirror of cultural identity; which, according to the Church, should be rural. It "constructs" the essence of this image and erases the trace of its construction since nature, like the nation, is that which does not change and thus eternally repeats itself. Here Maria's words are again significant: "In the country of Québec, nothing must die and nothing must change." Considering that much *had* changed when *Maria Chapdelaine* was written - over 50 per cent of Québec's population resided in urban areas when Hémon published his book - these words must be understood as a wishful call to action rather than the "mirror" of an essential Québécois

identity.[36] If French-Canadians were not quite that close to the land, the *roman de la terre* would do its best to make it so.

One novel offers us a powerful depiction of this rhetorical function of nature as the essence of national identity. *L'Appel de la race* by the Abbé Lionel Groulx was written in 1922. It was a controversial novel at the time and remains so to this day as Québec tries to move away from an ethnic nationalism into a more inclusive discourse of place and identity. Its essentialist portrayal of the French and English - which Groulx envisions as separate "races" - is deployed through a geographical determinism where constructions of nature simultaneously function as constructions of ethnicity. Throughout a career that spanned most of the first half of this century, Groulx was a tireless nationalist advocate for the French whose national destiny he saw in teleological terms as the will of a Catholic God which would eventually be fulfilled. He was Chair of the History Department at Laval University from 1915 to 1949 and, as an historian, he viewed the writing of the past as a tool for directing social action. Although based on actual events, the fictional framework of *L'Appel de la race* allowed him to express political opinions more freely than could historical writing. More than a *roman de la terre* then, *L'Appel* was a *roman à thèse*, expressing a strong moral and political position about the situation of Francophones in Canada and the necessity of maintaining an exclusive homeland where they could protect language and religion.

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[36] K. McRoberts, "La Thèse tradition-modernité: l'historique québécois." Elbaz et. al., eds., *Les Frontières*, op. cited, p. 34. This number is taken from the census of 1921, *Maria Chapdelaine* was first published as a book in 1916.

Homo quebecensis

The U.S.-based scholar Richard Handler has commented on the work of Lionel Groulx, and more specifically on the discourse of nature and identity that pervades it. His book *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* presents and analyzes several interviews with Francophones conducted at the height of the separatist movement that culminated in the referendum of 1980. Well after the *roman de la terre* or the period of *survivance*, Handler inquires into the roots of attachment to place by asking his interviewees to explain their sense of belonging toward Québec. His study outlines how the symbolic realm of nature still works to anchor the national community in place by "naturalizing" its presence upon the land - or it would be more accurate to say the "imaginative geography of the land", since Handler's interviewees are not specifically rural inhabitants. Handler draws parallels between his own data and Lionel Groulx's writings:

> The earth, one's native soil, one's fatherland, one's country - attachment to these things is considered by nationalists to be supremely natural, as is the way of life built on the basis of this attachment. Consider the notions of land and the national territory found in the works of Lionel Groulx. The colony of New France, from which sprang the French-Canadian people, is said to have been planted in the soil of the New World. The soil protected and nourished the nascent collectivity, providing the material necessities of life and promoting those moral virtues associated with uncorrupted labor and a pastoral milieu. But man has also given to the land. The soil has been conquered, developed, "humanized" by

the succession of human generations living upon it. The people mark the land with their soul and personality, and, above all, they love the land.[37]

This singular relationship between people and the environment in Lionel Groulx is captured by the expression *homo quebecensis.* The term suggests that descendants of New France constitute a distinct example of the human species, as particular to their own milieu as a type of rock or plant.[38] Such a specimen has undergone: "an adaptation that binds him indissolubly to the niche into which he has settled." As Handler remarks, Groulx maintains in his writings that this niche "creates a human variety, just as the soil and climate create biological varieties."[39]

The *roman de la terre* contains various fine specimens of this species and contrasts them against others who do not belong to it since they are essentially "detached" from the land rather than "attached" to it.[40] In *L'Appel de la race,* rural nature functions as a point of origin and the return to it restores the moral essence of the central character Jules de Lantagnac. The book opens when de Lantagnac has just come back from a trip to the rural locale of his birth, which is a catalyst for the recovery of his true and essential self. After an absence of more than twenty years during which he has worked in the urban and anglicized region of Ottawa, de Lantagnac feels that he was able to reconnect with his "moral climate"

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[37] R. Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 33-34.

[38] Handler attributes the expression to Marcel Rioux in a monograph entitled *Les Québécois.* The *homo quebecensis* is the "human specimen" found in Québec. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[40] Morissonneau, *Terre Promise,* op. cited, p. 15.

by going to his physical birth place. Recounting his trip to a priest who is also his moral guide, de Lantagnac uses vivid landscape descriptions and invites his friend to "gather his memories along a beloved shore" with him.[41] The character seems to be glancing back upon himself while he glances at the physical features of the land: "Et me voyez-vous qui souris à ces vieilles choses retrouvées où je me retrouve moi-même comme en un visage qui me ressemble?"[42] As his moral guide tells him, this return to his true self was inevitable: the priest compares de Lantagnac's pilgrimage to a metal bar that has shattered the foreign layers in his identity, allowing "the man of unity" to resurface.[43]

Nature as national space

Finding himself in nature, de Lantagnac necessarily finds his national identity since Québec's rural nature appears, in the book, to have an inherent patriotic character. This is indicated in a scene which symbolizes another return to origins, this time for his children who will be removed from their anglophone upbringing - from their mother who is English - and given back to the French "race." Here the gender structure of the nation shows a contradiction: while nature is symbolized as female with connotations of fertility, purity and renewal, the birth mother of de Lantagnac's children is in fact a woman who *threatens* the fulfillment of their true national destiny because she belongs to the wrong culture. The implication - which again demonstrates the essential bond between nature

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[41] L. Groulx, *L'Appel de la race* (Montréal: Fides, 1980), p. 20.
[42] "Do you see me smiling at these old things where I find myself again as though in a face that resembles me?" *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

and nation so predominant in Groulx - is that the children's "real" mother is not their biological parent but nature herself who nurtures her progeny through the land.

In line with de Lantagnac's pilgrimage, his children's ability to recover their French roots corresponds to a physical movement back to the land of their ancestors. This movement is initiated when father and children take a boat ride on a lake in the Québec Laurentians where the family has recently acquired a property. Approaching the end of a bay, they hear a group of religious men singing traditional French-Canadian songs. As described by Groulx, the scenery provides an acoustic background for the melodies, as if the landscape itself was playing them. When they get to the last song - which is the national anthem - the echo seems to come from the highest peaks: "on eût dit que l'hymne national devenait l'acclamation naturelle, le chant inné de la terre canadienne."[44] This merging of the national anthem with the physical space of Québec exemplifies what Handler has in mind when he refers to the geographical determinism found in Groulx whereby the soil of Québec produces the *homo quebecensis.* The novel shows the rhetorical function of nature in "naturalizing" the bond between people and land which turns them into subjects of the nation and therefore delimits, through them, the boundaries of national space. When de Lantagnac's daughter breaks the awed silence following the end of the national anthem heard on the lake, she exclaims:

"Quel beau pays tout de même que ces Laurentides du Québec! [...] N'est-ce pas qu'ici l'on parle *naturellement* le français?" Wolfred supports

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[44] "[O]ne would have thought that the national anthem was becoming the natural acclamation, the innate chant of the *terre canadienne* (French-Canadian land)." *Ibid.*, p. 35.

her assertion by affirming "il me semble qu'ici cela va tout seul."[45] Indeed, "the country air helping", the whole family will speak French for the remainder of their stay. Thus, the underlying message of *L'Appel de la race* is that French-Canadian identity is an essence that can be recovered intact from a return to the environment that initially imparted this identity, even after an absence of twenty years. If cultural essence can get clouded when it leaves the land and is exposed to other "unnatural natures", the ideology of agriculturism maintains that the rural is a matrix that can always restore identity since nature is immune to change. Indeed, as each of these novels illustrate, change in nature is always cyclical so that its culmination is a return to the point of origin. As a result, nature's change is a controlled activity that never threatens the integrity of the structure within which it happens: if humans change, nature in turn remains the same. By adopting nature as its narrative framework, the nation projects itself as permanent and acquires a discourse of origin.

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Having touched on the rhetorical uses of nature in Québécois rural novels, I want to return to the issue of tradition and modernity in this narrative, with the added problematic of essence and cultural identity. Although a few key points remain to be explored before I can bring this discussion to bear on Bourassa's particular use of the old and the new in his enframing of James Bay, let me say for now that, in the same way that tradition and modernity are equally constitutive of the spaces encountered in the *roman de la terre*, the essentialist notions that tradition begets -

[45] "What a beautiful country these Québec Laurentians are! Isn't it here that people *naturally* speak French?" "Yes, it seems to me that here this goes by itself." *Ibid.*, p. 36, my emphasis.

which are most apparent in Groulx's work - are not necessarily left at the door when Québec supposedly enters into modernity. In other words, the rural can be captured by change, progress and modernity while still functioning as the matrix of a fundamental French-Canadian identity; in the same way, the modernity and change associated with the Quiet Revolution can continue to be endowed with a surprisingly static understanding of the past and of the cultural identity it serves to anchor. Handler views this interdependence between past and present as the juxtaposition of a process of evolution onto traditional notions of land and identity:

> [C]ontemporary nationalisms [in Québec], like the clerical-conservative varieties, rely on the notion of a fixed national essence, though they add a developmental dimension not stressed by writers like Groulx. In other words, even when evolution is envisioned as ongoing, it is said to proceed on the basis of what has been fixed, once and for all, in the past. Like the metaphor of the collective individual, the species metaphor facilitates the attribution of boundedness to the nation.[46]

There is at least one *roman de la terre* that speaks directly to these considerations by telling a different story of the land, one where representations of a nature that anchors national identity exist side by side with an entrepreneurial force openly seeking to appropriate this nature to improve and exploit it. The hero of this novel, named Jean Rivard, may be a traditional *défricheur* but this does not stop him from being also an "economist." In that way, he brings colonization and economic development

[46] Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 44.

- what can be summarily regarded as "past" and "present" - closely together within the space of the nation.

Jean Rivard, le défricheur / *Jean Rivard, l'économiste*

> Honneur aux défricheurs! Honneurs! mille fois honneur aux vaillants pionniers de la forêt! (Applaudissements.) Ils sont la gloire et la richesse du pays. Qu'ils continuent à porter inscrits sur leur drapeau les mots sacrés: Religion, Patrie, Liberté, et le Canada pourra se glorifier d'avoir dans son sein une race forte et généreuse, des enfants pleins de vigueur et d'intelligence, qui transmettront intactes, aux générations à venir, la langue et les institutions qu'ils ont reçues de leurs pères. (Applaudissements prolongés).[47]

Antoine Gérin-Lajoie sketched his hero in a two-part novel - *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* and *Jean Rivard, l'économiste* - which he published in 1874 and 1876. Interestingly, both books were written several years before the three novels I have already discussed. I have reserved its analysis until last because, more than any other book, it sheds light on the *roman de la terre* as a discourse which is simultaneously located in the past and active into the present. The didactic tone of Gérin-Lajoie's two-

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[47] "Cheers for the défricheurs! Cheers! A thousand cheers for the courageous pioneers of the forest. (Applause.) They are the glory and the wealth of the country. May they continue to bear on their flag the sacred words: Religion, *Patrie*, Liberty, and Canada will be able to glorify itself to have in its bosom a strong and generous race, children full of vigor and intelligence, who will transmit intact to the upcoming generations the language and institutions they have received from their fathers. (Long applause.)." A. Gérin-Lajoie, *Jean Rivard, le défricheur* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1977), pp. 310-311.

volume narrative clearly predominates over its literary voice: the author's chief intent was to deliver a message that could somehow alter the flow of the urban exile of Francophones he observed around him. Like the religious elite of the time, Gérin-Lajoie advocated the opening of new land in the Laurentian region. The central character, Jean Rivard, embodies this programme of territorial expansion; a clearly utopian figure, he is also the epitome of the *défricheur* in his relentless efforts to "make land." Forced to abandon school when his father dies, Rivard uses his small inheritance to buy a remote piece of land in the forest in what is today the Eastern townships, southeast of Montréal. Prior to his retreat to the woods where he will fell tree after tree to push back the wilderness and create a manageable space, Rivard has a dream in which he sees the forest falling away to be replaced by abundant harvests of grains, fruit and flowers. In this vision, the higher destiny he must follow is revealed to him:

> Enfin il arriva qu'une nuit, après plusieurs heures d'une insomnie fiévreuse, il s'endormit profondément, et eut un songe assez étrange. Il se crut transporté au milieu d'une immense forêt. Tout-à-coup des hommes apparurent armés de haches, et les arbres tombèrent çà et là sous les coups de la cognée. Bientôt ces arbres furent remplacés par des moissons luxuriantes; puis des vergers, des jardins, des fleurs surgirent comme par enchantement. Le soleil brillait dans tout son éclat; il se crut au milieu du paradis terrestre. En même temps il lui sembla entendre une voix lui dire: il ne dépend que de toi d'être un jour l'heureux et paisible possesseur de ce domaine.[48]

[48] "Finally one night, after many hours of a feverish insomnia, he fell deeply asleep and had a peculiar dream. He felt himself transported to an immense forest. Suddenly

Each book meticulously details the steady process through which Rivard transforms the wild forest into a perfectly planned space of civilization. At every stage of development of his domain, Rivard appears fully in control of the various operations involved, thanks to his highly systematic management of the farm and global approach to the town he will help grow around it. In *Jean Rivard* then, rural nature has ramifications that are not always so clearly at the forefront of other *romans de la terre*: in addition to its yearly harvest, the land gradually sprouts new roads and fields, additional streets and houses, a church, a school, various local industries, until Rivard's hamlet is a model of sound regional development. The concluding section is a return to what has become "Rivardville" after fifteen years of development told through the eyes of an external observer who records the perfect land-use program the protagonist has set into place. It is suiting that Rivard and his guest go up to a balcony on the second floor of his house in order to get a panoramic view from above of this newly rationalized landscape:

> Et nous montâmes sur la galerie du second étage de sa maison, d'où ma vue pouvait s'étendre au loin de tous côtés.
> Je vis à ma droite une longue suite d'habitations de cultivateurs, à ma gauche le riche et joli village de Rivardville, qu'on aurait pu sans arrogance décorer du nom de ville.
> Il se composait de plus d'une centaine de maisons éparses sur une dizaine de rues d'une régularité parfaite. Un grand nombre

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some men appeared who were bearing axes and the trees fell here and there under their blows. Soon these trees were replaced by luxurious harvests; then some orchards, gardens, flowers sprang up as though magically. The sun was shining in all of its splendor; he believed himself to be standing in an earthly paradise. At the same time, he thought he could hear a voice saying: it only depends on you to become one day the happy and peaceful owner of this domain." *Ibid.*, p. 14.

> d'arbres plantés le long des rues et autour des habitations donnaient à la localité une apparence de fraîcheur et de gaîté. On voyait tout le monde, hommes, femmes, jeunes gens, aller et venir, des voitures chargées se croisaient en tous sens; il y avait enfin dans toutes les rues un air d'industrie, de travail et d'activité qu'on ne rencontre ordinairement que dans les grandes cités commerciales.[49]

Not one element is amiss in this space - especially not the trees which now follow the geometric pattern of streets instead of lying randomly about in the forest - with the result that what the external narrator is contemplating is, for all intents and purposes, a Garden of Eden finally recovered through planning, labour and good economic policy. Furthermore, what the two characters contemplate from their viewing platform is also the emergence of the city in the countryside, or at least of the industriousness and activity usually associated with it. If the *roman de la terre* tended to idealize the rural sphere as somehow detached from economic activity and therefore guarded from the changes associated with it, Gérin-Lajoie is unabashed about the role of that activity in helping to shape a space that is no less the country of God and of the nation. Turned into the rational space of capital accounting, this rural nature also appears more masculine.

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[49] "And we climbed onto the balcony of the second story of his house from where my perspective could stretch to all sides into the distance. On my right I saw a long row of farm houses, on my left the rich and pleasant village of Rivardville that one could have referred to - without being arrogant - as a city. It was composed of more than a hundred houses spread along a dozen streets of perfect regularity. A great number of trees planted along the streets and around the houses gave the town an air of freshness and good cheer. One could see everyone, men, women and young people, come and go, as well as loaded cars crossing in every direction. There was in all the streets an appearance of industry, of labour and activity that one normally would encounter solely in great commercial cities." *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

Habitant, planner and economist

Another notable difference in Gérin-Lajoie's narrative is that its protagonist is not as "organic" as other heroes of rural literature - he could hardly be described as a *homo quebecensis* - and yet this does not stop him from being a fierce proponent of the importance of place for French-Canadian national identity. Robert Major has argued that Jean Rivard, who is an exemplary republican and capitalist, fits the model of the American hero of colonization described by Franklin, de Tocqueville and Emerson better than he does that of the French-Canadian *habitant*.[50] Although he may clearly exhibit other cultural references as a fictional character, I want to suggest that his difference lies also in the fact that he does not fear that his identity will be altered by changes in the land. This makes him much more proactive about becoming the very agent of these changes and it is in that quality that he endeavours to fulfill his national duty. Indeed, it is chiefly out of a sense of duty toward his country that Rivard sets out to create his beautiful garden. Against the usual characterization of the *habitant*, Gérin-Lajoie is intent on showing that his hero becomes more than a farmer once his land is ready for cultivation but also acts as an economist, planner and city developer; all activities which appear not in opposition to each other but fully complementary. Agriculture is presented as the surest way to create jobs and bring about progress and prosperity, since the opening of new lands attracts other industries. This is done by putting much more emphasis on another important engine of territorial expansion, which is natural resources. The shaping of the wilderness into

[50] See R. Major, *Jean Rivard ou l'art de réussir: idéologies et utopies dans l'oeuvre d'Antoine Gérin-Lajoie* (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1991).

agricultural lands opens channels for tapping into its resources. What is important to grasp in the context of the Québécois dynamic between territory and identity is that, like agriculture, the tapping of resources is also an act of appropriation of *nature for the nation*, even if it replaces the old rhetoric of the land with that of progress and development. If my argument is right about the necessity of conflating nature and nation to confer essence onto cultural identity, the distance is therefore very short from "natural" to "national" resources, i.e. the appropriation of resources for a specific cultural group; it only requires a slight change in the kind of "nature" that defines national identity. This shift and its implications will appear more clearly in my analysis of Bourassa's claim to the resources of James Bay. For now, let me explore more fully how this is rendered in *Jean Rivard.*

Throughout the novel, the connection between the hero and the environment he will act upon hinges on the nation. The latter is never presented in abstract terms; if it is imagined, it is imagined through the process of its actualization. As in the work of Hémon, Ringuet and Lionel Groulx, the nation beckons through its nature; only this time it does so through the whole of its natural resources more than through the sole promise of an agricultural yield. Envisioned as a way of claiming the land, the tapping of resources and the labour associated with it effectively draws - both figuratively and physically - the boundaries of the national space Rivard wishes to open for his descendants. This is illustrated in a pivotal scene where a young Rivard speaks to his tearful mother prior to his exile in the woods where he will go from rags to riches in the space of a few years, using only the means nature puts at his disposal. He tells her

that, were he setting out for a foreign destination, she would be warranted in her sorrows. Instead, he reassures her:

> Je demeure dans le pays qui m'a vu naître, je veux contribuer à exploiter les *ressources naturelles* dont la nature l'a si abondamment pourvu; je veux tirer du sol les trésors qu'il recèle, et qui, sans des bras forts et vigoureux, y resteront enfouis longtemps encore. Devons-nous attendre que les habitants d'une autre hémisphere viennent, sous nos yeux, s'emparer de nos forêts, qu'ils viennent choisir parmi les immenses étendues de terre qui restent encore à défricher les régions les plus fertiles, les plus riches, puis nous contenter ensuite de leurs rebuts? Devons-nous attendre que ces étrangers nous engagent à leur service? Ah! à cette pensée, ma mère, je sens mes muscles se roidir et tout mon sang circuler avec force.[51]

The fear of foreign intrusion, of being dispossessed of something which rightly belongs to French-Canadians, is strongly expressed in this passage and is consistent with the well-known slogans of territorial appropriation I have already mentioned: "Emparons-nous du sol" and "Maîtres chez nous." Furthermore, the gender dynamics of such a territorial imperative show their traditional contours, as does the usual conflation of woman and

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[51] "I remain in the country of my birth, I want to contribute to the exploitation of the *natural resources* which nature has so abundantly endowed it with; I want to pull from the soil the treasures it holds and which, without vigourous arms, will remain sunk deep for longer still. Must we wait for the inhabitants of another hemisphere to come and grab hold of our forests right under our eyes, to choose amongst the vast stretches of land that still remain to be cleared the regions that are most fertile, most rich, then content ourselves with their leftovers? Must we wait for these strangers to hire us for their service? Mother, when I think of this I feel my blood start moving." Gérin-Lajoie, *Jean Rivard*, p. 17, my emphasis.

nation since this declaration is addressed to the mother who remains silent and nods in acceptance while her son vouches his masculine strength for her protection. In the initial stages of his work, Rivard finds courage in the assurance that by serving his country he will gain a wife which, of course, he does. His fiancée's face appears to him amidst the harvest and she joins him at the end of the first book once a domestic space has been carved up for her. In this way, Rivard is assured a legacy even if his descendants may live in a world different from his own. This gives us a glimpse into how *Jean Rivard* envisions the making of a rural landscape as a process that calls upon both traditional and modern views of the land and need not shun development and change in order to anchor national identity.

Rural ideal, development ideal

I wish to make two further observations about *Jean Rivard* before I summarize my discussion of the *roman* and try to assess its impact for an understanding of the politics of energy in contemporary Québec. In the first place, although the underlying plot of *Jean Rivard* is about a young man setting out to tap the resources of his land, to "pull them from the soil" and fully realize their potential, his activities can also be regarded as an impoverishment of the environmental diversity of the St.-Lawrence valley. From this vantage point, the extensive remaking of the region into the geometrical pattern of the *rang* accomplished over the span of nearly three centuries corresponds to a gradual depletion of fur-bearing animals and the simplification of the region's bio-diversity into a few selective crops. Rivard gets a glimpse of this environmental diversity moments before he lowers the axe he regards as the emblem and tool of

civilization.[52] The novel gives a brief inventory and description of the various species that compose the forest surrounding him. There is the elm which gives its protective shade; the white ash which offers the best quality of wood; the beech tree which never gets hit by lightning; the lime; the wild cherry tree; the pine; and finally the maple which is spared the ax because it can produce syrup. With each downed tree, frightened birds fly away from what used to be their peaceful retreat and the ground gives out a dull moan.[53] Fortunately, trees reappear in the last chapter either lining the streets of Rivardville or in an orchard where they have been planted, pruned and generally ameliorated thanks to the protagonist's industry:

> On a déjà vu que Jean Rivard aimait beaucoup les arbres; il était même à cet égard quelque peu artiste. Il ne les aimait pas seulement pour l'ombrage qu'ils offrent, mais aussi pour le coup-d'oeil, pour l'effet, pour la beauté qu'ils donnent au paysage. [...] Il mettait autant d'attention à bien tailler ses arbres, à disposer symétriquement ses plantations autour de sa demeure qu'il en accordait au soin de ses animaux et aux autres détails de son exploitation.[54]

Nature has been remade to fit the hero's ideal of civilization and development; drilled, domesticated, the trees are contained by a space, that of progress, rather than serving to demarcate their own space, which is that of wilderness. In-between the lines, the reader can recover traces of

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[52] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

[54] "We have already seen that Jean Rivard liked trees very much; he was even a bit of an artist in this regard. He appreciated them not only for the shadow they offer, but also for the visual effect, for the beauty they add to the landscape. [...] He gave equal attention to pruning and arranging them symmetrically around his property as he did to the care of his animals and other details of his exploitation."*Ibid.*, p. 182.

the environmental history of the space Rivard is carving for himself and his national descendants. Speaking of the fruit trees he has planted and cared for over the years, he anticipates the enjoyment they will procure his future progeny: "Mes arrières-neveux me devront cet ombrage."[55] Therefore, once the trees have been cleared and rationally replanted they represent the assurance of a legacy that projects itself from past to future. Having transformed nature, Rivard feels like he has in some way impacted a history beyond himself.

In the second place, I suggest that we need these cues because they are a first-hand testimony of Rivard's efficiency in transforming the land and maximizing its resources to bring prosperity; trees are a constant presence in Gérin-Lajoie's book, they are the immediate and pervasive environment of the *défricheur* and the central character displays a preoccupation with them that is almost obsessive. What is less apparent in the text, however, is what happens to the trees once they are felled. We learn that stumps and underbrush are burned and that the ashes are turned into potash, but - if we can step outside of the fictional realm for a moment - surely the reader can assume that these "magnificent" trunks received their weight in gold other than by providing the lumber necessary for Rivard's house and other buildings on his property. In his eagerness to show that Rivard is a self-made man, Gérin-Lajoie leaves out the important fact that logging companies followed very closely in the path of those individuals and families who cleared the land. Indeed, the making of agricultural land in the St.-Lawrence valley was advantageous to the logging industry in that the aspiring farmer doubled up as a logger for

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55 "My grand-nephews will owe me this shadow." *Ibid.*, p. 324.

companies that were usually American or Anglo-Canadian owned. This incursion outside the fictional realm throws the *défricheur* into a much wider economic and political sphere, thereby expanding the national space to which he belongs. To uncover this silence in the narrative is to recognize that the labour by means of which Rivard gains access to the resources of his country is closely connected with outside capital and that this connection is crucial - not merely contingent - in the creation of growth and prosperity. A rethinking of the rural sphere along these lines necessarily throws a different light on the usual anchors of Québécois identity. *Jean Rivard* demonstrates that staying close to the land and preserving tradition need not be an obstacle to change; rather it can become a key vehicle for it by enabling the penetration of capital into the countryside and, hopefully, the increase of wealth. In Gérin-Lajoie's book, the rural ideal hooks onto a liberal ideal of economic development without seemingly presenting the least threat to Rivard's identification as a French-Canadian. In fact, for the hero, development and the use of natural resources is seen as a national duty. The rhetoric of the land and the identity it anchors becomes more pointedly a rhetoric of the "resources" of the land, without losing its nationalist appeal. I have contrasted *Jean Rivard* with *Maria Chapdelaine*, *Trente Arpents* and *L'Appel de la race* to show that modernity and development in these narratives of Québécois identity do not exclude but rather *contain within themselves* various key elements of traditional nationalism.

Rural ideal and "Québec moderne": contrary or complementary natures?

Some of the questions raised above were partly encompassed in Christian Morissonneau's analysis of the myth of the North and his hero the Curé Labelle, who was a strong proponent of railway building as a way of developing resource industries along with traditional farming. I have tried to bring them into conversation with another expression of Québécois territoriality, the *roman de la terre*, and will endeavour to push that dialogue further into James Bay in the following Act. Roughly a century after the apologists of colonization appealed to the idea of the North to encourage a geographical expansion of the French-Canadian homeland - and grounded this appeal in constructions of nature such as those encountered in the *roman de la terre* - James Bay emerged as a powerful reconfiguration and recontextualization of that myth; one which is at times disorienting in its extremely heterogeneous evocation of the land.

Labelle himself had looked toward James Bay in his dream of conquering a territory that reached as far as Manitoba. In a letter sent to a Priest in Winnipeg, he envisioned their meeting across the broad land stretch between the two provinces, following two separate rivers bearing the same name: "Les deux rivières qui portent le même nom de la 'Rouge', la mienne et la vôtre, sont appelées à se joindre. Nous acheminons tranquillement vers les belles et fertiles régions de la baie James. Une fois là, nous nous donnerons la main."[56] If the James Bay development project did not, like Labelle, look westward in its territorial designs, it did share

[56] "The two rivers that bear the same name of 'Red', mine and yours, are meant to be joined. We are slowly making our way toward the beautiful and fertile James Bay region. Once there, we will shake each other's hand." Dussault, *Le Curé*, p. 93.

the utopian dimension of the nineteenth century myth of the North. The religious aspect imparted to it by church leaders such as Labelle may have been gone by the 1970s but the myth still retained the aggressive spirit of its previous messianic character; only this time such a spirit was more forcefully expressed through visions of natural resources, modernity and economic development, with more than a hint of the essentialism of the rural sphere. Economic development had always been an integral part of Labelle's project because for him no reconquest could occur over the English if it was not also an *economic* reconquest: in addition to agriculture, mining, town and industry development, business and tourism, railroad expansion and francophone immigration were the engines of his programme of colonization.[57] This global approach recalls that of Jean Rivard and anticipates the mandate that would be drawn up for the development corporation (SÉBJ) that would take over the administration of James Bay in the following century. The terms of territorial expansion here are drawn under a slightly different rubric from "colonization" to "development", a change which I will trace in more detail through my examination of James Bay. Suffice it to say at this point that, if there is a continuity between the nineteenth century "conquête du sol" - symbolized in part by the *roman* - and hydroelectric development in the James Bay region, it is that all three employ the evocative force of the idea of the North to gather and deploy the necessary agents of economic development, whether these be industry, capital or labour power. It becomes easier to see the correlation between Labelle's program of colonization and Bourassa's economic policies toward James Bay once the territorial narrative that feeds them both, the *roman de la terre*, is understood as one

[57] For details of this program, see *ibid.*, p. 9-123.

that offers a representation of nature that is a hybrid between permanence and change, stability and expansion, tradition and modernity yet can always serve as a point of reference for national identity. In the wake of the Quiet Revolution, the later decades of the twentieth century are often celebrated in Québec as a departure from an archaic past safely sealed away from the present in, among other things, the pages of the *roman de la terre* or the yoke of a religious morality which has been overthrown. The James Bay project was often promoted as a ground zero by its supporters because it supposedly marked the shift between two radically different societies, with agriculture and religion representing the old and the secularity of government, industry, technology and resources the emergence of the new. One anchored itself in rural nature while the other sought to reject it: still, as my analysis of *Jean Rivard* and other rural novels show, both needed a wilderness demanding to be "turned into a flourishing country" in order to represent the space of Québécois culture as a space of civilization, and justify its advance into new territories. From the *roman de la terre* to James Bay, I want to suggest that nature - although of a different "nature" - remained the anchor of the nation. In the next Act, I will look at the spectacular enframing of James Bay as an attempt to root the nation still more deeply into nature, this time through a relationship that is more broadly determined by rational science and technology.

PORTFOLIO 3

Figure 12: Secretary behind her desk

Montréal, March 24, 1999

As I read through archival documents detailing the spectacular conquest of the North, the question of women's presence in James Bay enters the field sideways, asking to be considered and yet disappearing behind what is called "the facts." Secretaries - women most certainly - have typed these reports for bosses who may have thought nothing of interrupting their work to ask for coffee. Company newsletters are full of women smiling behind their desk, hands frozen in mid-gesture over a keyboard. Here the national epic has shrunk to the space of a small cubicle filled with the insignificant props of office work. My mother spent many years of her life among these objects. As a receptionist for one of the engineering firms that built the dams, she could have been the one smiling on company pictures, between desk and filing cabinet. Seeing these women's clothes or how their hair is done adds a layer to my research I had not foreseen. I can touch the fabric of skirts, restore the exact hue of eyeshadows and hear the clang of bangles against the desk. Most documents encountered in the archives have felt distant and smooth so far, emerging from a past I have no relation to. When the secretary's hand lingers in this grainy typewriter print, the page holds deeper crevasses of meaning. Letter-shaped dents trap the ink, I think of water in the bark of a submerged tree. With a steady pounding of metal against pulp, the James Bay "adventure" moves up one line at a time between the mechanism of fingers, keyboard, memory. I used to marvel at how fast my mother could make words appear on the page, faster than my mouth could utter them. This was her tenfold craft, a magic that could string meaning by hitting paper, make sentences hold still - and now I am reading them. Archives show that rivers were fitted into dams like crisp paper sheets between the guides of a typewriter.

Figure 13: Pleasures of landscape. Bourassa viewing the La Grande

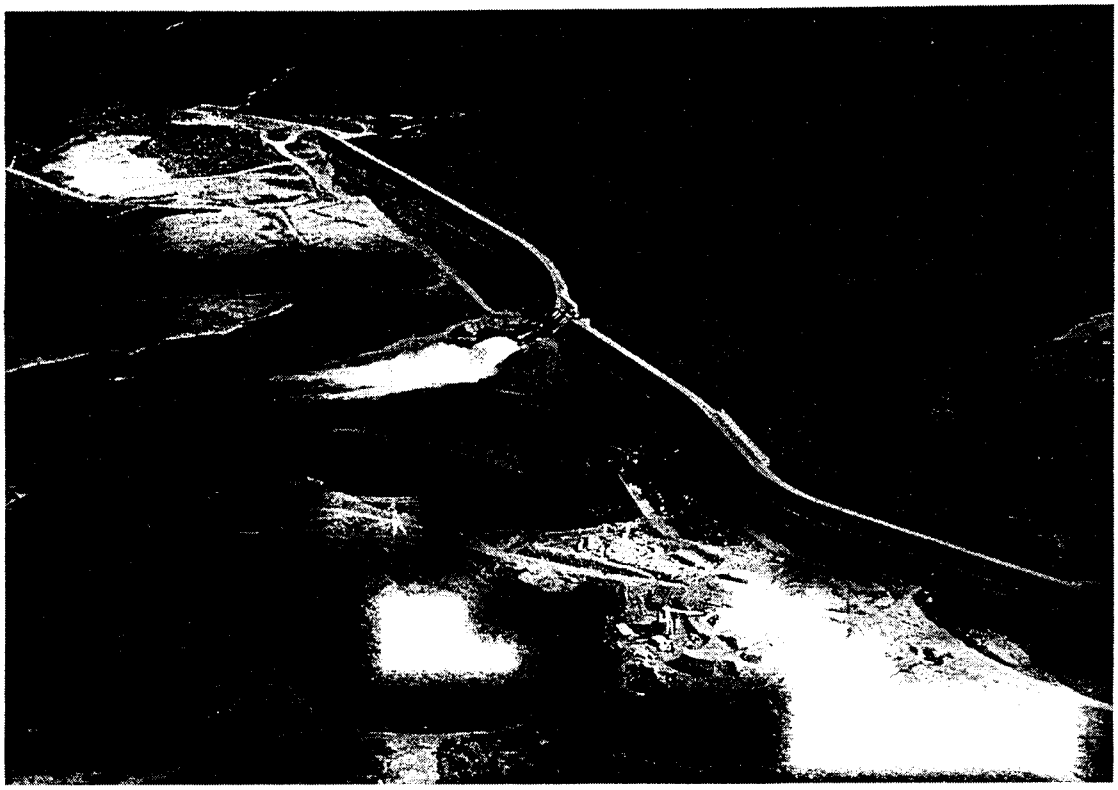

Figure 14: LG3 dam. "A concrete arm holding the La Grande"

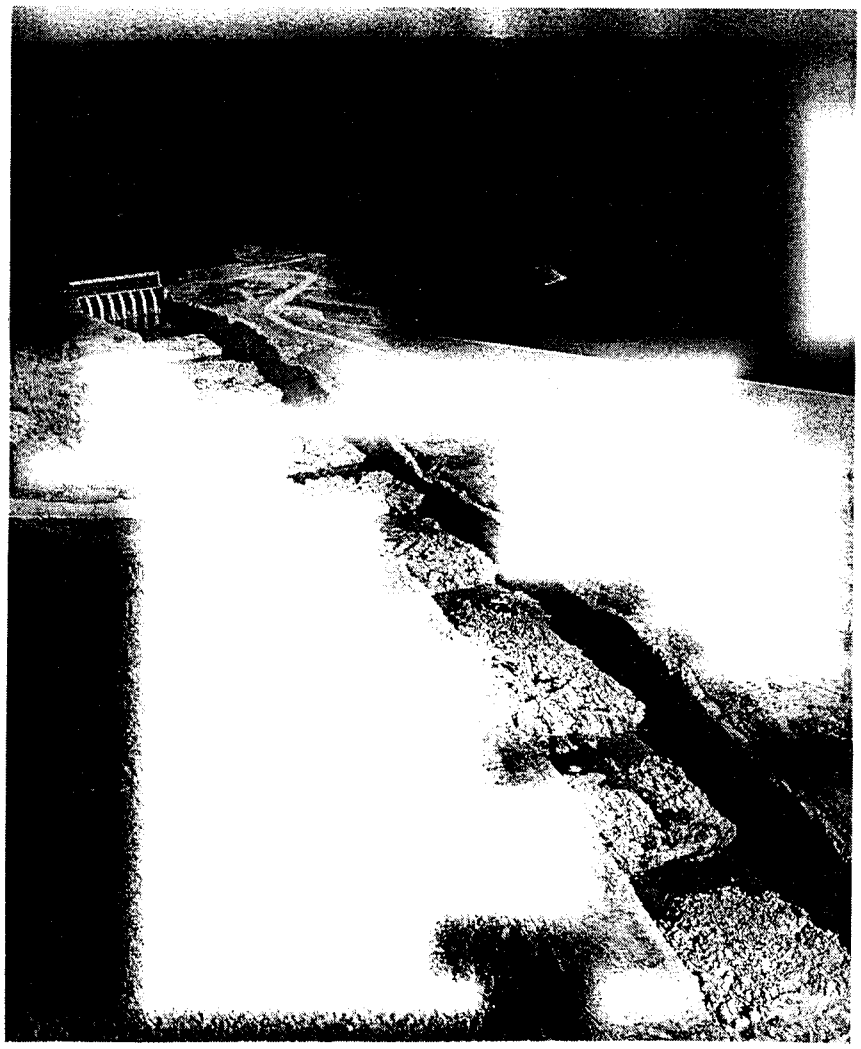

Figure 15: LG2 escalier de géant

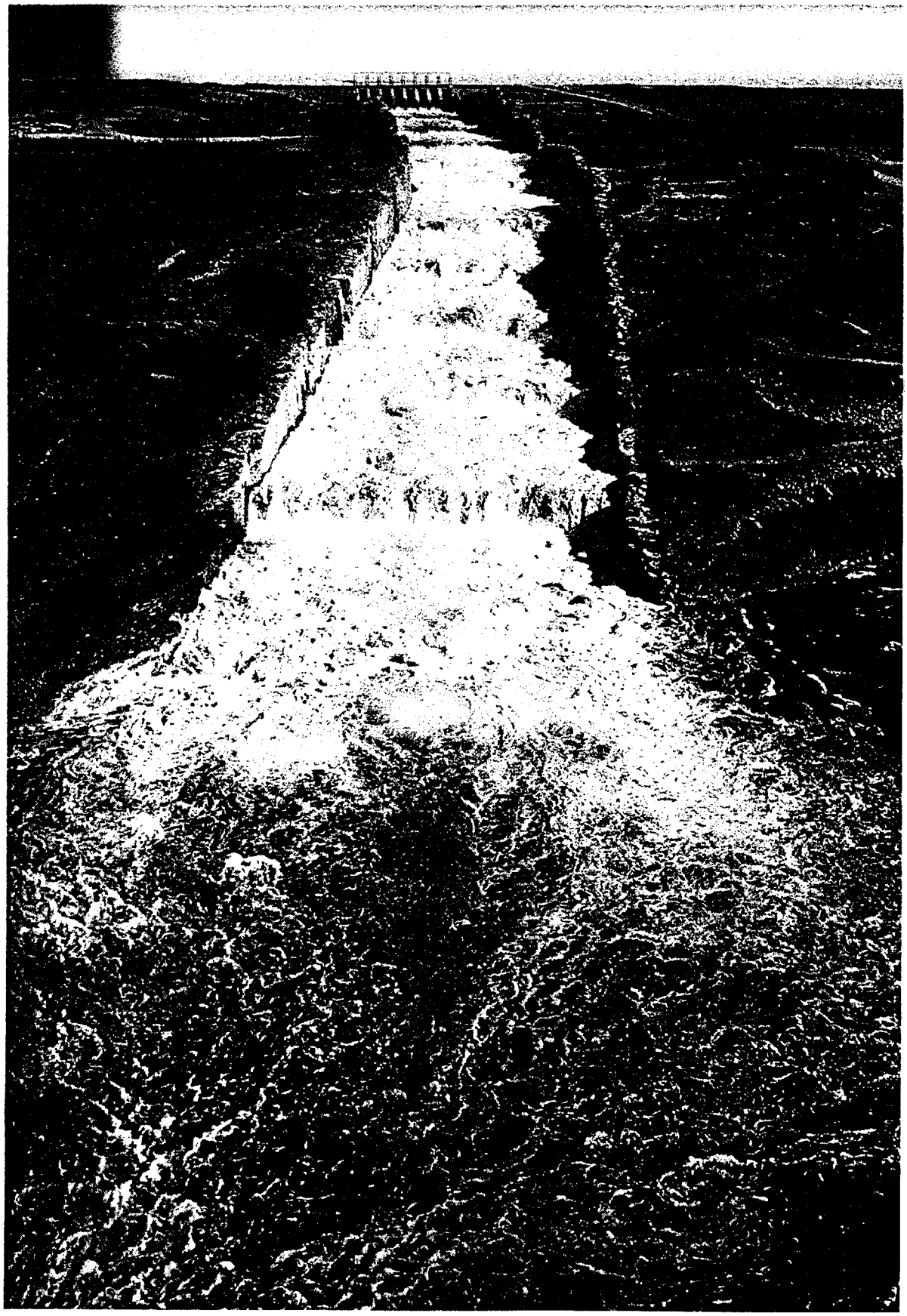

Figure 16: Rushing waters. Another view of the *escalier de géant*

Figure 17: Maestro Bourassa

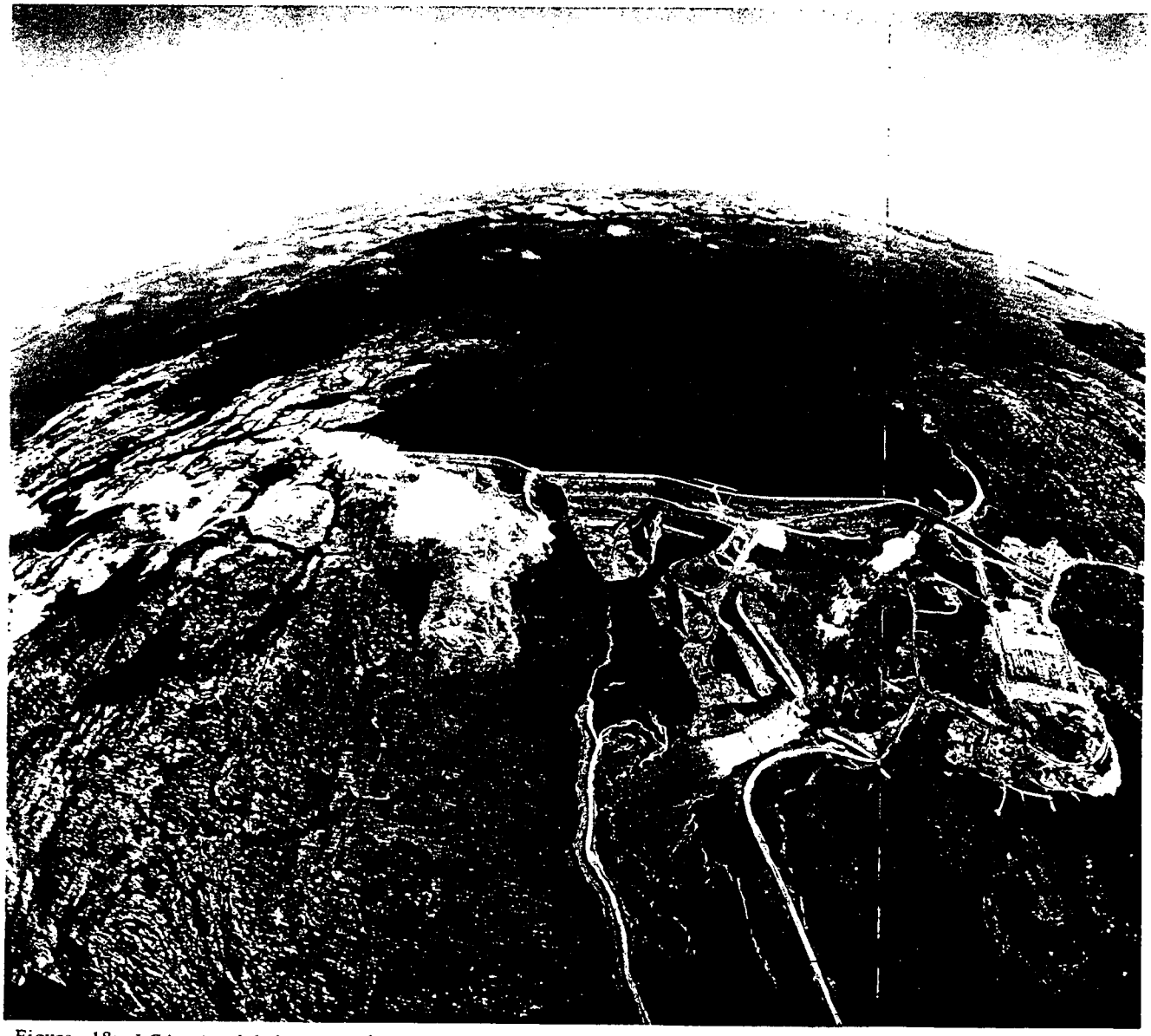

Figure 18: LG4. A global geography

ACT 2

WILD AND RICH: SCRIPTING JAMES BAY AS A SPACE OF DEVELOPMENT

Le territoire du Québec est immense et en grande partie inexploré. Pendant que les Américains et les Russes se lancent dans l'exploration de l'espace, il y a sur notre territoire, tout près de nous, à l'intérieur de nos frontières, un des plus beaux défis à relever: la conquête du nord québécois, avec ses rivières tumultueuses qui sont autant de fleuves grandioses, ses lacs immenses qui sont autant de mers intérieures, ses forêts de conifères qui cachent des ressources inouïes en gisements miniers de toutes sortes. Mais il y a aussi sa faune presque inconnue dans le Sud; sa flore qu'il faut inventorier et protéger; il y a l'inconnu irrésistible qu'il faut découvrir. C'est toute l'histoire du Québec qu'il faut réinventer; c'est le courage et la volonté de nos ancêtres qu'il faut répéter au XXe siècle; c'est notre territoire qu'il faut occuper; c'est la Baie James qu'il faut conquérir; nous avons décidé que le temps en était venu.[1]

Robert Bourassa, *La Baie James*, p. 12.

Imaginons un roman dont le héros serait un territoire: nous aimerions que ce livre se lise comme le roman de la [Baie James].[2]

Pierre Turgeon, *La Radissonie: le pays de la baie James*, p. 17.

[1] "The territory of Québec remains to a large extent unexplored. While the Americans and Russians are involved in space exploration, there remains on our territory, very close to us and inside our frontiers, one of the most beautiful challenges that can be taken up: the conquest of Québec's North, with its tumultuous waters that form so many grandiose rivers, its immense lakes that resemble so many seas, its evergreen forests that hide unimaginable resources in mining deposits of all kinds. But there is also its fauna, which is almost unknown in the South; its flora which must be inventoried and protected; there is the irresistible unknown that we must discover. We must reinvent the history of Québec; we must repeat the courage and the will of our ancestors in the twentieth century; we must occupy our territory; we must conquer James Bay. We have decided that the time has come."

[2] "Let's imagine a novel whose hero would be a territory: we would like this book to be read as the novel of [James Bay]."

The characters of the *roman de la terre* are well-known figures in Québec. It is not so much that they transcend their fictional framework, but that everyday life often proceeds through an array of literary references in attempts to signify the relationship between people and national territory. Along these lines, Louis-Edmond Hamelin remarked that Québec farmers did not remain insensitive to Gérin-Lajoie's famous hero; at a meeting of the Catholic Farmers' Union in 1920s, one of the speakers referred to the audience as "sixty thousand Jean Rivards."[1] Similarly, it is fitting that the Curé Labelle was represented in the fictional world of *Les Histoires des Pays d'En-Haut* given that he was frequently described as a character who was larger than life.[2] Even before James Bay got off the ground, the project had its share of supporters ready to embody and enact what could be understood as the "poetics" of Québécois territoriality by drawing on both the heroic imagination of the North, and the rhetoric of nature contained in the *roman de la terre.* One of these characters was a notary public from the Abitibi region named Dominique Godbout. In the late nineteen-sixties, he was responsible for a fundraising campaign to

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[1] L.-E. Hamelin, *Le Rang d'habitat*, op. cited, p. 316.

[2] This was a popular television series inspired from Claude-Henri Grignon's book about a miser named Séraphin Poudrier. The series expanded on the characters and added other ones to represent rural life North of Montréal in the region the Curé Labelle helped to colonize, known as *Les Pays d'En-haut* (the "Northern Countries"). See C.-H. Grignon, *Un Homme et son péché* (Montréal: Stanké, 1984).

build a road that would aim directly North from the small community of Villebois, into James Bay. To do so, he helped found "The Order of Northern Conquerors."

This was a fundraising plan whereby each donation would correspond to one of twelve titles whose prestige reflected dollar value. Thus, for five dollars one would be recognized as a "Portageur du Nord", twenty dollars granted the title of "Adventurous Brother of Radisson" or one hundred dollars that of "Captain of the Northern Sea." The ultimate title was reserved for those who could afford two thousand dollars; they would be made a "Duke, invincible, with the faith and heart of William the Conqueror." A two-page announcement appeared in the Québec city newspaper *Le Soleil* which also listed honorary members of the Order; the list included four bank directors, the province's Premier (Jean-Jacques Bertrand), the Chief of the opposition (Jean Lesage), the Montréal mayor (Jean Drapeau), as well as other public figures such as Pierre Trudeau and Charles de Gaulle. A certificate was given to those who donated money which recognized them as lifetime members of the Order, a privilege that came with the inscription of the giver's name on a memorial plate to be placed at the entrance of the road. As well, a passport was issued which guaranteed perpetual rights of use on the road. Although this "passport" was hardly an official document, it symbolically laid a political claim to the territory of James Bay through the construction of this first access road.[3]

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[3] See "Pour hâter la réalisation du chemin de pénétration Villebois-Baie James." *Le Soleil*, February 15, 1969, p. 22. Geographer Michel Brochu gave his support to this campaign, see "Le Nouvel axe économique routier de La Sarre-Villebois (Abitibi) à la baie James." *L'Actualité économique* (Montréal: École des Hautes Études commerciales, 1970), pp. 819-824.

ANNONCE

Président

M. EMILIEN PRONOVOST, industriel de La Sarre et homme d'affaires très expérimenté, connu dans toute la Province du Québec pour ses nombreuses déclarations et son esprit d'initiative.

POUR HATER LA REALISATION DU CHEMIN DE PENETRATION VILLEBOIS - BAIE JAMES

LA CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE DE LA SARRE INVITE TOUS LES HOMMES DE BONNE VOLONTE A JOINDRE LES RANGS DE

L'ORDRE DES CONQUERANTS DU NORD

Vice-président

M. GERALD BUSSIERES, industriel et homme d'affaires. Expert en machines lourdes. Président du Comité Sauter de la Chambre de Commerce de La Sarre, intéressé à son immigration pour ouvrir le chemin de pénétration VILLEBOIS - BAIE JAMES.

Secrétaire

M. DOMINIQUE GODBOUT, B.A., LL. L. Notaire. Président de la Société St-Jean-Baptiste du Diocèse d'Amos. Président de la Société d'Histoire et d'Archéologie d'Abitibi. Président de l'Association de Chasse et Pêche d'Abitibi-Ouest. Secrétaire du Comité moteur de la Chambre de Commerce de La Sarre.

Voici les titres et le passeport que votre perspicacité et votre prévoyance peuvent vous permettre d'acquérir, pour les modestes sommes ci-après indiquées :

TITRES :

1 — PORTAGEUR DU NORD, pour la somme de cinq dollars ($ 5.00)
2 — VOYAGEUR DE LA BAIE JAMES, pour la somme de dix dollars ($ 10.00)
3 — FRERE AVENTUREUX DE RADISSON, pour la somme de vingt dollars ($ 20.00)
4 — COMPAGNON SANS PEUR DE D'IBERVILLE, pour la somme de vingt-cinq dollars ($ 25.00)
5 — CHEVALIER DE LA BAIE D'HUDSON, pour la somme de quarante dollars ($ 40.00)
6 — VIKING, ROI DE LA MER DU NORD, pour la somme de cinquante dollars ($ 50.00)
7 — CAPITAINE DE LA MER DU NORD, pour la somme de cent dollars ($ 100.00)
8 — AMIRAL DE LA MER DU NORD, pour la somme de deux cents dollars ($ 200.00)
9 — ARMATEUR DES CONQUERANTS DU NORD, pour la somme de cinq cents dollars ($ 500.00)
10 — SEIGNEUR DES BAIES DU NORD, pour la somme de mille dollars ($1.000.00)
11 — BARON DES SEIGNEURS DU NORD, pour la somme de mille cinq cents dollars ($1.500.00)
12 — DUC invincible, à la foi et au coeur de Guillaume le Conquérant, pour la somme de deux mille dollars ($2.000.00)

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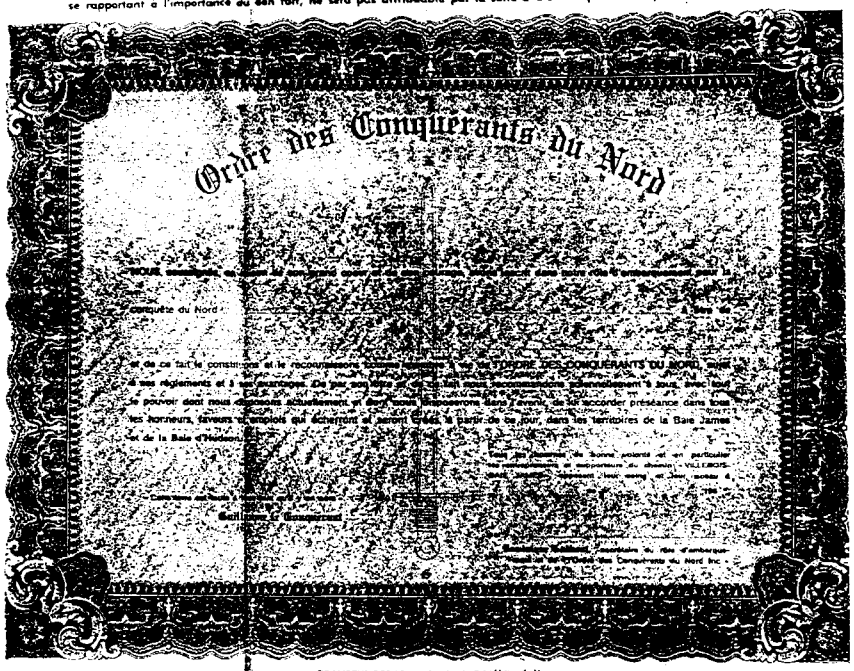
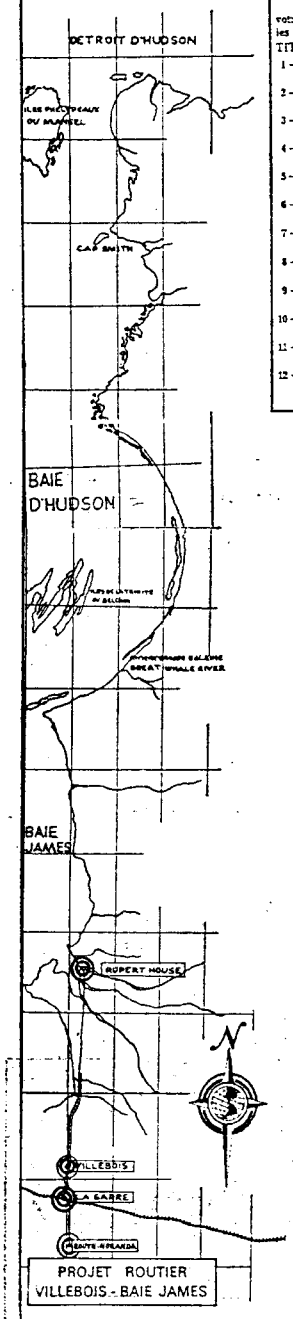
Pour tout don supérieur à deux mille dollars ($2,000.00), l'Ordre conférera et remettra solennellement un titre qui, tout en se rapportant à l'importance du don fait, ne sera pas attribuable par la suite à d'autres personnes que le donateur.



GRANDEUR REELLE DU CERTIFICAT 13½" x 10½"



Les Contributions de toutes les Compagnies et Corporations seront publiées.

1er Don reçu: La Cie HOWARD & BIENVENUE de LA SARRE ..... $10,000.00 en 1969

Aussi, avec vos moyens et votre cœur, vous pouvez tous devenir des conquérants du Nord. Et, qui ne voudrait pas s'embarquer à nouveau, avec Radisson et d'Iberville.

Les fonds recueillis par l'ORDRE serviront intégralement à parachever le chemin VILLEBOIS-BAIE JAMES, entrepris par la Chambre de Commerce de La Sarre, et à mettre en valeur les richesses de la Baie James et de la Baie d'Hudson.

Les noms de tous ceux qui auront aidé aussi à réaliser cette magnifique aventure seront inscrits dans un Rôle d'embarquement et conservés, pour la postérité, dans un Monument-souvenir qui sera érigé à l'entrée du chemin VILLEBOIS-BAIE JAMES.

Le cœur quebecois des Baies JAMES et HUDSON offre plus de neuf cents milles de côtes à la prospection et à l'exploitation minière. Au Cap Smith se trouvent des montagnes d'amiante et de jadeite. Les îles de la Trinité et Belcher renferment d'inestimables gisements de fer magnétique et de cuivre. Nos lacs de la rivière Grande Baleine il y a des gisements de plomb et de fer. Du pétrole pour gr. en quantité fantastique sous les Iles Phélypeaux. Le gaz naturel abonde tout le long de la Baie James. Le calcaire des Iles Phélypeaux à "la valeur beauté que celui du Bassin de Paris". Des prospecteurs à l'emploi de la compagnie SELCO Explorations Ltd. et deux autres société canadiennes (Canadian Rock Co. et Hard Metal Canada Ltd.) font actuellement la prospection des diamants autour des Baies James et Hudson.

Attiré par les richesses inouïes que recèle le Nord, tout un peuple, comme le fer aimanté d'une boussole, s'est mis en marche vers la Baie James et la mer du Nord.

Les Abitibiens, peuple jeune et ignoré du reste du Canada, ont construit de leurs propres ressources, depuis le 1er février 1967, la partie la plus difficile (et qui représente plus de la moitié du trajet à parcourir) d'un chemin de 125 milles qui doit les conduire à RUPERT HOUSE, sur les bords de la BAIE JAMES, et leur livrer par le fait même, grâce aux voies d'eau naturelles, des côtes d'une richesse incroyable.

Ayons aussi notre part dans cette réalisation d'envergure nationale, et faisons pour une fois un placement avec nos dons. Bâtissons tous ensemble l'avenir de nos enfants, en leur achetant un passeport pour le Nord. - Tous ceux qui auront acheté leur passeport (lequel est émis pour la vie) pourront utiliser le chemin VILLEBOIS-RUPERT HOUSE, une fois celui-ci terminé.

"Cette terre est toute à tous tant qu'il y en aura"
GUILLAUME LE CONQUERANT

N.B. Tout chèque (certifié) et tout mandat de poste devra être adressé et fait à l'ordre de:
"ORDRE DES CONQUERANTS DU NORD INC."
C.P. 118 La Sarre, Abitibi-O., P.Q.

Figure 19: The Order of Northern Conquerors

Dominique Godbout traveled extensively through Abitibi to solicit financial support for the James Bay road. The epic tone of the campaign was sustained in his discourses through frequent appeals to the figure of "William the Conqueror."[4] An avid reader of historical epics, Godbout's endeavour was inspired by various historical and literary heroes in a way that is reminiscent of Jean Rivard, who regarded his books as companions of colonization who taught him the virtues he needed in order to accomplish his work:

> Ce sont mes premiers amis, mes premiers compagnons de travail: je les conserve précieusement. Robinson Crusoé m'a enseigné à être industrieux, Napoléon à être actif et courageux, Don Quichotte m'a fait rire dans mes moments de plus sombre tristesse, l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ m'a appris la résignation à la volonté de Dieu.[5]

If William the Conqueror was Godbout's model hero, the notary nevertheless also drew on local figures: once his listeners had been won over and donated their money, he would thank them by saying that foreigners would later look back on the people of Abitibi and remember Maria Chapdelaine's famous words: "Ces gens-là sont vraiment d'une race qui ne sait pas mourir" ("These people truly belong to a race which cannot die"). This *mythico-poetic* quality of Godbout's speech was apparently

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[4] L. Bernard, "L'Abitibi désolée part à la conquête du Nord." *Perspectives*, May 11, 1968, p. 6. It is significant that William the Conqueror should be Godbout's model hero since he was a leader of the French-Norman conquest of England in 1066.

[5] "These are my initial friends, my first companions of labour: I treasure them. Robinson Crusoe taught me to be industrious, Napoleon to be active and courageous, Don Quichote made me laugh in my most sombre moments, the Imitation of Jesus Christ taught me to resign myself to the will of God." Gérin-Lajoie, *Jean Rivard*, p. 330.

effective in inciting people into action since the notary gathered eighty percent of the funds necessary to fulfill the project.[6] In many ways, the road to James Bay was a measure of last resort for the people of Abitibi. Faced with difficult farming conditions, unemployment and the exhaustion of mining resources, some towns had lost up to fifty percent of their population by the end of the nineteen-sixties.[7] The Order of Northern Conquerors deployed a geographical imagination of the North as a space of hope, thus viewing it as a "Promised Land" and fitting in every point the parameters outlined in Christian Morissonneau's study. This is well exemplified by the events that surrounded the inauguration of the first stretch of the Villebois-James Bay penetration road: on March 17 1968, a group of approximately five hundred people drove on the road, accompanied by religious songs played through loudspeakers. The crowd was stopped at the Harricana river, unable to proceed due to the unsteadiness of a temporary bridge. Nevertheless, a priest recited mass in front of the plowshare, evoking "le courage des peuples bibliques qui, comme cette foule, comme tout l'Abitibi et ses comtés voisins, se sont aussi mis en branle vers la terre promise."[8] Imagined through such a utopian discourse, the space of James Bay was envisioned by the Northern Conquerors to be a tremendous reserve of economic power which could lift the region out of its economic slump:

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[7] Following a population increase of 1.5% from 1961 to 1966, the region lost more than ten thousand people in the 1966-1971 period, which amounts to a decrease of 6%. See "La population et son territoire: des mondes en mutation" in O. Vincent, dir., *Histoire de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue*, op. cited, p. 484.

[8] "[T]he courage of biblical peoples who, like this crowd, like all of Abitibi and its neighbouring counties, have set themselves in motion toward the Promised Land." L. Bernard, *Perspectives*, p. 9.

> The Québec side of the Hudson and James Bay offers more than nine hundred miles of coastline to mining exploration and exploitation. Mountains of asbestos and nickel are to be found in Cap Smith. The Trinity or Belcher islands contain innumerable deposits of magnetic iron and copper. Close to the Great Whale river are deposits of lead and iron. Fantastic quantities of petroleum could lie under the Phélipeaux islands. The whole length of the James Bay coast abounds in natural gas. Limestone from the Phélipeaux islands has "the same beauty as that from the Paris Basin." Prospectors [...] are presently looking for diamonds around the James and Hudson Bays.[9]

This focus on natural resources which represents nature as a repository of economic wealth - and, as will later become clear, the Québécois as national subjects who must tap into it - connects both back to *Jean Rivard* and forward to Robert Bourassa. I have tried to demonstrate the performative instrumentality of literary narratives about the land - and the characters these stories bring to life - in bringing about this hopeful conception of territory and what it contains. Like the Northern Conquerors building a road to the "promised land", Bourassa would become a dynamic agent of Québec's national expansion into the North by importing key elements of its literary/geographical imagination, along with new structures of territorial planning and economic development. Furthermore, his leadership demonstrated the extent to which, in a nationalist context, cultural constructs are intertwined with the application

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[9] *Le Soleil*, Saturday 15 February, 1969, p. 22. See Figure 19 (bottom right) for the original text in French.

of governmental policies. Indeed, Bourassa can be said to have written his own *roman de la terre* in the North, which was also an epic narrative of conquest and hope: through his "project of the century", he reactivated a traditional Québécois poetics of land, territory and identity to mobilize the necessary agents and resources that would create the space of James Bay. In my analysis so far, I have moved back and forth between the myth of the North and the *roman de la terre* as narratives that seek to anchor the Québécois nation territorially and, in the process, I have taken them beyond their strict temporal or geographical context. My purpose in doing so is to stress that social discourses are extremely mobile and flexible entities, and that they become a little more hybrid each time they are called upon. And yet they do so without losing the force of their initial signification. Indeed, the various meanings that are projected and/or read into particular social discourses are subject to change as more enduring elements of culture are recontextualized. In that process, these enduring cultural elements are nevertheless "recognized", a process whereby they become increasingly "taken-for-granted" over time. The constitutive elements of discourse travel extensively, they can be dismembered and remade like the landscapes they help to construct without loosing their connection to the cultural and historical registers that imparts their meaning. This explains why *Maria Chapdelaine* can be read both as a rural novel as well as an epic of spatial conquest; similarly, Jean Rivard tackles what he regards as a remote wilderness in the proximity of Québec's largest urban center, the city of Montréal. As for *Trente Arpents*, the fact that an industrial - or "unnatural" - nature seemingly drains the rural at the same time as it reaches into it means that each sphere reaches far beyond its concrete and immediate space. I have wanted to keep these

connections open in order to be able to account for Bourassa's own reactivation, and appropriation, of popular Québécois narratives in the North. This reactivation is not systematic or even fully conscious; it picks and chooses from the variety of elements which the francophone geographical imaginary makes available. Furthermore, Bourassa is not the sole agent re-enacting this territorial memory. Rather, his leadership is its most visible expression in the early phase of James Bay hydroelectric development.

While the idea of spatial conquest through technology played a big part in his enframing of the region, the discursive power of nature in territorializing Québécois identity, as well as the traditionalist framework within which this connection was initially developed, should not be allowed to slip from view. If Maria was a heroic "*homo*" *quebecensis* by choosing life on the land and the old rural sphere as her native country, James Bay workers were similarly identified as national heroes by braving the wilderness and lending their strength to tap into the nation's resources. While this was a "popular" and widely accessible narrative for the Québec population, its mobilization for the purposes of development still necessitated a certain amount of control over its terms and geographical trajectory. I want to briefly discuss how Bourassa and his government steered this narrative in an advantageous direction before moving to an analysis of how spectacle became a dominant way of framing the project during construction of the LG2 complex.

Trading weapons, tapping nature's wealth

If Bourassa was writing his own narrative of the land in James Bay, Dominique Godbout and the members of his regional organization were

eager to be given a part in such a script.[10] Five months before he made his famous launch of the hydroelectric project, they wrote a letter to the Premier asking him to support the Villebois-James Bay road. The group had already appealed to Premier Daniel Johnson in 1967 in a letter that conveyed strongly the difficult socio-economic conditions of the Abitibi region and the hopefulness of the population that James Bay could change these conditions:

> Ce que nous voulons, nous, c'est que vous nous aidiez à nous sortir de l'enlisement et du découragement. [...] L'Abitibi des colons se meurt d'avoir trop attendu. Nous vous avons prouvé, à date, que le territoire de la Baie James, versant naturel de l'Abitibi, nous appelait, comme un grenier aux réserves fabuleuses. [...] Nous demeurons, Honorable Premier Ministre, malgré nos fatigues, nos privations et nos blessures, toujours décidés à nous rendre, envers et contre tous, comme d'Iberville, jusqu'à "Rupert House" avec le drapeau de la Patrie...[11]

The document that was later sent to Bourassa adopted a similar, but more restrained, tone. It listed the communal efforts already deployed, spelled out the economic advantages of creating access to the region, and reminded Bourassa, gently, that Abitibi has been for more than twenty years a

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[10] Godbout's organization was the "Chambre de Commerce de Lasarre" and acted as a regional business council.

[11] "What "we" want is for you to help us come out of our sinking situation and feeling of discouragement. [...] The Abitibi of settlers is dying from waiting so long. Up to now, we have proven to you that the territory of James Bay, naturally adjacent to Abitibi, was calling us like a storehouse of fabulous reserves. [...] We remain, Honorable Premier, despite our fatigues, privations and wounds, still dedicated to reach, against all odds, like Iberville, Rupert House with the flag of the *Patrie...*" *Mémoire de la Chambre de Commerce de La Sarre*, May 25, 1967, pp. 7-8.

forgotten region in a country whose national motto is "Je me souviens."[12] Significantly, the letter stressed that the people had done their national duty by using their own resources to foster economic activity "without troubling the peace of other", and that the state should now step in to do its part.[13]

The suggestion that economic development fosters social peace acquires tremendous weight given the context in which these words were addressed to Bourassa. The people of Abitibi made their plea to the Premier in the midst of the worst political crisis Québec would ever know: the 1970 October Crisis was barely over when the letter was sent.[14] To mend the damage caused by the unrest, Bourassa - who was only five months into his leadership when the crisis exploded - needed more than

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[12] *Letter to Bourassa* (November 1970), p. 4. The motto "Je me souviens" ("I remember") appears on all car license plates in the province and is generally understood to be a reference to the Conquest. The ubiquitous presence of this simple phrase tagged onto every moving vehicle in Québec makes the issue of collective remembering an unavoidable element of the social landscape.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[14] The "October Crisis" began on the morning of October 5 1970 when the British diplomat James Cross was kidnapped from his house by two members of the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ), a Marxist-Leninist organization fighting for Québec's independence. A manifesto was read publicly where the FLQ asked for the liberation of members who had been imprisoned following previous acts of insurrection. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau categorically refused to negotiate with the FLQ and a second man was taken hostage on October 10; his name was Pierre Laporte, a minister and key member of the Bourassa government who was also a close friend of the Premier. Ironically, Robert Bourassa was on a business trip in New York city when the crisis exploded, busily preparing the ground for James Bay by discussing sales of electricity across the border. Upon his return, he and his government decided to call on the federal Canadian army to maintain order. Troops moved into the province and the War Measures Act became effective on October 16, with the result that hundreds of FLQ supporters were interrogated or imprisoned without charges. While negotiations continued between the FLQ and Bourassa's government, James Cross was freed but Pierre Laporte was assassinated on October 17. Bourassa's leadership was understandably shaken by these events, he was accused of weakness by turning to Trudeau and the Canadian army to resolve what was perceived as an internal crisis. For a perspective from a thinker and activist of the FLQ, see P. Vallières, *L'Exécution de Pierre Laporte: les dessous de l'opération essai* (Montréal: Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1977); for an analysis of these events as represented in the media, see C. Ryan, ed., *Le Devoir et la Crise d'Octobre 70* (Ottawa: Leméac,1971).

ever to "help people help themselves", as the letter stated, and to fulfill the promise upon which much of his election campaign had been based, which was to create one hundred thousand jobs in the province.[15] James Bay had already been on the horizon when he made that promise: the epic discourse in which he framed the project was his way of inviting the rebellious forces of Québec to trade their weapons for pick and shovel - or machines and mathematics as the case may be - to start tapping the resources of the land. This plan, however, had to make good economic sense for the province as a whole. As the Order of Northern Conquerors campaign indicates, the La Sarre business council built a road toward a utopian North ready to be conquered through heroic male labour, patriotism and faith: unfortunately, their trajectory did not coincide with that other territory of the nation where space is selectively carved to facilitate money flows and strengthen global connections. The road that would reach the shores of James Bay was created, but it was built more than one hundred kilometers northeast of La Sarre and Villebois so as to be aligned with the urban center of Montréal. In this way, James Bay decision-makers confirmed that the unevenness of development is not merely a casualty but rather a structural element of capitalism. They confirmed also that if economics could use the gathering power of myth, it could just as easily invoke the necessity to make "rational" development decisions to turn away from it. The Abitibi region which was severely in need of jobs - or rather in need of being brought within the sphere of the city and its economic activity - was not directly involved in the process, despite a stretch of road already built but, from the perspective of future

[15] Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 55.

developers, dangling to nowhere.[16] Among the many reasons for sidestepping the work already done in Abitibi, I believe the need for a heroic act that could belong directly to Bourassa's government cannot be underestimated: indeed, the "opening" of a road up to James Bay was an important part of casting it as a wilderness whose access required both genius and labour. These meanings were called forth during the construction of the James Bay road which was seen as a channel of nation-building because it brought part of northern Québec into contact with its southern core. This road would stretch four hundred and fifty miles from Matagami to Radisson and be built in four hundred and fifty days.[17] Although it sidestepped the Northern Conquerors' initiative, the road built by the liberal government used the same discursive building blocks: producing James Bay as a space that was as rich as it was wild, it simultaneously represented it as the "promised land" of development.

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[16] While this region and others surrounding James Bay were targeted through special programs to fulfill labour needs during the construction of the dams, none of these jobs contributed to long-term development. After the peak periods of construction, workers would return to the same economically depressed areas they had left to go to work in the north. Again, Pierre Perrault's movies illustrate how powerless Abitibi residents were to influence their own economic becoming due to a government bureaucracy ill at ease with this marginal region. While the James Bay development project was in full swing in the 1970s, the Québec administration changed its agricultural policy in the region to, instead, steer the economy toward forestry. The result was a government-sponsored tree-planting effort which created some employment, but at a cost which the farmers who had settled there through the colonization programs of the post-depression era could simply not accept. Indeed, for those who had cleared their piece of land one tree stump at a time over more than forty years, the absurdity of replanting what had finally become decent agricultural fields was too much to bear. Perrault makes this point by interviewing an old farmer who calmly continues to clear his parcel of land day after day, seemingly as a way to deny this absurdity. Another interviewee, Parti Québécois candidate Haurice Lalancette, makes a comment that suggests how these injustices would eventually translate into racial tensions in James Bay: "C'était l'ambition qui voyait que qu'est-ce qu'on a défriché, ce serait quelque chose de bien. Ben quand on retourne à l'état sauvage après avoir travaillé 40 ans, on se pose la question des indiens de la Baie James. Nous autres, qu'est-ce qu'on était? On était moins que des indiens, d'après moi on était des esclaves chrisse!" See *Un Royaume vous attend* (National Film Board of Canada, 1975).

[17] See Lacasse, *Baie James*, pp. 87-102.

Bourassa brought this myth, along with the *roman de la terre* and its traditional discourse of identity, fully into a liberal development ideal when he had this to say about the workers he met during his first trip to James Bay:

> Many young people attracted by the challenge of a country to discover, to build. I cannot refrain from seeing in them the almost exact copy of the first *défricheurs* of the country. Today they are a few hundreds. Soon they will be five thousand, ten thousand, fifteen thousand bringing together their efforts toward a common goal: to put Québec's resources at the service of all the Québécois.[18]

Against this backdrop, I want to focus my analysis in the remainder of this Act on the dominant strategies used by Bourassa and the planning institution his government created for bringing James Bay into view as a space of progress and development where the Québécois could project and envision themselves as a national community. To create this space, nature was represented more emphatically as a wilderness, and national identity became increasingly articulated in relation to natural resources, and the technology that could harness them. As I hope to have established by juxtaposing the *roman de la terre* with Bourassa's enframing of the North - and using the Northern Conquerers as a hinge between the two - nature's identity may have shifted from rurality to hydroelectricity but the nation continued to draw on its rich symbolic repertoire in order to anchor, protect and legitimate its territorial presence and expansion, this time into James Bay. While Bourassa envisioned the energetic power that could be

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[18] Bourassa, *La Baie James*, p. 129.

generated by James Bay rivers to be unbounded, he also knew how to make strategic use of its symbolic resources which were equally profuse. The equation of nature with the nation - which went from a dominant focus on rural nature to one on "natural" resources as the basis of national identification - was an indispensable rhetorical tool in Québec's appropriation of a land and resources to which the Cree have an undeniable claim. I view this equation as a fundamental element of Québec's continued claim to the North, one which must be understood and challenged if the nation is to start opening to and incorporating discourses of difference, along with the spaces these discourses give rise to. The Cree's agency in countering the cultural production and appropriation of their ancestral lands by the Québécois has forced some of these spaces to open. In what follows, I wish to examine the production of James Bay as a series of French Québécois cultural landscapes by looking at two of the processes through which this production took place during the building of the first phase: namely, *spectacle* and *scripting*. Although I treat them separately, it is important to note that they function as a whole and actively constitute each other. I will then contrast these processes against a Cree experience of landscape which is characterized by the reading of *tracks* on the land. Finally, I will bring these processes together by analyzing the new structures of governmentality they actualized in Northern Québec.

Spectacle

> "We see ourselves on the screen, ourselves as we would like to be..."[19]

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[19] Rose, *Feminism*, p. 107.

To characterize his memorable launch of the James Bay project in 1971 and the visual presentation that accompanied it, Robert Bourassa said the following: "This was quite a show... I had huge pictures, sound, light... some people were trembling!"[20] The images that rolled on the giant screens were characteristic of the enframing of James Bay as a spectacular wilderness bursting with resources and ready to be tapped by the South. Numbers abounded in the narrative accompanying the film: $14 million already spent, projected harnessing of five rivers, construction of camps for 25 000 workers, investment of $400 million for mechanical and electrical equipment, 125 000 job openings...[21] Panoramic shots of the land displayed and magnified its vast extent, showing endless forests and wide bodies of water rushing through rugged terrain. No one puzzled at the images of bison seemingly grazing on the coastal plains of James Bay. Only the Cree who would later see the film laughed at this peculiarity; since they had first-hand experience of this environment, they knew that no such animals live in the sub-Arctic region.[22] This anomaly strongly highlights the construction of James Bay as an imaginative geography for the southern population of Québec. Incorporating an eclectic set of misconceptions, idiosyncrasies and symbols both old and new to characterize the land, it was clearly a geography of hope for Francophones in the pursuit of their economic and cultural affirmation. As such, it yielded numerous spectacular images that turned an area previously little known by the South into a series of national landscapes where heroic acts of colonization could be staged anew. The La Grande river, the Underground Cathedral, the LG2 dam and its famous *escalier de géant*,

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[20] Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 66.
[21] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.
[22] McCutcheon, *Electric*, p. 45.

these various sites produced in the first decade of the development scheme came to symbolize pride, affirmation and technological excellence in the eyes of many Québécois of French ancestry as they reiterated their cultural past into the present: "Aux descendants des pionniers français, [le projet] offrait plus que la création de nouveaux emplois; il proposait de nouvelles terres à défricher, pour y récolter non plus les produits de la ferme mais des millions de kilowattheures."[23] With James Bay framed along these lines, Bourassa's portrayal of workers as *défricheurs* is naturalized and taken for granted, thus rendering the legitimacy of their presence into Cree territory - along with the legitimacy of the entire project - unquestionable.

Recognizing a familiar landscape

Indeed, Bourassa worked actively throughout his political carreer to defend the legitimacy of southern Québec's territorial expansion into the North through his constant reiteration of a colonial narrative in the space of James Bay. Like the *défricheur* he admired so much, he too endeavoured to clear the land: this, however, he accomplishes not with labour but with an accumulation of rational knowledge. Describing a reconnaissance flight over the region, he mentions: "Someone cites for me some of the rivers' names: the Opinaca, Eastmain, La Grande. They are like so many studies, documents, drafts, geographical maps coming to life, moving under our eyes."[24] Hydro-Québec and other archives contain a wealth of documents

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[23] "To the descendants of the French pioneers, the project offered more than the creation of new jobs; it offered new lands to clear in which they could harvest not the products of the farm but millions of kilowatthours." Turgeon, *op. cited*, p. 17.
[24] Bourassa, *La Baie*, p. 128.

where it is possible to retrace in minute details how the region gradually became visible in this way - one chart, map or landscape description at a time. The most intriguing among them is perhaps a report by two geographers who were sent to drive along the newly opened James Bay road with the task of describing the landscapes that lie on either side, and eventually produce a document that would be distributed to potential visitors on the inauguration of the LG2 complex in 1979. In their introduction, the authors make the suggestion that landscapes exhibit different qualities depending on whether they are perceived by an informed observer or not. They ask: "Quels sont les paysages qui s'offrent à l'observateur le long des principales routes du Territoire de la Baie-James? Ou quels sont les paysages qui se dégagent à l'observateur averti, c'est-à-dire en possession de données éclairées?"[25] In suggesting that landscape can be authored in that way and that different kinds of knowledge produce different perceptions, the pair acknowledge their part in providing the data that will organize the gaze of potential visitors and workers in James Bay. As their preliminary report indicates, they fulfill their mandate by naming twenty-three landscapes and classifying them according to their physical properties. The names they choose for these separate sites do not command the view in any precise way so much as suggest instead a visual impression. They are the "surroundings of the Chalifour", the "undulations West of Chapais", the "wavy highlands of Soscoumica lake", the boggy lowlands of the Nottaouai", the "high basins of

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25 "What landscapes present themselves to the viewer along the main roads of the James Bay territory? Or, what landscapes emerge for the informed observer, that is, one who has access to data?" P. Guimont and C. Laverdière, *Les Paysages le long des routes du territoire de la Baie-James* (Montréal: Société de développement de la Baie James - Environnement et Aménagement du territoire, 1977), p. 4.

little rivers", etc.[26] These poetic toponyms read like so many potential titles of landscape paintings. The authors realize that, on their own, they represent but a sketchy and incomplete attempt at "subdividing" this vast region, a task which will require "perception from the air" to be more complete.[27] While the latter comment suggests that the detached view from above is envisioned as a superior way of seeing and knowing, detailed field notes remind us of the partial embodied vision from which these landscape descriptions originate, hampered or aided by the quality of the weather, and scripted amidst the mundane tasks of eating, sleeping and physically moving through the territory. It is important to note that, although these authors acknowledge the partiality of their own vision, nowhere do they suggest that their knowledge could be expanded by inquiring with the local Cree population regarding existing toponyms: instead they value "perception from the air" as a more reliable source of information, and give no consideration to that fact that their own appellation supersedes Cree place names. In that way, they are fully complicit with the invisibilizing of the Cree population from the James Bay landscape. And yet, unlike most documents by non-natives I examined throughout my research, these two individuals' struggle - and part failure - in producing meaning is evident in the text, as is the importance of "situating oneself in order to better understand the territory and contribute to its development."[28] In that way, there is a slight opening in their report for the introduction of different ways of seeing and

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[27] I must emphasize that the road between Matagami and Radisson stretches for 900 miles. The same distance going South would span approximately from Montréal to Tampa, FL. Thus Guimont and Laverdière were indeed facing an extensive task.

[28] "En fin de compte, mieux identifier et comprendre les paysages du territoire, c'est mieux se situer, partant mieux contribuer à l'aménagement du milieu." *Ibid.*, p. 4.

experiencing the territory. Interestingly, the fieldnotes that suggest this opening were not included in the version of the report meant for James Bay visitors.

Bourassa was not so keenly aware of the limits of spatial and environmental knowledge or of his positionality as a viewer. On the contrary, his discourse - oral *and* written, since he wrote three books about James Bay - suggested that the body of knowledge he was drawing from was co-extensive with what there was to know about the whole region.[29] As was often the dominant development approach of the time, he did not admit indigenous activity upon the land as a practice that could generate knowledge; beyond what maps, charts or calculations could represent, there simply was nothing to see. It is this exclusion which allows him to transform the North into a space that is fully known and therefore fully governable. Gérin-Lajoie's *défricheur* once again stands in the background as Bourassa greatly impoverished the landscape by viewing its resources solely as capital. Unlike the two geographers who struggled to make

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[29] These books were the following: *La Baie James* (Montréal: Éditions du Jour, 1973); *Deux fois la Baie James* (Ottawa: Éditions La Presse, 1981) and *L'Énergie du Nord, la force du Québec* (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1985). I have referred chiefly to the first book since it spells out Bourassa's initial vision of "economic nationalism" while the first phase of the project was being built. His second publication, *Deux fois la Baie James* analyses the remaining energy potential that could still be developed in the province and proposes a plan for expanding energy sales: "Le Québec et ses voisins canadiens et américains forment un axe d'échanges énergétiques qui reste à développer. Il est dans l'intérêt de ces régions d'augmenter les échanges d'électricité. Dans ce groupement naturel, le Québec jouera le rôle de principal producteur d'hydro-électricité... *L'eau qui coule dans les nombreuses rivières québécoises, sans avoir généré l'électricité qu'elle est susceptible de produire, est perdue à jamais*" / "Québec and its Canadian and American neighbours form an axis of energy exchange that remains to be developed. It would be in their interest to increase electricity trade. In this natural grouping, Québec will act as a central producer of hydro-electricity... *The water that flows in the many rivers of Québec without having generated the electricity it has the potential to produce is forever lost*" (p. 145, my emphasis). The third book reiterates this utilitarian vision and is aimed more directly at an American audience thanks to an introduction by James Schlesinger, who served as U.S. State Secretary of Energy from 1977 to 1979. It was also translated into English.

meaning from a space that appeared too large and too complex to be captured in one glance, the Premier knows what he is seeing, or rather, what matters to be seen. He knows it so well that his very first trip over James Bay reveals a space which, curiously, he can easily "recognize":

> Depuis de longues minutes, nous survolons lacs et rivières et j'ai l'impression de redécouvrir un paysage familier, déjà vu. Et pourtant, quel spectacle inédit!
>
> Pendant des centaines de milles, c'est la forêt dense, inacessible, creusée par des rivières sinueuses, des lacs immenses et souvent anonymes.
>
> Je ne peux m'empêcher de penser au génie et à la force de caractère des premiers explorateurs de la région: les d'Iberville, les Radisson. J'avais sous les yeux ce que devait être la physionomie totale du Québec du 17e siècle.
>
> Et cette forêt qui continue de défiler, impassible, interminable. Trente-deux milliards de pieds cubes de bois de valeur marchande. Une possibilité annuelle de trois millioins et demi de cunits, le quart de la production forestière actuelle au Québec.
>
> De temps à autre, on remarque l'affleurement des rocs volcaniques propices à la formation de gisements de cuivre, de zinc, d'or et d'argent. En outre, suivant les géologues, des filons d'amiante et de nickel. Soixante-dix millions de tonnes de réserve de métaux non ferreux. Plus d'un milliard de dollars de revenus possibles.

> Comment rester insensible, comment ne pas être émerveillé par un tel spectacle! Quelle réserve inouïe de puissance économique![30]

By rising over the landscape, Bourassa can look down over the region as a *terra incognita*: constructing it as empty and untouched by human presence, he can make a temporal jump backward to recover in imagination what he thinks would have been the integral Québec of the seventeenth century. And yet, this blank, anachronistic space which will be forced into the present through technology and development is precisely *not* a terra incognita and is not unknown to him since he also talks about "rediscovering a familiar landscape." This, I propose, is a strong indication of the ways in which discourse is constitutive of physical geography and plays a decisive part in laying the terrain of development. If, as Edward Said argues, "the rapport between an Orientalist and the Orient was textual", Bourassa gives a powerful example in the above description of the extent to which his relationship to James Bay was founded on text.[31] His familiarity with the heterogeneous discourse of history, literature, charts and economic projections about the North allowed him to create an

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[30] "We've been flying over lakes and rivers for a long time now and I feel like I am rediscovering a familiar landscape, already seen. And yet, what an original spectacle! For hundreds of miles, it is a dense forest, inaccessible, ploughed by winding rivers, lakes that are immense and often anonymous. I cannot refrain from thinking about the genius and strength of character of the region's first explorers: those like Iberville, Radisson. I had under my eyes what must have been the absolute features of seventeenth century Québec. And this forest that continues to stream by, impassive, endless. thirty-two billion cubic feet of wood with a marketing value. An annual possibility of three and a half million units, one quarter of Québec's present forestry output. From time to time, one notices on the surface the outcropping of volcanic rocs favourable to the formation of copper, zinc, gold and silver deposits. As well, according to geologists, asbestos and nickel veins. seventy million tons of non-iron metals in stock. More than one billion dollars in possible revenue. How can one remain insensitive and not be filled with wonder by such a spectacle! What an amazing reserve of economic power!" Bourassa, *La Baie*, pp. 127-128.

[31] E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 52.

imaginative geography that could serve as a stage for enacting his own economic script in the region. Having read these "texts" and discussed them in his books, Bourassa was recognizing his own imaginative geography when he flew over the space of James Bay: furthermore, having most of his field of vision confirmed prevents him from seeing other attributes in the landscape. The imaginative geography he could so easily "re-cognize" was, of course, larger than him or even the francophone culture to which he belonged as it reiterated several elements of Québec's past, which is also linked to France and the rest of Europe. Right into the twentieth century then, these colonial connections and the power relations they contain were being recontextualized and reinscribed into Cree territories through planning and development.

In speaking about imaginative geographies, Edward Said reminds us that "we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate."[32] In the same way that the Orient is constituted as a stage "whose audience, manager, and actors are *for* Europe", the North that Bourassa glances down at is a space of economic power that is scripted for and by the South only. While, in his description, the landscape remains to a large extent unnamed by Europeans, its economic value appears in turn well known: the Premier's numbers are careful but precise, his gaze extends over the surface as well as reaches down into the underground geography of the territory he is keen to conquer. The act of "re-cognizing" this landscape when looking at it for the first time is testimony to the sedimentation and circulation

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

whereby imaginative geographies become taken for granted and acquire the force of "truth." As the above passage demonstrates, the unambiguous "truth" of James Bay is its economic nature: a truth which the Northern Conquerors and countless others who shared this imagining of the region also helped to create, and which clearly cannot be shared by local native inhabitants for whom the territory is much more multi-faceted. This "truth" was meant to consolidate the, narrowly understood, "Québécois national community" as they gathered into an audience to watch the spectacle of the project - and all the electrical, political and economic power it could harness - being built.

And yet before Bourassa and others could view the landscape in such a way, various specialists and scientists had to precede them and prepare the ground by charting its purported emptiness and confirming what could be lying in wait. Indeed, an important function of the staging of James Bay as a spectacle was to make the region known, or rather "recognizable" through a set of common cultural references and ways of seeing. If, as Gillian Rose has remarked, "seeing and knowing are often conflated", this invitation to collectively see James Bay was designed to teach about Québec's geography and allow the population to become acquainted with its national territory.[33] This need to teach and inform the population about the project was carried via the sustained production of images - visual, cartographic, textual - of this new space; the organization of the view effected control on what was to be brought into visibility or left out of the frame. I have suggested that these cultural landscapes brought a "new" region into view but stressed as well that they did so by calling upon and

[33] G. Rose, *op. cited*, p. 86.

reiterating a colonial past; one which informs the Québécois territoriality that was enacted in the North. To be fully enacted, however, this territoriality required a careful - and at times intensely physical - process of surveying, measuring, calculating and categorizing the space of James Bay. Like the *roman de la terre* which "writes" rural nature in the pages of a book and, through that process, recontextualizes the rural sphere as national space, this process "writes" wild nature and appropriates James Bay as a national and economic territory. In what follows, I want to explore this mechanism but I will refer to it as an act of "scripting" rather than writing. I choose this term because it encompasses the two central elements I want to bring into focus: that is, the *writing* of James Bay through some of the literary signs and symbols of Québécois culture which I have already explored, but also its *staging* through the images and spectacle that enact these very meanings, a point which deserves further discussion.

Scripting

> Il est vrai que l'homme peut difficilement faire mieux que la nature. Voilà pourquoi, encore une fois, grâce au grand projet de la Baie James, ce territoire deviendra pour les hommes, pour les chercheurs, pour les amoureux de la nature, un immense laboratoire d'observation, de recherche et d'expérimentation susceptible d'apporter à l'homme d'ici et d'ailleurs des sources nouvelles de compréhension de son environnement, de son

milieu de vie et un peu de la sagesse et de l'équilibre que la nature semble se plaire à recréer partout.[34]

Linking the dots

Prior to the official announcement of the project, the James Bay territory had long been the object of scientific explorations seeking to determine its hydroelectric potential. Once he made the decision to turn the La Grande river into the focal point of his leadership, Bourassa was relying on data that had been gathered over more than a decade of exploration work in the area. The Shawinigan Water and Power Company, the largest power corporation in the province before its taking over by Hydro-Québec, had concentrated its research on the Rupert, Nottaway and Broadback rivers, all of which were located in the southern part of the region. Using these studies, Hydro-Québec continued to survey the territory, adding the Eastmain and La Grande rivers to their inventory. In 1967, two hundred and fifty men - I was told that no women were involved in these expeditions - lived in eighteen exploration camps disseminated across one hundred thousand square miles of territory and busily "preparing the future":

> [L]es relevés géologiques et les études hydrologiques permettent d'établir une cartographie de la Baie James. En 1968, c'est l'accélération des travaux de cartographie, des

[34] "It is true that man can hardly do better than nature. Here is why, once again, thanks to the James Bay project, this territory will become for men, for researchers, for nature lovers, an immense laboratory of observation - of research and experimentation - capable of bringing to men of here and elsewhere new sources of understanding of their living environment, and a little of the wisdom and balance that nature likes to recreate everywhere." Bourassa, *La Baie James*, p. 102.

> études des sols et des relevés géologiques dans la région du complexe Nottaway-Broadback-de Rupert. Pas d'études, à ce moment-là, sur les rivières Eastmain et La Grande Rivière. Les années 1969 et 1970 se passent dans les bureaux: révision des chiffres et des estimations, compilation des données recueillies sur le terrain et voyages de reconnaissance des responsables de la direction du Génie d'Hydro-Québec.[35]

This passage reveals another aspect of the creation of a geographical divide between North and South through the production of knowledge about James Bay. The scientific tools of geology, geography and cartography endeavour to "clear" the wilderness by rendering its space in highly rational, mathematical terms. This representation - which is consistent with the history of European colonial exploration in North America - is made possible by taking the data harvested back to the "offices" of Hydro-Québec where it is compiled, assessed and calculated. In that way, the offices of the energy corporation located in the city of Montréal become the distant "centers of calculation"[36] where the space of the north can become known and decisions can be made about its becoming: "Pour en arriver à

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[35] "Geological samples and hydrological studies help to establish a cartography of James Bay. In 1968, cartography work, soil studies and geological sampling become intensified in the Nottaway-Broadback-Rupert region. No study, at this point, on the Eastmain and the La Grande rivers. The years 1969 and 1970 are spent in the offices: numbers and estimates are revised, data gathered in the field is compiled. Those in charge of the engineering division at Hydro-Québec continue their reconnaissance trips." Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 26.

[36] See B. Latour, "Centers of Calculation." *Science in Action: how to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 215-257. Discussing a trip to the South Pacific by the French explorer Lapérouse, Latour notes that centers of calculation - by which he means various imperial cities in Europe - were instrumental in consolidating the "Great Divide" between civilization and barbarism: "The *implicit* geography of the natives is made *explicit* by geographers; the *local* knowledge of the savages becomes the *universal* knowledge of the cartographers; the fuzzy, approximate and ungrounded *beliefs* of the locals are turned into a precise, certain and justified *knowledge*" (p. 216).

ces résultats puis, ultérieurement, à ces prises de décision, des centaines d'explorateurs ont sillonné, examiné, scruté tout le territoire de la Baie James."[37] Through various *cycles of accumulation* over the years, James Bay became gradually mobilized to become a chief engine of Québec's economy.[38] This cycle was greatly accelerated once Bourassa had firmed up his project and was preparing to launch it: the warm months of 1971 would become known as "the summer of geologists" as sixty specialists dispersed themselves across the land to study the five major rivers of the territory.[39]

The gathering of such information proved to be an excruciating physical task as technicians endeavoured to measure the territory against existing maps:

> Avec nos instruments, lourds et encombrants, notre rôle consistait à mesurer les élévations et les distances pour repérer sur le terrain des points précis apparaissant sur nos cartes et sur nos photos aériennes. Un travail dur, fatigant mais passionnant. Ma dernière expédition du genre consistait à relier des points sur une distance ininterrompue de 300 kilomètres.[40]

This attempt to "link the dots" across such a vast territory is reminiscent of the work accomplished by the two geographers who set out to describe the landscapes alongside the James Bay road. Here, however, even fewer traces

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[37] Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 29.

[38] See Latour, *Science*, p. 219-223.

[39] Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 28.

[40] "With our heavy, awkward instruments, our role was to measure distance and elevation to locate on the ground precise points showing on our maps and aerial photos. A tough job, tiring but fascinating. My last expedition of this kind consisted of linking dots on an uninterrupted distance of 300 km." *Ibid.*, p. 23.

are left of the subjects who gathered the data that was to be translated into charts. The erasure of subjectivity from these processes yields a two-dimensional, newly manageable space that renders James Bay "portable" so that it could be toured with and presented to a broader, geographically scattered audience.[41] No area was too big, complex or difficult of access for these scientific expeditions to repertory and draw in minute details: "Les gars du siège social d'Hydro-Québec nous demandaient de tout mesurer, du point le plus haut au point le plus bas. On traçait des lignes d'arpentage qui partaient du fond des tourbières pour aboutir à la crête des montagnes."[42] The development vision of James Bay is well captured by such an image of a land surveyor standing behind his instrument "to measure everything." With his eye fitted into the narrow tunnel of a lens, he projects a straight line across the territory that digitizes its dips, slopes and elevations from one end to the other. This telescopic gaze had been without precedent in the space of James Bay. It produced a knowledge of it that could not be further from a Cree hunter's perspective. What could be the meaning of such data if the body had not moved through space to interpret the ground's curve within the environment that produces it? Much of the discrepancy between Cree and Québécois constructions and experiences of landscape is encompassed in this question. I will bring this discreapancy into sharper focus by discussing Cree cultural perceptions of landscape; but before I do so, I want to lay out a few more points about how several

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41 Bruno Latour gives a good idea of this change of scale which renders space portable when he ask, referring to European cartographers: "How large has the world become in their chart rooms? No bigger than an atlas the plates of which may be flattened, combined, reshuffled, superimposed, redrawn at will." Latour, *Science*, p. 224.

42 "The guys form Hydro-Québec's head office were asking us to measure everything, from the highest point to the lowest one. We would draw survey lines that started at the bottom of peat bogs and reached to the mountain crests." Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 23.

forms of exclusion were articulated and materialized throughout the territory via the politics of vision.

A portable landscape

The show that launched James Bay as well as the process of "scripting" I have discussed encompassed "ways of seeing" that are typical of Western modernity. Martin Jay has argued that: "Beginning with the Renaissance and the scientific revolution, modernity has been normally considered resolutely *ocularcentric*."[43] If words and speeches reiterated the Québécois colonial past during the construction years, images also performed the past into the present by reinscribing a different set of colonial relations: in making the space of James Bay esthetically pleasing to the eyes, these images enacted unequal power relations between Québécois and Cree. I have already suggested that, as dams went up and reservoirs expanded, the slow transformation of the region was something to be watched. Fragments of its geography floated south of the 49th parallel to surface in newspapers, magazines and TV screens, thereby assembling its

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[43] M. Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity." S. Lash and J. Friedman, eds., *Modernity and Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 178, my emphasis. For various explorations of this concept, see J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972); G. Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983); A. Pred, *Recognizing European Modernities: a montage of the present* (London: Routledge, 1995); D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). For a feminist critique of these visual regimes, see R. Deutsche, "Boys Town." *Evictions: art and spatial politics* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 203-244; M. Morris, "The Man in the Mirror: David Harvey's 'Condition' of Postmodernity." *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol. 9 (1992), pp. 253-279; C. Nash, "Reclaiming Vision: Looking at Landscape and the Body." *Gender, Place and Culture* 3.2 (1996), pp. 149-169; G. Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity." *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the History of Art* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 50-90; G. Rose, "Looking at Landscape: the uneasy pleasures of power. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 86-112.

face for non-native viewers. Many of these images were produced through aerial photography so as to represent the engineering structures from above and magnify their presence in space.[44] In this detached, two-dimensional view, the dams looked neatly fitted into a space that had been cut up for them; they appeared to be gigantic objects standing in a "container" space. Gazing at those images, it is easy to forget that their presence rearranges an entire geography, from an environmental point of view but also from a social and political one.

There are several important consequences of this visual discourse, many of which can be explained by its privileging of "perspective" in inviting and organizing the gaze. Denis Cosgrove has discussed the emergence of perspective in fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Italy as an appropriation of space relying on Euclidian geometry; this new visual language was expressed in European art through the emergence of landscape paintings.[45] Using perspective to quantify space and reproduce it on the canvas, landscape paintings made a strong claim to "realism" by assigning to art a "mirror" function. It is worth noting that, in the context of James Bay, this claim to realism was even stronger because the landscapes that circulated in the south were generally photos. In his analysis of "the idea of landscape", Cosgrove has explained how the illusion of order can be maintained through the convention of realist vision and the controlling of pictorial space. This control slips from view all the more

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[44] Since I had become very familiar with this imagery, I felt an acute discrepancy when I visited LG-2 between the mental scale I had of the project and the one I experienced while on site. Seen in pictures, the structures had seemed much more gigantic.

[45] D. Cosgrove, "Towards a Radical Cultural Geography: problems of theory." *Antipode* 15 (1983), p. 5. See also his "Prospects, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10 (1985), pp. 45-62.

easily in photographic landscapes as the viewer forgets that angling, pointing, framing or lighting are all active processes whereby the photographer - like the painter - creates an image. Two important consequences of this control by the artist are that the flow of time appears suspended and the image seems directed at a single, external subject:

> It offers a view of the world directed at the experience of one individual at a given moment in time when the arrangement of the constituent forms is pleasing, uplifting or in some other way linked to the observer's psychological state; it then represents this view as universally valid by claiming for it the status of reality. The experience of the insider, the landscape as subject, and the collective life within it are all implicitly denied. Subjectivity is rendered the property of the artist and the viewer - those who control the landscape - not those who belong to it.[46]

To create this order, landscape imagery is usually devoid of human subjects. This was true in James Bay where the effort to showcase the engineering structures meant that they had to be represented against an abstract space acting as a backdrop. The emptying of space gives the illusion that the landscape exists solely for the enjoyment of the viewer and, more importantly, that it is fully available to such an individual. The presence of native people necessarily disrupts the illusion of ownership, which partly explains their constant erasure - or that of markers that would indicate their presence - from the frame of representation; clearly

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[46] D. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 20.

this happens not only in pictures but, more significantly, in practice through the structures that enable access to resources and their management. It is only through the removal of native presence in the landscape, and their marginalization in the decision-making process involved in each step of the project, that James Bay and its resources could begin to be conceived as "belonging to all the Québécois." By denying "the landscape as subject" - or rather that subjects could belong in the landscape of hydroelectricity - the promotional imagery of the project made the viewer the sole possessor of this landscape, as well as its consumer. This viewer had to be located outside the frame for the picture to take effect in this manner, therefore such a person could clearly not be a native of James Bay. Radically detached from its internal subjects, the landscape is finally rendered "portable", which is also a way of effecting a greater amount of control upon it. As Martin Jay argues, this portability also means that the landscape and what it depicts can "enter the circulation of capitalist exchange."[47]

Nature as a standing reserve

The detached view from above represents James Bay not only as a portable landscape but, more pointedly, as one that can be "exported." The processes I have just described which make the space of James Bay devoid

[47] "John Berger goes so far as to claim that more appropriate than the Albertian metaphor of the window on the world is that of 'a safe let into a wall, a safe in which the visible has been deposited.' It was, he contends, no accident that the emergence of the invention (or rediscovery) of perspective virtually coincided with the emergence of the oil-painting detached from its context and available for buying and selling. Separate from the painter and the viewer, the visual field depicted on the other side of the canvas could become a portable commodity able to enter the circulation of capitalist exchange." Jay, *Scopic*, p. 182.

of human presence also exemplify what I have in mind when suggesting that the North was constructed as "wild and rich" by the discourse of development. If aerial photos displayed vast amounts of unoccupied space, they also beautifully showcased what this space contained in terms of natural resources, the most spectacular of them being water. In fact, the hydroelectric structures themselves seemed to function as props for advantageously showing this abundant resource. Implicit in these landscapes is the power of technology in harnessing nature and forcing it to serve humankind. In the same way that the viewer is external to the landscapes of hydroelectricity, so are humans perceived to be external to nature in these spectacular shots. Thus, the visual economy that makes James Bay a portable landscape also produces it as a "standing reserve." In "The Question Concerning Technology", Martin Heidegger proposed that modern technology had strayed from the meaning that was originally contained in the Greek word *techne*, where the power of nature resides in the bringing forth of its possibilities, and technology is the agent of that unconcealment:

> [*Techne*] reveals whatever does not bring itself forth and does not yet lie here before us, whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another. (...) Thus what is decisive in *techne* does not lie at all in making and manipulating nor in the using of means, but rather in the aforementioned revealing. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth.[48]

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[48] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 13.

Heidegger emphasizes, through his notion of *techne*, the uncertainty of revealing: "whatever can look and turn out now one way and now another."[49] This uncertainty is seemingly resolved by controlling the image of James Bay and representing it - as well as its nature - as a picture.[50] For Heidegger, Western science and technology typically does away with the uncertainty of revealing through its emphasis on manufacturing which transforms nature into a standing reserve. There is no better image of this concept than the reservoirs that stand behind the turbines of a dam, gathering rivers and storing their waters so that they can be available on demand for the production of electricity. Similarly, the mining resources below the surface of the territory must be imagined as standing reserve to unlock what is a material but also a symbolic potential. The lyricism of Northern Conquerors concerning what riches James Bay may contain offers a good example of this: rendered in text, the region is no less conceived as a picture with its lavish descriptions creating a mental image of this *el dorado*. By representing James Bay as a vast empty space, and therefore a wilderness, the landscape imagery I have described is a complement to text, and works in conjunction with it to set up the resources of the North as standing reserve. As a wilderness, James Bay is a space where there is nothing to see or imagine but what should be "unlocked, transformed, stored or distributed."[51] The spectacular engineering structures hold and handle water like so many concrete arms operating the La Grande river

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[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 129-130.

[50] I am referring to Heidegger's analysis of modernity as the "age of the world picture": "[W]orld picture, when understood essentially, does not mean a picture of the world but the world conceived and grasped as picture. What is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is *set up by man*, who represents and sets forth." Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture." *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130, my emphasis.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

like an "organic machine."[52] Once spectatorship becomes the dominant way of seeing James Bay rivers, and other resources, the need for their access and use is always already inscribed as an absolute. Furthermore, the certainty that nature is wild increases its promise as a standing-reserve: because it is untouched its potential yield can only be greater. The possibility - which the Cree and their allies have struggled to express - that nature could have limits, be tricky, unwieldy or not fully knowable never figures in the spectacular landscapes of development and their production of nature, both visually, textually and materially. The camera, or the text, that constructs and orchestrates the view projects itself instead like a passive mirror capturing what was always lying in wait to be seen and known. Once again, nature operates its rhetorical magic: it never encompasses the idea of production but is always perceived as the realm where things just "are."[53] And yet, as the spectacular images of a wild and abundant nature harnessed by technology indicate, the James Bay that emerged in Southern Québec during the nineteen-seventies was clearly a Western cultural construction "for and by" the Québécois. The fact that James Bay was so carefully constructed as a "discourse" was a strong factor, I suggest, in powering its material impacts. This cultural construction and its accepted meanings had force and currency enough to mobilize the necessary agents that would divert rivers, flood vast stretches of land, destroy Cree ancestral sites and hunting grounds and secure for years to come, the production of one of the staples of Québec's economy, which is electricity.

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[52] I am borrowing the term from Richard White who used it to describe the Columbia river. R. White, *The Organic Machine: the remaking of the Columbia river* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

[53] See H. Lefebvre, "Nature and Nature Conquered." *Introduction to Modernity* (New York: Verso, 1995), pp. 132-156.

Tracks

The above processes spell out a strange contradiction which is that people living in the south of Québec were disengaging from the space of James Bay at the same time as they were being introduced to it. The quantifying gaze of surveyors removed the body from the territory in the same way that panoramic spectatorship of this "grandiose" nature separated the viewers from the spaces being viewed: in that separation, James Bay emerged as a particularly eurocentric geography, all the while projecting itself as universal and open to all who would take part in the project. Abstracting people and territory, the spectacular enframing of the North produced a geography of ownership where viewers were invited to freely include themselves by stepping into the fold of the national *community*, which was co-extensive with the national *economy*. Empowered to "see" Northern resources, Bourassa was convinced that natives would readily join in his development project: "Indians must take notice of the whole situation and of the exceptional opportunities for their collective future that the economic windfall from the La Grande project represents."[54] Yet the community, imagined as "all the Québécois", that would possess James Bay was in fact out of bounds for natives as long as they wished to retain and develop their own modes of seeing and interacting with the land, which was co-extensive with their own hybrid economy. I now turn to these ways of seeing in order to problematize the dominant visual ideology of development in relation to Cree cultural perceptions of landscapes.

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[54] Bourassa, *La Baie*, p. 130.

Reading the land

> Job said the rain would stop and in the early afternoon it did. We got out our equipment and went for a walk. Job took as lively and detailed an interest in every rock, tree and plant as we would in every shop if we were walking along the Champs-Élysées. Here, a porcupine had been eating at the topmost branches of a tree. Lower down, see, even the beaver had been around, he had come for food. There a rabbit had left signs of his recent presence. And over here, under this rock, is one of those places he had told us about, where the bear goes looking for ants...[55]

The first necessary step in comprehending a Cree relationship to the land is to decenter dominant Western constructions of landscape and to call into question their emphasis on vision.[56] Throughout this Act, I have discussed a Western framework of perception which involves a cognitive separation between the space to be viewed and the viewer, which is reproduced in the geographical division between North and South. In this framework, James Bay was rendered as a spectacular space where nature and the people confronting it were seen to be "larger than life", giants in a country of gigantic proportions. For the *défricheur* to become a truly national hero, the nature he must measure his strength against has to be of epic proportions. The qualities of heroes are proportional to the spaces in

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[55] Richardson, *op. cited*, p. 172.

[56] I am grateful to Susan Preston who discussed these questions with me and shared her own work on the role of landscape for the Eastern James Bay Cree. See S. Preston, *Meaning and Representation: landscape in the oral tradition of the Eastern James Bay Cree* (M.A. thesis, The University of Guelph, Ontario, 1999).

which these heroes accomplish their feats: in that sense, cultural landscapes act as spaces of projection. For local Crees whose practices linked them closely to the James Bay environment, regional landscapes were also spaces of projection; yet these spaces were not generally known through passive spectatorship but through everyday experience, thus yielding a different perception of their scale and relative distance to the observer. Furthermore, as a dominant mode of cultural exchange, oral tradition rather than vision has been the principal form through which landscape is perceived and signified. The emphasis on the spoken word in the form of storytelling readily stands in contrast with the visual language that was so instrumental to developers during the years of construction to familiarize non-local populations with the space of James Bay. In addition, it stands in contrast with the written form of the *roman de la terre* where the act of writing about the land effects a separation from it by locating the narrative inside the pages of a book. With orality as a dominant form of cultural transmission, each geographical locale presents its own narrative, and writing literally takes place "on the land." The effort to decenter a Western understanding of landscape then has to take into consideration not only the mode of experience - passive spectatorship versus active embodied practice - but also the mode of signification - images and written text versus oral tradition.

The experience of landscape that was expressed by the Cree through oral tradition was characterized by movement and mobility. As hunters and gatherers, the Cree moved extensively across the land usually in small family groups. Hunting families regularly travelled several hundred kilometers in the fall and winter when they left gathering points to travel

in search of the game and fish that would sustain them through the seasons. Some groups remained on the coast through the year, identifying as "coasters" in contrast with the "inlanders" who travelled inland from the bay.[57] In the summer, both would congregate in specific locations with some of them eventually assuming the function of fur-trading posts as the Cree devoted part of their hunting production to commercial exchange with the Hudson Bay Company.[58] Over time, some of these posts have evolved into the permanent villages that are now spread across the Eastern James Bay territory, amounting to four on the Coast (Chisasibi, Wemindji, Eastmain, Waskaganish) and six inland (Matagami, Waswanipi, Nemaska, Ouje-Bougoumou, Mistissini, Nemaska). The consolidation of these settlements into villages offering Western housing and commercial amenities has altered the balance of subsistence activities for the Cree and effected a transition to wage-earning and a market economy that was accelerated with the advent of a James Bay and Northern Québec agreement. Nevertheless, traditional practices such as hunting, fishing and trapping remain a central component of the Cree culture and experience of landscape.

In these practices, physical movement is guided by the various signs a hunter can collect indicating the presence of animals in the environment, and inferring the trajectory they follow. Reading signs of the presence of animals and moving across the land are interdependent activities that make hunting possible. Not only does movement unfold in the course of a

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[57] T. Morantz, *An Ethnohistoric Study of Eastern James Bay Cree Social Organization, 1700-1850.* (Ottawa: Canadian Ethnology Service, Paper No. 88, National Museums of Canada, 1983), p. 12.

[58] For an in-depth study of fur-trading activities in the area, see Francis and Morantz, *op. cited.*

day as a result of this interpretation of signs in the landscape, it also unfolds along the seasonal cycles which determine where animals are to be found as well as the quality of the land surface, which can hinder or facilitate travel. For the Crees, the ability to pursue traditional activities is dependent not merely on the availability of game and fish but on the crucial capacity to continue to *read* the landscape in a language that they know. Working from oral recordings collected by her father (anthropologist Richard Preston) in the early nineteen-sixties, Susan Preston has analyzed how "tracks" function as language:

> Tracks are language in the landscape. The signs by which the hunter knows who he is intersecting with in the landscape are tracks left in the snow. Primarily footprints, tracks also include evidence of vegetative browsing and damage, as well as fecal remains. Tracks convey a vast amount of information: who is ahead, where they were and where they are going, what their condition is, how many there are, how long ago they were here, how old they are, how fast they are moving, how heavy and how big they are by their footprint size and spacing of steps. Without seeing the person themselves you can know them by their tracks. It is the central way of knowing who is in the landscape with you. This applies to all the "actors" moving about in the landscape, including other humans, animals, spirit persons, and atooshes (cannibal-monsters).[59]

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[59] Preston, *Meaning*, p. 84. In her study, Preston also looks at tracks as maps, indicators of temporality and carriers of cultural values (pp. 70-119). Not all hunting activities, bird hunting among them, involve the same tracking system.

If Cree spatial practice fashions a landscape that is rendered as narrated text in the oral tradition, Preston's study shows that landscape is also textual from the beginning as hunters follow their prey through signs. Hunting, therefore, writes and reads the land and, in that way, is not unlike the Québécois *roman de la terre*, albeit in a different material format. When Job Bearskin goes for a walk (see opening quote of this section), he reads the marks various animals have left on his hunting territory and forms a narrative of their movement which helps him plan his activities for the day. What I wish to stress is that the profusion of signs in the landscape and the reliance upon them makes the process of *reading* - which necessarily entails a previous act of *scripting* - a dominant mode of interaction with the land for the Cree. That mode is not limited to hunting and can serve more generally to orient oneself across the land. One Cree man gives this testimony of traveling by skidoo with his father to reach a distant village:

> Along the way to Mistassini there were blazes on the trees. We would get onto a lake and I'd stop the skidoo. My father was riding behind me. I'd ask him, Which way now? He'd say, See that point there, you go around it, and you go into a little bay, and at the bay there's gonna be a rock. You go right along the rock, and the first tree you see there's gonna be a blaze on it. So we would go there and go along the rock, and the first tree we'd see would be dead, rotten, but you could see the old blaze on it. And all the way to Mistassini, going through all the lakes,

> he made only one mistake, when I didn't even know where the fuck I was going...[60]

In their efforts to guide themselves successfully across space, the two men remind us that James Bay is neither empty nor uninscribed - a blank wilderness as the spectacular enframing of Northern Québec suggests - but possesses other kinds of texts, which can only be read through the body. Whether for purposes of hunting or traveling, the ability to orient oneself by reading different tracks in the landscape involves an act of looking which is qualitatively different from that involved in the experience of landscape through spectatorship. The crucial point here is that, when Western ways of seeing consume and appropriate space such as they did through the spectacle of development, the attribution of "emptiness" to James Bay is less a result of its relatively small, scattered population than of the inability of the body to occupy a space that is everywhere colonized by the eye alone. Promotional imagery geared to urban populations rendered the space of James Bay as a series of views from above encouraging the detached contemplation of this new national scenery. By contrast, the Cree experience of the same space was predicated on practices that necessitated an embodied engagement with the territory. The different modes of interaction with the environment employed at different times by each party emphasize the importance of landscape as a culturally inflected experience in the production of space and geographical imaginaries.

Perhaps more to the point, the above examples show that geography can be experienced as text and that the ability to continue to read its

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[60] Richardson, *Strangers*, p. 13.

narratives is a necessary requirement if subjects are to carry on the cultural practices that define them as a people. In the same way that the *défricheur* is supported by the textual matrix of the *roman de la terre* and the physical space of the Laurentian landscape as it continues to be reiterated and recontextualized as a cultural symbol of the past, the Cree hunter is supported by the land. That reliance on the land is rendered all the more crucial because cultural narratives rely less on text than on the land itself as their repository, this despite the fact that several Cree tales and stories now appear in print.[61] This emphasis on the land is predominant also because, with Cree people increasingly juggling traditional activities and wage-earning in the market economy, hunting is a primary means of maintaining cultural coherence. As Susan Preston argues, "the loss of a normal pattern of recognizable signs would severely

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[61] There is an on-going project to develop a database of Cree historical and cultural knowledge as it relates to Cree territories in Québec, starting with those of the Whapmagoostui band. This project includes a detailed survey of place-names (some maps have already been drawn with these names) and the gathering of supporting information such as stories, myths and land-use data. The database is testimony to the multiple layers of scripting that form Cree ancestral lands in Northern Québec. In the words of the project's chief investigator, David Denton: "The names and stories are not abstract facts about the past. They are melded into a landscape that echoes these tales from the past which are heard, interpreted and reinterpreted as people travel from place to place. They are a cultural heritage, linking the community and its past to a myriad of points across the land and evoking sadness, mirth or wonder at the ancestors' experiences on that land. At the same time, they are a network of messages containing both practical information and a breath of spiritual and moral counsel. There is every reason to believe that the naming and story-telling tradition that created this network is still vital and dynamic. [N]ew names are still being added and, in years to come, new stories will likely become part of the traditional history tied to those places. The names and stories add an important dimension, whether this is called '"iterary" or "aesthetic", historic or spiritual, to Cree appreciation of their lands." Denton's description eloquently captures the deep cultural layering of place by the Cree. The effort by the Québécois of the South to recontextualize in James Bay a poetics of land originating from the St.-Lawrence valley can be viewed as an attempt to inscribe a similar cultural layer, and to make its dominant references seem less "out of place." See D. Denton, "The Land as an Aspect of Cree History." In G. Ioannou, ed., *The Waters, the Land and the People: an anthology of writings on Hudson and James Bay* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Sierra Club of Canada, *forthcoming*).

limit the ability to know and participate in culture."[62] Hydroelectric development in the region effected that loss at a rate never before experienced by the Cree, and in that way presented strong obstacles against their efforts to integrate these changes within their traditional worldview. As I have wanted to stress by analyzing the production of Québécois cultural landscapes in the North as a process of "scripting", development *rewrote* in a profoundly material way the spaces known to the Crees by changing the course of rivers and altering the ecological balance of the land. This is not an abstract argument about discourse, nor is it an appeal to leave the land untouched to preserve a purported timeless "essence." The Cree themselves have not known their environment to be static in such a way and have long integrated dynamic change into their culture and economy. Rather, this is an argument to take seriously the idea that landscapes are constructed and experienced through different cultural filters that become taken-for-granted. The lack of recognition and refusal to factor in these cultural filters has made hydroelectrical development in the North the exclusive purview of one culture - broadly understood as that of the Québécois of French ancestry - at the expanse of another, that of the Cree. It has created a national discourse of identity that is strongly predicated on a culturally-specific experience of territory. By making the North at once knowable and visible to a disembodied observer, scripting and spectacle constituted it as a terrain to be acted upon by a "universal" subject who was in fact culturally specific, and heavily gendered as white, male and bourgeois through the process of looking at landscape. The goal of making Québec a diverse national community is impossible to achieve without introducing

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[62] Preston, *Meaning*, p. 119.

difference in the territoriality this subject produces, in James Bay and other spaces of nation-building.

Governmentality

> Développer la Baie James, c'est aussi quitter la vallée du St-Laurent, élargir nos frontières et prendre possession de toutes nos ressources. -- C'est enfin, pour l'ensemble des Québécois, découvrir à nouveau la fierté que seul peut donner l'accomplissement d'un destin à la grandeur de ses aspirations et de ses capacités.[63]

I now want to tie together the various issues I have presented in this Act by bringing them under the rubric of governmentality. My analysis so far has endeavoured to show that, coming into view through the dual action of scripting and spectacle, James Bay was rewritten into a series of landscapes that represented the - assumed - interests and aspirations of the French Québécois and negated a Cree experience of the same space, which is characterized not only through scripting and viewing but also through the reading of tracks. The knowledge that "linked the dots" on a map so that they could be filled in-between with environmental and economic data summoned a series of new landscapes into presence that were nonetheless familiar to the Québécois because they performed a well-known territoriality. It is important to remember that, through this process, the region was also successfully laid out for government

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[63] "To develop James Bay is to leave the St.-Lawrence valley, to broaden our frontiers and take possession of all our resources. -- It is, finally, for all the Québécois, to discover anew the pride that only the fulfilling of a fate equal to their aspirations and capacities can yield." Bourassa, *La Baie*, p. 49.

intervention; a point which I need to explain further before bringing this Act to a conclusion. As I have shown, before Bourassa could make it his chief instrument for governing the province, there had to be an extensive body of images, reports, narratives, data, lay opinions and scientific studies assessing and imagining the hydroelectric potential of the region. From the start, this knowledge production about the area was meant to coincide with the development of a national economy; therefore, in defining the physical and cognitive domain where the natural resources of the North could be accessed, Québec - Southern Québec that is - was also expanding its political territory. Bourassa was clear on this matter: he considered it a strong advantage of hydro-electricity that it allows for the development and planning (*aménagement*) of new territories.[64] Following from the Quiet Revolution, the strong connection between identity and nature (envisioned as natural resources) had made the establishment of provincial - rather than federal - institutions in the North a priority in the building of a strong Québec state. Throughout the nineteen-sixties, geographer Michel Brochu - a member of the Arctic Research Center at the *Université de Montréal* - was pushing strongly for the establishment of a Québécois governance in Northern Québec, which would also encompass the Arctic region. It was during a scientific research trip that he became concerned with what he saw as an administrative vacuum in the area then known as "Nouveau Québec" and feared that Québec's integrity could suffer from it. His views were heard by then Liberal Minister of Natural Resources René Lévesque who, following two meetings with Brochu, accepted to support and work toward a more efficient administration; this led to the creation of the

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec in 1962.[65] According to Brochu, the principles that guided the *Direction* were as follows:

> [T]o take charge of the totality of the Administration, Health and Education of Eskimo (sic) settlements in Nouveau-Québec, simply because the latter is part of Québec's territory so that it was and is normal that it should be this way. On the other hand, to respect the Eskimo language and tradition through an education system where Eskimo is the first and principal teaching language.[66]

Brochu's interest in Québec's Northern territories led him to support the initiative of the La Sarre business council to build a road linking the Abitibi to the shores of James Bay.[67] After a request for more information on the project, he was asked by Dominique Godbout if he would enjoin his

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[65] The boundaries of Québec were extended all the way to its northern coast by Ottawa in 1912, but the Federal government continued to be the sole provider of services to the Inuit population. The *Direction générale du Nouveau-Québec* was a relatively short-lived administrative structure which was reshaped by the advent of the James Bay Development Corporation, although the first phases of the project were built on rivers South of the geographical area designated as *Nouveau-Québec*. Although the Crees have been more directly affected by hydroelectric development, this region encompasses the ancestral territories of the Inuit as well, which explains why both groups were included in the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement. Despite the fact that many of its provisions continue to be contested, the JBNQ agreement constitutes the current administrative framework in these territories. See R. Mainville, "Visions divergentes sur la compréhension de la convention de la Baie James et du Nord québécois." *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* Vol. 23.1 (1993), pp. 69-79; L.-E. Hamelin, "L'entièreté du Québec: le cas du Nord." *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* Vol. 42.115 (1998), pp. 95-110; B. Diamond, "Villages of the Dammed: the James Bay Agreement leaves a trail of broken promises." *Arctic Circle* (1990), pp. 24-34.

[66] This quote is taken from what appears to be the text of a public address found in the Brochu collection at the *Centre de recherche Lionel-Groulx*. To his credit, Brochu was adamant about the fact that Inuit children had to be taught in their own language. For more details concerning Brochu's perspective on Nouveau-Québec, see his book *Le Défi du Nouveau-Québec* (Montréal: Éditions du Jour, 1962). The old appellation "Eskimo" appearing in Brochu's documents has since been replaced in Canada by the term "Inuit."

[67] See M. Brochu, "Le nouvel axe", opus cited.

university colleagues to make donations to the Order of Northern Conquerors during their fund-raising campaign. This link between Brochu and the Northern Conquerors is significant as it brings together within a single sphere two ways of imagining the North usually viewed as mutually exclusive: i.e. the epic narrative which is supposedly superseded by the scientific rationality of planning. In mobilizing his academic resources to publicize the cause, Brochu entered, as it were, into the fold of the epic territorial narrative that propelled the James Bay penetration road. While the tools he called upon were those of the modern state apparatus, he also appealed to the symbolic - which I have also called *mythico-poetic* - order of the nation to tighten the bond between people, resources and territory. In an interview where he discussed the necessity of annexing coastal islands of the Hudson and James Bay to the territory of Québec, his gaze on the landscape seemed to fuse together governmentality and national destiny: "If only two deputies wanted to take care of it, this anomaly would be corrected. In front of me, mobile and convincing features unfurl the epic movie of Nouveau-Québec."[68] In this single phrase both writing (epic) and spectacle (movie) are brought together as channels of the new governmentality that was to be expanded in the region.

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[68] M. Vadeboncoeur, "Le géographe Brochu s'inquiète de l'avenir de ces îles riches en pétrole et en minerais." *La Patrie* (November 1967), p. 18. The latter part of the quote cannot easily be translated: 'Devant moi, un faciès mobile, convaincant me fait voir le film de l'Épopée du Nouveau-Québec.' Brochu wrote extensively on the territorial limits of Québec in the Hudson and James Bay where tidal ranges can be several kilometers long, thus exposing islands that, he argued, should be within Québec's jurisdiction. In his view, the reluctance of the federal government to cede these islands to the province was a potential threat to its territorial sovereignty. See M. Brochu, *Les îles littorales et du large du Nouveau-Québec* (Montréal: Conseil de la Vie Française et Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, 1967); "Les anomalies des frontières naturelles et politiques du Nouveau-Québec." *Relations* (February 1962), pp. 35-36.

A father's attention

This merging of territorial rationality and symbolic narrative is precisely what Bourassa accomplished so well in leading the province through his *projet du siècle*; my analysis shows that such a process is predicated on the production of cultural landscapes. The Premier's development scheme deployed new state institutions throughout the territory at the same time as it redefined the parameters whereby the people of Québec could identify - or not, as the Cree's own ways of seeing attest - as national subjects. These parameters were enlivened by a sense of place that was both novel and familiar as it reiterated an old narrative in a new geography. Poised to expand and give a more definite shape to some of the state structures that had emerged with the Quiet Revolution, Bourassa's leadership is a rich example of what Michel Foucault has identified as a shift, in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, toward the "governmentalising of the State."[69] Foucault regards this emerging governmentality as an "economic" turn in the art of governing whereby politics is no longer about maintaining the sovereignty of the Prince over his territory but about organizing the relations between "men and things" in an effort to foster wealth and well-being from within. Reviewing a body of post-Machiavellian literature, Foucault states that:

> The art of government, as becomes apparent in this literature, is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy - that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family

[69] See C. Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: an introduction." G. Burchell et. al., eds., *The Foucault Effect: studies in governmentality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 1-51.

> (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper - how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the state.[70]

Although Foucault never commented on it, the patriarchal underpinnings of governmentality appear in their crudest light in this image of the family as a model of government. This is a sharp point of entry for starting to conceptualize the gendered nature of the state, especially since it is precisely in this transition from sovereign power to governmentality that Foucault sees the entrance of "biopower" in the political sphere.[71] So far in this Act, I have emphasized the racial exclusions - particularly the exclusion of the Cree - effected by the state; yet in different but equally important ways, James Bay and the national community it was meant to bring together was also problematic for women in its enactment of a patriarchal discourse of spatial conquest. The effects of bio-power - how power produces the body through different knowledge regimes - take hold differently depending on how these regimes actualize race, gender and class through the body. Articulated as "how to introduce the meticulous attention of the father toward his family into the management of the state", the question of governmentality becomes more pointedly about the reproduction of patriarchal relations throughout the social body and encompasses the same detached, regulating vision which effects control

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[70] M. Foucault, "Governmentality." *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[71] "During the classical period, there was a rapid development of various disciplines - universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops; there was also the emergence, in the field of political practices and economic observation, of the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing and migration. Hence there was an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations, marking the beginning of an era of 'bio-power.'" *The History of Sexuality - Volume I* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 140.

over landscape. Gillian Rose has called attention to the power relations that are embedded in landscape, arguing that "visuality is not simple observation but, rather, is a sophisticated ideological device that enacts systematic erasures."[72] Envisioned as the "attention of the father", governmentality is not simply a means of maximizing the resources of the state through good government but acts also as a patriarchal visuality that effects the erasure and abstraction of a wide range of subjectivities. In line with Foucault's analysis of power, it is important to note however that these erasures happen through the complex production of "governable subjects", which is also a result of development. In the case of James Bay, the production of these subjects happened to a large extent through the reiteration of the symbolic structure that traditionally defines the Québécois nation. If the conjunction of poetics and politics I have sought to demonstrate so far is accurate, it would follow that the development structure drawn around James Bay would exhibit some of the gender, race and class erasures contained in Québec's popular narratives of land and territory. Indeed, in light of the gender content in Foucault's description of governmentality, but also in light of my discussion of how the enjoyment of landscape is reserved to a detached - seemingly male - viewer, it is entirely suiting that Robert Bourassa should have become known since the nineteen-seventies as the "father of James Bay", and memorialized as such next to the *escalier de géant.*[73]

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[72] Rose, *Feminism*, p. 87.

[73] Figure 20 shows a picture-montage which stands next to the viewing platform facing the *escalier de géant* on site at LG2. The montage shows a life-size picture of Bourassa superimposed against the *escalier de géant.* The proportions have been altered so that the ex-Premier is not dwarfed but appears himself gigantic next to the spillway. The caption identifies Bourassa as "The father of James Bay" and gives some brief biographical notes about him.

Figure 20: Bourassa. Father of James Bay

The label is appropriate since the Premier took personal responsibility for the project's success and dedicated most of his political career to steer its way. When he introduced Bill 50 to the Québec parliament in order to create the planning institutions that would manage the project (SDBJ and SÉBJ), he accorded great importance to this motion and viewed it as one of the most important of his administration.[74] To signify as much, he chose to present the bill on June 23rd 1971, the eve of the Québécois national holiday known as Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Contrary to his best intentions, the offering was received with a wall of opposition: suspicion arose against his government that the creation of a new management institution simply duplicated the already costly state-owned

[74] Lacasse, *Baie James*, p. 68. For details about the creation of the SDBJ and SÉBJ, see footnote 13 in "Mise-en-scène."

electricity corporation or, worse, that it meant the creation of a parallel government - a state within a state with unchecked authority over Northern Québec. The fact that, ultimately, the national power company would remain in charge of the dams and their output begged the question as to why a new organization should be created when all the necessary expertise was already in place at Hydro-Québec. Against these odds, the bill was nevertheless adopted a mere three weeks later on July 14. In an effort to appease the debates that unfolded during this period, Bourassa made various statements at the National Assembly that clearly show how he intended to govern the province and lead this project to a successful end. With a vigor and conviction that had not so far been characteristic of his leadership, he made a plea for his bill:

> Gouverner c'est prévoir, connaître et décider. La connaissance que nous avons du dossier, les avis non équivoques des experts et des spécialistes, les impératifs de la relance économique, tout nous incite à commencer sans délai le développement de la Baie James, pour le progrès du Nord-Ouest québécois et du Québec tout entier.
>
> Cette décision prise, nous aurions pu emprunter, sans grand effort d'imagination, les voies classiques qui s'offraient à nous: confier simplement aux sociétés existantes des morceaux de développement... [L]e risque nous a alors paru trop grand d'une dispersion des énergies, d'une confusion des tâches et d'un manque grave de planification dans l'aménagement d'un territoire aussi vaste que prometteur.[75]

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[75] "To govern is to predict, know and decide. The knowledge that we have of this dossier, the unequivocal advice of experts and specialists, the imperatives of

As these words make clear, the James Bay project encompassed much more than the building of dams. In his vision of a global Northern planning agency, Bourassa exhibited a philosophy of government that was concerned first and foremost with the strategic inter-linking of separate elements with a view to maximize their potential. Viewing a territory "as extensive as it is promising", the Premier once again called upon a visual ideology that constructed the space of James Bay as a passive and external entity. Yet, as land disputes with the Cree would abundantly reveal, there is nothing inherently abstract about space, nature or territory and the resources they contain: instead I want to suggest, in light of my discussion of the production of cultural landscapes in the North, that their construction as objects of knowledge for the deployment of power is itself a product of governmentality.

Seeing like a national subject

I want to conclude this Act and look toward the next one by showing how the processes I have described which script James Bay as a space of development constitute its viewers as the national subjects of a patriarchal and homogenous state. Bruce Braun has addressed this question in his study of "Geology and Governmentality in Late Victorian Canada" where he explores various "histories of seeing" - gathered mostly from early explorers in British Columbia - and how they enabled the production of a

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economic revival, everything pushes us to begin without delay the development of James Bay, for the progress of the Québec North-West and of Québec as a whole. This decision taken, we could have borrowed, without much effort of imagination, the traditional avenues offered to us: to simply entrust pieces of development to existing corporations... [T]he risk seemed too great of a dispersal of energies, confusion of tasks and serious lack of organization in the planning of a territory as extensive as it is promising." *Ibid.*, p. 69.

vertical territory in late nineteenth century Canada.[76] These representations opened up a space where nature was made visible as a repository of geological resources, and thus rendered available for exploration and/or exploitation. However, this could only be accomplished once members of the population acted as "geological observers", capable of seeing in the landscape its exploitable resources. Therefore, Braun argues, the question of governmentality starts sooner, in the discursive construction of nature and territory as fields of intervention:

> To Foucault's concept of governmentality must be added the problem of nature's intelligibility. Geology did not simply exist "in" a given territory. Rather, as a set of rules governing what was visible in nature, geology brought a "territory" with its "qualities" into being, and thus opened a space - simultaneously epistemological and geographical - that could be incorporated into forms of political rationality. This is not an idealist argument that discourses like geology produce the world in an ontological sense; it is a much less grandiose argument that what counts as "territory with its qualities" does not precede its construction... [F]or state officials to optimize the use of these newly legible spaces, social and spatial practices needed to be remade, as did citizens.[77]

Jean Rivard in his emotional address to his mother/nation where he vows to "pull from the ground the resources it harbours" was such a citizen: "remade" - or rather self-made according to the republican ideal - for the

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[76] B. Braun, "Producing Vertical Territory: geology and governmentality in late Victorian Canada." *Ecumene* 7.1 (2000), pp. 7-46.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

purpose of fulfilling the nation's providential mission. My discussion of how the experience of landscape is qualitatively different for Québécois and Cree suggests that the latter would have had to learn to "see" differently to become part of the national community that was performed through development in the North. This, for the Cree, meant more than a simple change of perspective, as Bourassa and many of his supporters assumed, but implied the reworking of a relationship to the land which could alter the terms of their culture and economy, and challenge their ability to derive, reiterate and share cultural meaning from the experience of landscape. Thus, this is a key example that cultural landscapes do not simply memorialize the national past but, in a nation-building context, can also produce the nation's future. They can do so by constituting viewers as national subjects through their performance of popular, or taken for granted, cultural meanings. In that way, cultural landscapes are always simultaneously *political* landscapes.

Therefore, as it propels the emergence of a "modern" state in Québec where science, engineering and technology form the new vocabulary of national identity, this mission of tapping the resources of James Bay appears surprisingly "non-modern" since it reiterates the past so strongly, especially through the traditional figure of the *défricheur*. Once again, the scientific rationality that "connects the dots" does not do away with the mythical enframing of the North and the traditional poetics of nature and territoriality but continues to exist side by side with them. The post-1960s Québécois nation relied heavily on this mythico-poetic framework in order to open up its own space of modernity in the North, and fashion itself as a bridge between past and present. Indeed, how can the nation exist solely

in the present - as the supposed "rupture" effected by the Quiet Revolution seems to suggest - when its very condition of existence is its claim to the past, which also anchors a claim to territory and ensures the maintenance of identity? If James Bay became "incorporated into [new] forms of political rationality" through the building of a hydroelectric network, so did the figure of the *défricheur* and the territorial relationship he embodied, which was also gendered as masculine and racialized as white. What counts as "territory and its qualities" in this knowledge regime is the territory that such a mythical figure dreams of and produces: it should come as no surprise then that there is so little room for difference - all forms of difference - in James Bay and, by extension, in the national community the project was meant to bring together under the sign of modernity. The making of national space along these lines determines which practices will count, or will be allowed to take place in the North. When Bourassa praised the construction workers he met in James Bay as the "almost exact copy of the first *défricheurs* of the country", he was effectively congratulating them on the appropriateness of their relationship to the land, which could foster the wealth of the state from within. It is that relationship which constitutes the *défricheur* as a national subject, "making land" - or "making money" - to expand the national territory. The hunting, fishing and trapping practices of the Cree challenge and interrupt the political rationality of cultural landscapes and their production of *natural* resources as *national* ones. Although the Cree live in a geographical space called Québec, they cannot fully be Québécois unless they too are remade as citizens who can enter into what is envisioned as a "productive" relationship with the contents of national space. The same is true for women or for anyone with a different vision of Québec's territory and

resources. In discussing the staging and scripting of James Bay as a reiteration of a traditionalist discourse of nature and identity, I have wanted to show that it enacted a patriarchal discourse of spatial conquest that sought to erase difference, and thus created highly unequal forms of access to the region. Furthermore, it generated, at the national level, unequal rights of citizenship among the population of Québec, and most acutely for the Cree inhabitants of James Bay.

Transformed into a space of spectacle, the North becomes a screen where the nation - or, at any rate, the nation constituted in highly particular ways - can project its historical becoming and where national subjects can "see themselves as they would like to be"; this provided they can envision James Bay as an appropriate space for their own realization both individually and collectively. The images that lit up a dark arena on the night of the launch were pleasurable to watch on the condition that subjects could project themselves in such a space, thus identifying with the representation of a territory and resources overdetermined by masculine heroism, and by the rational order of capital accounting. Via spectacle, Bourassa invited the population of Québec to share in the enjoyment James Bay procured him as - in every sense of the word - a landscape of power. This power, however, could not be shared by everyone, no more than the wishful imagining of James Bay into an inclusive national landscape could eliminate the geographical structuring that controlled and guided access to its resources, deepening the gap between North and South in the process. The elimination of the body from the space of James Bay amounts to the elimination of these uneven subjective geographies from the frame of representation. As a result, the pleasures afforded by viewing a

spectacular wilderness bursting with riches were not freely accessible across Québec in the name of territorial pride, but contingent on the positionality - both in terms of geography and of subjectivity - of each viewer. In bringing this Act to a closure, Gillian Rose's critique of what she call "the pleasures of landscape" can shed more light on the spectacular politics that surrounded James Bay:

> The particular dominant gaze constructs access to knowledge of geography as a white bourgeois heterosexual masculine privilege. And this gaze is not only the gaze at the land, although its dynamics are most clearly revealed there: it is also a gaze at what are constituted as objects of knowledge, whether environmental, social, political or cultural."[78]

In order to belong to "all the Québécois" as the promoters of hydroelectric development repeatedly claimed it did, the space of James Bay needs to be envisioned less as a spectacular geography and more as the site of complex social relationships that defined its meaning differently - and often in conflict - for those involved. As Rose suggests in her analysis of the masculine gaze, the task of representing other social subjects which, in this case, amounts to representing other possible national identities, necessitates "the rearticulation of traditional space so that it ceases to function primarily as the space of sight for a mastering gaze, but becomes the locus of relationships."[79] This is not an easy task since the most important agents of the project - the workers who built the dams - were

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[78] Rose, *Feminism*, p. 109.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 112. Rose is quoting the work of Griselda Pollock.

themselves envisioned as actors or extras in a grandiose film.[80] For some, the ability to see themselves in the larger James Bay picture was an important step in accepting and becoming part of the project. One worker gives his impression of such a recognition: "One day I was watching television and I saw myself, just like that, at work, then I was taking off my mask. My wife couldn't get over it..."[81] This sense of awe and pride could clearly not be felt in the same way by Cree people who, having seen their ability to read the James Bay landscape and pursue their cultural practices in it severely disrupted, could hardly be expected to recognize themselves in it, even when they participated in the project. I want to further pursue these issues and continue to question how the abstracting gaze of development contributed to the fragmentation of the national community throughout the James Bay project by turning to the geography of the work camps, and their contemporary inscription in the landscape.

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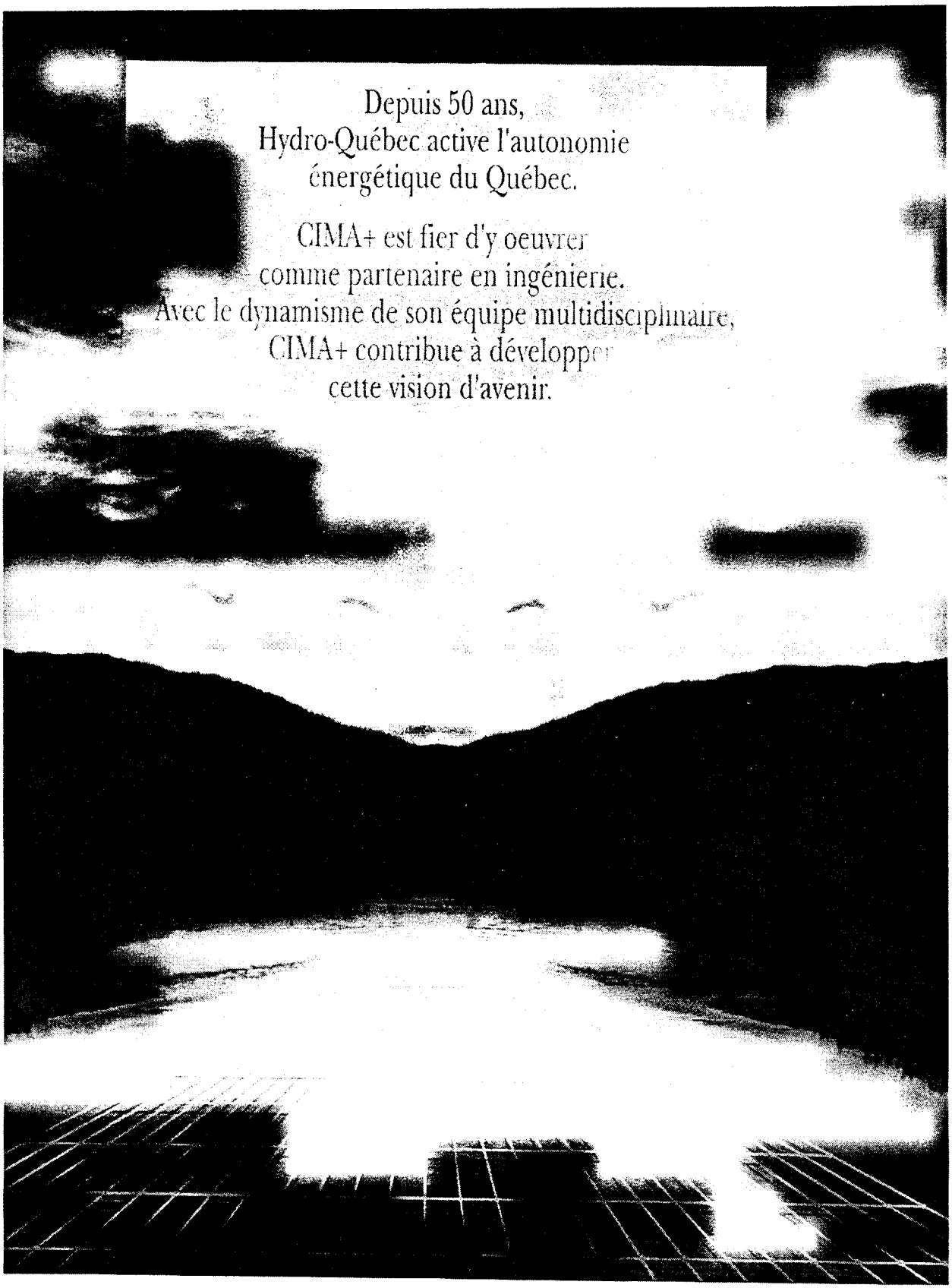
[80] The opening lines of an article talking about the project are a good example of this: "Que ressent-on lorsqu'on se retrouve à 137 mètres sous terre, dans une salle de machines longue comme cinq terrains de football, excavée dans le granit massif, pour y loger des turbines aux dimensions gigantesques *où les travailleurs s'affairent en silence, tels des figurants d'un film spectaculaire.*" / "How does it feel to find oneself 137 meters underground, in a machine room that is five football fields long, excavated from solid granite to install turbines of gigantic dimensions where workers busy themselves in silence, like extras in a spectacular movie?" L. Picard, "LG-2: là où rien n'est à l'échelle humaine." *Le Soleil* (October 29, 1980). Another example is a brochure produced in 1994 by the SÉBJ about a later phase of the project, LG-1. Designed to recall the "magic of spectacle", the document employs every possible signifier of theatricality: each section begins with a stylized curtain, the pages are framed by snapshots of workers who represent "the actors", and the table of contents is arranged like the program of a play with sections bearing titles such as "casting", "main actors", "backstage", "intermission", "closing spectacle", "soldout" and "supplémentaires." See *La Grande-1, les acteurs* (Montréal: Société d'énergie de la Baie James, 1994).

[81] M. Tremblay, "Timide, Mme Lévesque casse la glace." *Journal de Montréal*, May 2, 1980.

PORTFOLIO 4



CIMA+

Pour penser énergie!

Figure 21: "Developing a [rational] vision for the future"

André Bastien
Directeur des éditions Libre Expression,
Montréal

Profession: pionnier...

Le lac du Tast n'en finissait plus de dégeler . . . Puis, un bon matin, le vent s'est attelé à la tâche ; il a fait place nette. L'hydravion peut maintenant s'y poser sans danger pour ravitailler les deux hommes qui, pendant plus de deux mois, ont vécu seuls dans cette immensité sauvage, loin de toutes régions habitées, surveillant les abords du campement, réparant un canot, feuilletant, le soir, de vieux romans jaunis, dans l'attente du retour des équipes d'arpentage.

En nous souhaitant la bienvenue, Georges Bergeron, le contremaître du principal campement d'exploration de la Baie-James, cache difficilement sa joie comme si, «naufragé» dans ces parages inhospitaliers, il voyait en notre venue une sorte de délivrance. Ses yeux se portent irrésistiblement vers le camp de bois ronds où, depuis les premiers signes du dégel, il se terrait, reclus volontaire en la seule compagnie de Roger Truchon, un homme si semblable à lui que leur silence se muait en un long soliloque.

La voix brisée, Georges Bergeron laisse pourtant filtrer entre ses dents tachées par le tabac : «Le temps a été long . . .»

Mais il se reprend rapidement, mettant un peu de gaieté sur son visage buriné.

— Je m'en vais faire une attisée . . . Les gars de la ville, c'est frileux !

Photo SEBJ

Leur école : la vie rude des chantiers . . .

Dans quelques jours, pour la troisième année consécutive, les équipes de géologues et d'arpenteurs envahiront le campement du lac du Tast, avant d'essaimer le long des rivières Nottaway, Broadback et Rupert.

À l'été 1965, ces mêmes équipes ont cherché à déterminer le parti qu'elles pourraient tirer de ces trois rivières au lit peu profond, des rivières vagabondes pour n'avoir pas su se creuser un sillon dans le massif rocheux.

L'année suivante, les géologues et les arpenteurs prenaient pied sur l'Eastmain et La Grande Rivière, situées plus au nord, tout en poursuivant l'exploration de la Rupert, le cours d'eau, pour l'heure, jugé le plus intéressant. Cette rivière prend sa source dans le lac Mistassini qui, en raison de sa superficie — 2 200 km carrés — de son bassin hydrographique — 17 600 km carrés — et de sa dénivellation — 370 mètres au-dessus du niveau moyen de la mer — pouvait devenir l'un des plus grands réservoirs au monde.

Ainsi, cette année, les efforts des équipes d'exploration portent sur le premier tiers de la Rupert, où elles ont repéré onze emplacements possibles pour la construction de barrages. De nouveaux campements verront le jour : Rupert I, Rupert II, Rupert III, des campements moins sommairement aménagés, avec un petit quelque chose des villes du Sud. Pas le vrai confort, mais ces petits riens qui le rappellent : une cantine, une infirmerie, la radio, des trottoirs de bois, un quai pour les hydravions . . .

Pour Georges Bergeron, c'est déjà une autre époque !

— Quand ils nous ont laissés ici, se souvient-il avec nostalgie, il y avait cinq pieds de neige, la forêt debout et du froid . . . 39° sous zéro. Il nous a fallu nous tailler une clairière, dresser une tente, faire du feu pour ne pas mourir de froid . . .

Figure 22: Profession pionneer

RULES CONSTRUCTION SITES:

1. Members of the personnel must always carry their identification card issued by one of the territory's verification centers and it show each time a security agent demands it.
2. Anyone carrying a false identification card or one that is expired or not valid can be expelled from the work site.
6. Anyone driving a vehicle without having obtained the necessary authorization can be immediately expelled.
10. Members of the personnel must respect security norms at all times and obtain prior authorization when they wish to have access to work sites.
11. It is strictly forbidden to trap, which leads to immediate expulsion from the work site.

HOUSING:

1. Male personnel is forbidden to receive female personnel in assigned dorms and vice-versa.
2. Members of the personnel need the written authorization of the housing bureau supervisor to occupy a room.
3. It is strictly forbidden to change rooms without the written authorization of housing bureau supervisors.
4. Any absence from the work site for vacations or any other reason must be submitted in writing to the housing bureau. Employees temporarily leaving the work site must hand in all their personal belongings to their respective employers.
7. It is forbidden to modify the temperature set on thermostats.
9. Any non-authorized modification made in a room will be immediately corrected and the ensuing cost will the charged to the occupant or occupants of the said room.
10. It is strictly forbidden to prepare meals in the rooms.
11. It is strictly forbidden to keep animals in the rooms.
12. For hygienic reasons, it is strictly forbidden to wash clothes, or one's feet, in the sinks.
13. It is strictly forbidden to smoke in bed, this under threat of immediate expulsion.

RULES FOR WOMEN:

1. Female personnel is forbidden to receive visits from male personnel in their assigned dorms.
2. Female personnel can have access to all community centers except the tavern.
3. Female personnel is in charge of maintenance in their assigned rooms. This excludes floor cleaning.

* *Translated from an SDBJ workers handbook.*

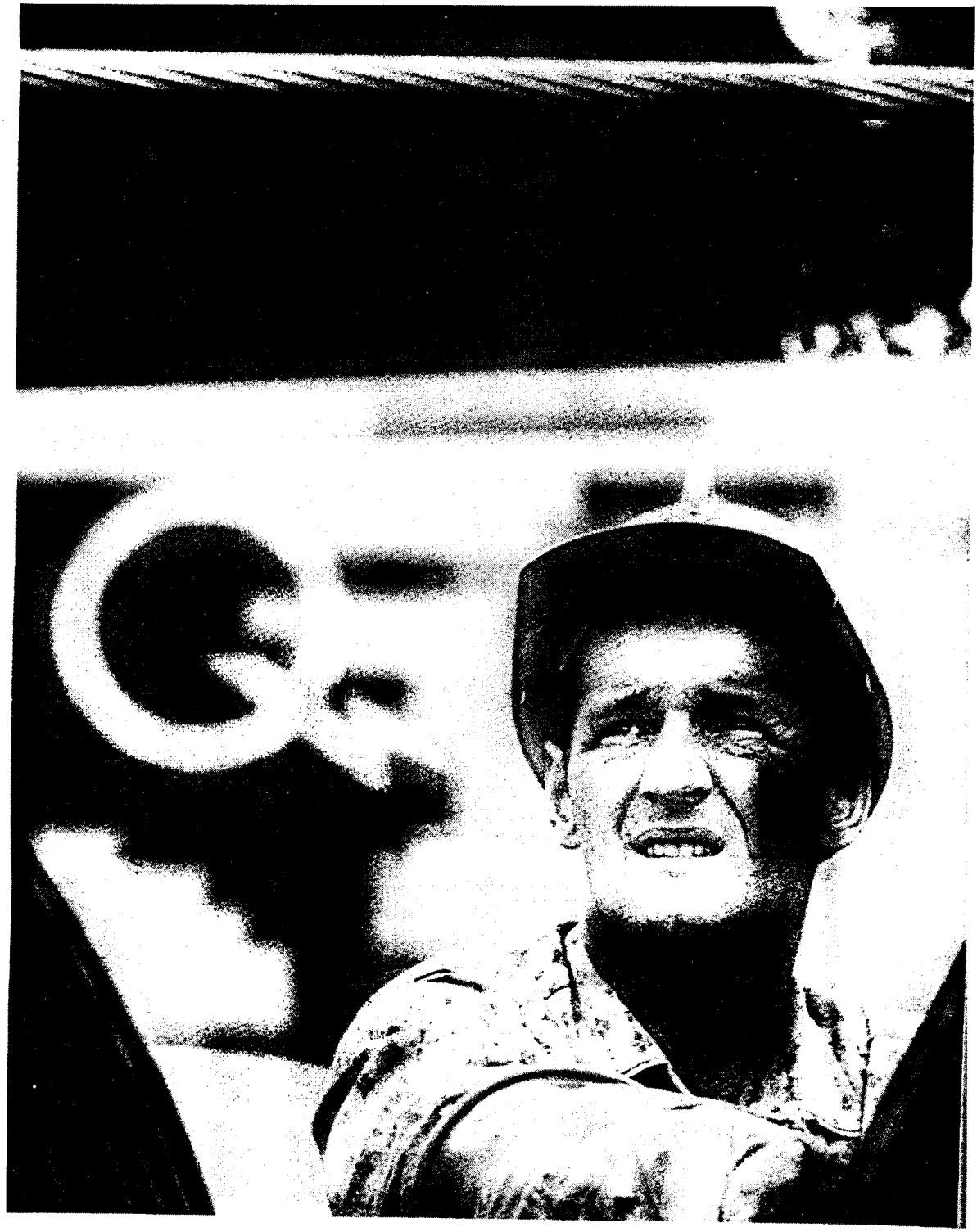


Figure 23: Worker as "Hydro-Québécois"

Figure 24: Under the gaze

ACT 3

BUILDING WATER: A GEOGRAPHY OF "THE PEOPLE"

La Jamesie, c'est une terre neuve, riche de promesses, une terre à découvrir, à valoriser, à aimer. Le Jamésien, c'est aussi l'être neuf, entreprenant, volontaire; c'est celui qui met tout son talent au service d'un coin de terre déshéritée, pour développer, bâtir, créer, afin d'agrandir le Québec de demain. Jamésiens, nous le sommes tous, par notre action commune, notre volonté quotidienne, tournées vers le devenir des terres nordiques. Amis Jamésiens, à nous de relever le gant!

Le Jamésien (SDBJ newsletter), April 1981, p. 3.

Le plus difficile c'est de dépendre constamment de l'employeur et de constater son omniprésence. L'employé, travailleur ou cadre, tout qu'il a, il le doit à l'employeur. C'est la voiture de l'employeur, la cuisine de l'employeur, les loisirs de l'employeur, la roulotte de l'employeur, il est tout le temps présent. L'employé doit constamment fonctionner selon les règles de l'employeur, il ne peut pas se retrouver chez lui avec ses propres règles. Il ne peux jamais dire: ce soir, je prends ma voiture et je m'en vais à telle place. Évidemment, où est-ce que tu peux aller?

Roger Lacasse, *La Baie James*, p. 270.

[1] "Jamesia is a new land, full of promises, a land to discover, to valorise, to love. The Jamesian is also a new individual, enterprising, determined; one who commits all of his talent to the service of an underprivileged piece of land, to develop, build, create in order to enlarge tomorrow's Québec. Jamesians we all are through our common action, our daily willpower, heads turned toward the future of northern lands. Jamesian friends, let us accept the challenge!"

[2] "The hardest part is to constantly depend from the employer and to become aware of his ubiquitous presence. The employee, labourer or executive, owes everything he has to the employer. It is the employer's car, the employer's kitchen, the employer's leisure, the employer's trailer, he is always present. The employee must always function according to the rules of the employer, he cannot find himself at home with his own rules. He can never say: tonight, I am taking my car and I am going to such and such a place. Obviously, where can you go?"

During the initial phase of construction, the region administered by the SDBJ was a territory within the territory of Québec with its own private roads, checkpoints and regulations. The workers' mobility was extremely limited within and beyond work sites and they experienced a further tightening of security measures following a rioting episode in 1974 caused by a disagreement between labour unions. Extensive vandalism took place with the result that the LG2 construction site had to be closed during that year for the better part of April.[1] Upon their return, workers found that verification centers had multiplied around the work camps as well as across the broader territory. Individuals had to wear their identification badge at all times or be ready to show it upon request. These procedures, however, were not the expression of a new regime so much as an added degree of surveillance in an environment that was crisscrossed with regulations from the moment of its creation.

The geometrical layout of buildings, the imposition of a strict schedule for waking up, eating, working, resting, the general ordering of time and space, all these elements contributed to militarize the work camp and were experienced by a large number of employees as the disciplining of their private lives: "Tu vis dans un cercle fermé et tu es toujours dans

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[1] For details on these events, see A. Bolduc and D. Latouche, *Québec: un siècle d'électricité*, op. cited, pp. 363-370.

les règles et même sous la surveillance de l'employeur."[2] Some went as far as to compare these camps to a prison: since work was on a contractual basis, one would enter the SDBJ territory only to come out at the end of a pre-determined time.[3] This sense of restriction was felt immediately at the airport, which was the first contact workers had with their new environment: "L'aérogare permet aussi de faire connaissance avec l'autorité, avec la réglementation, avec la hiérarchie sociale et de ressentir pour la première fois qu'on s'est immiscé dans un territoire privé qui a ses lois propres et auxquelles il faut se soumettre."[4] Standing in sharp contrast against the heroic enframing of James Bay with its repeated references to freedom, mobility and the conquering of open spaces, this description of the policing of the workers' movements highlights the disciplinary structure their lives became intertwined with once they started working for the *project of the century.* Whereas the mythico-poetic discourse that was frequently adopted to promote the project emphasized the unbridled freedom of discoverers, the free access to untapped resources, and the courageous conquest of land, labourers in James Bay encountered a highly organized space, surveyed, cut up and in no way directly accessible to them outside the channels created and controlled by the development corporation.

Part of this disciplining had to do with the difficulty of creating means of access to a region removed from urban centers without

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[2] "You live in a closed circle and you are always within the rules and even under the surveillance of the employer." Lacasse, *La Baie James*, p. 270.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 266.

[4] "The airport also allows one to get acquainted with authority, with regulation, with social hierarchy and to feel for the first time that one has penetrated into a private territory which has its own rules and to which one must submit himself." *Ibid.*, p. 260.

establishing significant modes of collaboration with its local population. Such discipline was also necessary to the deployment of a new governmentality in the North, one that would concern itself as much with national subject as with resources and territory. In that regard, the space of the LG2 work camp was another segment of the visual ideology I have explored in the previous Act; one where the gaze could contemplate a landscape that was more conspicuously social than the spectacular nature of aerial photos, and yet no less carefully scripted. If the camp itself was a regulatory space, I want to suggest that its discipline was enacted less through rules and surveillance - although they did matter - than through the larger territorial discourse it reiterated and gave physical expression to. Indeed, with the deployment of a planning and administrative structure in James Bay, non-natives could enter into an organized relationship with a newly expanded national territory. The legitimacy of this access acquired the force of truth through an imagined geography of the North envisioning it as the natural extension - both geographically and historically - of a Québécois territorial becoming. In addition, this legitimacy was reinforced by treating labour as the performance of a national duty and, as it follows, of national *identity*. Like Eucharistе Moisan, Maria Chapdelaine, or Jean Rivard, those who went up to James Bay were imagined to be irresistibly attracted to work the land and to the challenge of transforming it to serve their country. Speaking about the workers, Bourassa remarked: "Les Québécois n'ont jamais été aussi proches les uns des autres, aussi typiques, dirais-je, de leur vitalité historique qui les a fait s'accrocher à leur terre, à leur sol avec une détermination et une obstination exemplaires."[5] The

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[5] "Québécois people have never been closer to each other, never so typical, I would say, of the historic vitality that has made them cling to the land, to their soil, with

moral values and geographical imagination the figures of the *roman de la terre* symbolize - along with the larger social context they emerged from - constituted a central point of reference for creating dominant subject positions in James Bay, and for producing positive meaning around the construction site. If "the production of governable subjects is also an aspect of development",[6] the building of a power network in Northern Québec can be said to have enabled the production of "national" subjects through the staging, in that space, of what it meant to be Québécois. Work camps became primary sites for the performance of such an identity as they organized and deployed a workforce that would remake the space of James Bay: "À la pointe des travaux, 18000 personnes s'acharnaient ici à *resculpter* le paysage."[7] Much like in the pages of the *roman de la terre*, what it meant to be Québécois in James Bay was strongly determined by the terms of its nature, although these terms had now been recontextualized via the exploitation of its most abundant resource, which is water.

These complex processes are captured in a slogan that was used by Hydro-Québec in a publicity campaign launched during the building of LG2: "Nous sommes des Hydro-Québécois" ("We are Hydro-Quebecers"). The expression was meant to inspire pride; pride in dominating the natural environment, in the technical feat of building an extensive energy network in a remote region, but pride mostly in accomplishing all of this in French.[8]

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such exemplary and obstinate determination." Bourassa, *La Baie James*, p. 131.

[6] See M. Watts, "Development." R. J. Johnston et al., eds., *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 166-171.

[7] "At the peak of construction activity, 18000 people were struggling here to re-sculpt the landscape." P. Turgeon, *La Radissonie*, op. cited, p. 17.

[8] I am grateful to André Bolduc for helping me trace this expression to the original publicity campaign and for sharing his thoughts on its impact in the context of the time.

The conjunction of these two terms - one referring to a natural resource (water as hydro power) and the other to identity (Québécois) - brings nature and nation together into a single signifier. This conflation, I suggest, is reminiscent of the *roman de la terre*'s effort to naturalize national belonging by portraying characters whose core essence is indistinguishable from their natural environment.[9] I have insisted that, while rural nature is scripted differently than the nature of development, some meanings remain consistent and cannot be allowed to slip from view by positing a radical break between the "traditionalism" of the past and the "modernity" of the present. Rather than such a break, what we see at work in James Bay could be understood as a repeated and gradual recontextualization of the past into the present as a way to preserve the nation's dominant cultural meanings, while still projecting its becoming into the future. The expression "Hydro-Québécois" is a key example of the persistence of the old nature/identity discourse in Québec right the way through the very icon of progress which Hydro-Québec represents, and the space of modernity this icon sought to create, which is James Bay. Furthermore, the governmentality of the state is fully expressed through this conflation since to be a "Hydro-Québécois" is to take pride in a culture, but also to lay claim to its territory and resources. To be a *Hydro-Québécois* is to be, like Jean Rivard, a *défricheur*; a citizen "remade" to see in the landscape nature's exploitable resources, to see water as electricity, profit and national possession. More than the barracks-style buildings of the work camps and the rules that monitored access and conduct in them, this way

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[9] This conflation is still central to Hydro-Québec's marketing strategy. A recent ad in a well-known Québec bi-weekly magazine displayed the following slogan: "L'électricité est dans notre nature" / "Electricity is in our nature." See *L'Actualité*, Septembre 15, 2001, p. 109.

of seeing was the discipline that mattered if James Bay was to be successfully integrated into Québec's national territory.

Indeed, following the Quiet Revolution the Québécois state secured and expanded itself through means much less dramatic than Foucault's barracks and panopticon yet equally effective. The access to James Bay resources was enacted through the population by delimiting a new space of development for the nation, a process that effectively brought people and land together into a new social landscape. By cementing the bond between individuals and geography and valuing it as one of the highest forms of attachment, the state could better control the productive interface between people and territory. While Foucault saw in the governmentalizing of the state a shift away from the impetus to maintain the domination of the Prince over a given territory, the dual nature of James Bay as simultaneously a space of planning and the territory of a nation trying to firm up its boundaries in turn re-establishes territorial *sovereignty* as the chief concern of government. Here governmentality does not gradually supersede sovereignty but is the very means of acquiring and securing sovereignty over a larger territorial sphere. Surprisingly, the question is rarely posed in those terms within the nationalist debate and yet in it lies the biggest obstacle on the way to independence. Indeed, the Québec question cannot only be posed in terms of a separation from Canada but should also be problematized as a redrafting of the bond between population and geographical space so that the space occupied by the national group referred to as the "Québécois" can begin to coalesce with the geographical space known as "Québec." In some way, contemporary Québec brings us back to Machiavelli's Prince trying to retain control over a given

space, although this prince would be a multiple rather than singular figure. Indeed, governmentality in the Québec context is still a problem of establishing political *sovereignty* over a given geographical area, its resources and its population. As a result, the introduction of governmentality in the North could not afford to let go of certain crucial markers that signify political presence. If governmental power was multiple and capillary it also had to be clearly recognizable in James Bay as a territorial presence. Foucault has argued that: "[P]ower is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society."[10] To legitimate access to Northern territories, the figure of the Prince had to be at once visible and diffuse, both single and multiple. I want to propose that these mutually exclusive characteristics were brought together by envisioning sovereign power - the figure of the Prince - as the attribute of "the people." Moreover, it is their communal labour that justifies access to territory.[11]

What is important to note is that the nationalist conception of "the people" can hope to retain sovereign power over territory by maintaining the illusion of the community's homogeneity; in other words, James Bay can only belong to "all the Québécois" if all the Québécois embody a similar relationship to this territory. This is a crucial point for understanding how

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[10] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality - Volume 1* (New York: Random House, 1990), p. 93.

[11] Sylvie Vincent has exemplified this perspective in a media analysis of open letters written during the so-called *Oka Crisis* in the summer of 1990, one of them stating that: "It is true that the Indians have inhabited this territory but that is all they did. Who developed it? Who built its roads and made its cities? [...] Our ancestors and ourselves have conquered these territories through our lives and our work. See S. Vincent, "Terre québécoise, première nation et nation première: notes sur le discours québécois francophone au cours de l'été 1990." In N. Khouri, ed., *Discours et mythes de l'ethnicité, ACFAS #78* (Montréal: Les Cahiers scientifiques), p. 21, my translation.

structures of exclusion within the Québécois nation were reasserted and given spatial form through hydroelectric development, even as it was claimed to bring the national community together. It is precisely because communities are not easily held in such a way that they construct the meaning of land, nature and place in support of a "natural" unity. As I have explored, spectacle, disembodied vision and the reiteration of a spatial imagination that binds nature and national identity are some of the means through which the nation covers over its contested territory and deals with its inherent ambiguity. Another one is the appeal to the figure of "the people" and their labour which, in a contradictory way, hardens the boundaries of the nation at the same time as it proposes inclusion. Homi Bhabha has argued that the nation is ambiguous because it exists in double time; that of the narrativized people of the past simultaneously with the heterogeneous people of the present. His understanding of narrativity points to a fundamental split not *between* but *within* nations:

> The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national production and disrupts the signification of the people as homogeneous. The problem is not simply the "selfhood" of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nations. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred Nation It/Self, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous

histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference.[12]

The space of James Bay - and more particularly the space of its work camps - can be regarded as such, a "tense location of cultural difference." I want to explore this tension by looking at the sites where workers lived during the building years and by problematizing how these sites are now memorialized in the physical landscape. Work camps were an important aspect of the imaginary geography of the North: they were the eye of a storm of changes that were taking over the land, tranforming its ecology and aligning it with the trajectory of Québec's future. In that sense, their geography is differently embodied than the discursive landscape I have so far focused my attention on. As a result, an analysis of the work camp necessitates a slight shift in methodology in order to draw a link between the spectatorship of the South to the actors who were directly involved in producing the North as a space of development. Yet, while the action shifts from detached spectatorship to physical labour, it would be misleading to assume that the narratives I have examined so far are no longer active in this Act. As my analysis will show, the disembodied, patriarchal gaze of development is sometimes challenged on the work site, but, at other times, it continues also to be strongly performed and reiterated by human agents in the landscape. If dominant territorial imaginations produce dominant subject positions, I want to explore in this Act the extent to which those who were constructed through the gaze of a nationalist development

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[12] H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, op. cited, p. 148. A similar notion is expressed by Foucault in relation to power and the state: "One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole." Foucault, *The History*, p. 94.

project enacted that gaze within the spaces where labour took place. My goal is to simultaneously discuss discourse and practice since, ultimately, the central questions I have unfolded throughout this thesis are all in some degree connected to the issue of labour, without which no transformation or production of nature can happen.

In the two previous Acts, I have called upon various social theorists who examine the production of nature as a social and material process that transforms space.[13] Here I want to look more closely at the role of the working body and its ability to reiterate a Québécois cultural identity in making a new geography of development. If nature is socially produced, I wish to ask "Who enacts this production?" or, more pointedly, "What kinds of bodies are enlisted for what kinds of productions of nature?" Clearly, these bodies are gendered, racialized and classed. Moreover, they are engaged in heterogeneous relationships that can carry the production of these attributes unchanged, or redirect it, or both. As a result, this Act navigates a much more complex terrain, one where actors both rescript and reject the heroes of Québec's territorial imagination, and rarely do so consciously. The LG2 workcamp gathered, organized and deployed various social actors who, in producing a space of development territorialized the Québec nation further North, effectively spatializing its colonial - and patriarchal - meanings into a new landscape of power, but sometimes also

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[13] See first footnote in Act 1. Also, for an analysis of how this production is linked to capital, see H. Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 1974; D. Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) and *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); N. Smith, *Uneven Development*, op. cited. For a discussion of "how workers actively shape economic landscapes and uneven development" see: A. Herod, "From a Geography of Labor to a Labor Geography: labor's spatial fix and the geography of capitalism." *Antipode* 29.1 (1997), pp. 1-31; A. Herod, ed., *Organizing the Landscape: geographical perspectives on labor unionism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

challenging it. If the hydroelectric landscape of dams and reservoirs is a product of the cultural politics of nationalism and its various constructions of "the people", one question always seems to escape these constructions which is: *Who are "the people"*?[14] I want to explore that question by using gender as a point of entry and by discussing how it figures both separately and together with race in the workforce.

Women at work: in difference and solidarity

> [S]he knew very well that if she had been a man, she could have entered and exited history at will, claimed a collective, national or mythical image-reservoir as her own, confident that all of this belonged to her and that is was up to her to make the right choices in order to integrate her fantasies into the grand spectacle designed, staged and performed by generations of men...[15]

Seen through company newsletters, promotional brochures and the mainstream media of the province, work camps were highly symbolic sites used to showcase labour and display a new national community in the making; women, however, often seemed out of place in such a community. If male workers could envision themselves as *défricheurs* of a modern nation, the roles that were available to their female counterparts did not so forcelly evoque the "collective, national or mythical image-reservoir" that

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[14] S. Marston, "Who are 'the people'?: gender, citizenship, and the making of the American nation." op. cited, pp. 449-458.

[15] N. Brossard, *She would be the first sentence of my next novel* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1998), pp. 31, 33.

had produced and sedimented this popular character over the years. The fact that women did not take part in the initial exploration of the area, or had to wait a year to work on site after the first labour camp was built highlights how patriarchal narratives of conquest necessarily produced spaces that were inaccessible to females. The solidarity (perceived and real) of those who were building the dams was broadly regarded as an icon of the nation's openness and of its equalizing potential. Women readily complicated this ideal by virtue of their presence in the masculine spaces of nation-building: in being there, they were also being "elsewhere" and thus undermining the patriarchal enframing of nature, along with its race, class and gender bias.[16] Yet, the story is not nearly so simple. As I was able to see during my research, women also reinscribed these categories in and through the process of their deconstruction. I would like to explore that claim further by looking at two manifestations of gender in the labour camp. Firstly, I will examine how the introduction of women in the workforce was posed simultaneously as a spatial and sexual problem; secondly, I will discuss the paradoxical performance of femininity on the construction site, and what it can tell us about the place of difference within the national community.

Placing women: space and sexuality in the work camp

The logistics of integrating a small number of female workers in living quarters that were servicing an overwhelmingly male population

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[16] For a discussion of "elsewhere" as a feminist politics of resistance, see G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, op. cited; T. de Lauretis, "The Technology of Gender." *Technologies of Gender* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); b. hooks, "Homeplace: a site of resistance." *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990), pp. 41-49; G. Pratt, "Geographic Metaphors in Feminist Theory." S. Hardy Aiken et al., eds, *Making Worlds: gender, metaphor, materiality* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998), pp. 13-30.

were an important concern for the SDBJ. The initial ratio of forty women for nearly five thousand men gradually improved over the ten years it took to build LG2, but women never formed more than six percent of the total workforce that built the complex, usually in traditional female occupations such as nurses, secretaries, maintenance workers and kitchen staff.[17] The difficulty of "placing" women in James Bay - of altering spatial structures so that they could sleep, eat, work, or relax - is a powerful example of the extent to which gender is inscribed into space, and even more so in this case where the remote labour camp was seen to have been painfully carved out from the *wilderness.*

For the women who flew there, the experience of traveling in a plane full of men was a precursor of how gender would pervade the various spaces of their lives in James Bay. One woman described her first contact in the following terms: "Ce qui m'a frappée en arrivant à l'aéroport, ce sont ces dizaines et ces dizaines de visages d'hommes, derrière le comptoir, et ces yeux avides qui me scrutaient, moi, la nouvelle femme. C'était intolérable. J'avais l'impression d'être une bête de cirque."[18] Once they had gone through the regulatory procedure for checking their papers and issuing an identification card, newly arrived workers - male or female - would be taken to the dorms where they would share a room with another employee. Until the end of 1974 when the permanent village of Radisson was built to accommodate children in family housing, the sleeping arrangements in the workcamps influenced who could come to work in

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[17] See C. Tougas, "Sept cents femmes qui s'intègrent à un univers de 14 000 hommes." *La Presse*, October 20, 1979, pp. 16-17.

[18] "What surprised me arriving at the airport was dozens and dozens of male faces behind the counter, these avid eyes scrutinizing me, the new woman. It was unbearable. I felt like a circus freak." Lacasse, *La Baie James*, p. 150.

James Bay at the same time as it effected a tight control on relations between men and women. No person of the opposite sex was allowed in the dorms, a rule which included even married couples and was of course excessively naive - or oblivious - in its assumption regarding the sexual preferences of workers. Although strict application of this regulation was in fact unveven, security agents were assigned to male and female dorms and any employee who contravened it could face eviction. The issue of incorporating spaces where couples could be intimate with each other remained a controversial one throughout the duration of the project. The option of constructing motels or small cabins that could be rented was considered, but the fear was widespread that such sites would encourage sexual impropriety - i.e. prostitution - in the work camps. The development corporation's extreme concern over the sexuality of the workers is signified by its zero tolerance, at least on paper, for trespassing in the dorms. Because of its importance as a high profile, government-sponsored construction project, James Bay simply could not be perceived as a space of sexual license, or even as a space where any sex took place at all. All in all, camps were organized to reproduce labour power with minimal attention to the other components of the workers lives, or to needs that did not directly concern the advancement of the project.[19]

If women and men could be kept separate through a strict monitoring of access and movement around the privacy of dorms, these rules had to be relaxed in public areas. Nevertheless, occupational segregation continued to determine employees' trajectories; whereas

[19] Facilities were built - among them a gym and a ski hill - to allow workers to engage in leisure activities in spite of their long working hours, but the issue of the lack of access to shared housing remained a point of contention throughout the building of LG2.

women found themselves overwhelmingly in the office, the hospital or the kitchen, the majority of men tended to work outdoors and travel more broadly across the territory as part of a construction crew. Despite clear differences in occupation and status based on gender, race and class, archives and interviews demonstrate that the workcamp was broadly envisioned as a utopian democratic space where hierarchies were non-existent. There was a strong desire to emphasize sameness rather than difference among the members of the workforce since difference could threaten the "fraternity" of collective labour. In that spirit, women were often said to be "one of the boys", and yet the claim that James Bay could be a gender neutral space is easily challenged by looking at the spaces of daily life. While the dorms negotiated gender difference by regulating access, co-ed areas seemed to register even more forcefully how the paradox of having women in James Bay resided in the issue of sharing space. As a central meeting place, the cafeteria posed a tremendous challenge to women who were meant to "fit in" at the same time as they remained the subject of a constant scrutiny. Here is how two women describe their experience:

> J'ai trouvé ça terrible, humiliant et épouvantable de sentir braqués sur moi, et épiant mes moindres gestes, les regards insistants de centaines d'hommes qui flairaient tout de suite la nouvelle femme.
>
> Leurs regards se posaient sur toi dès que tu franchissais la porte d'entrée et t'accompagnaient jusqu'à l'avant [...] Tu te sentais jaugée, devinée, déshabillée et tu éprouvais une gêne

terrible. Et c'était pire si tu te retournais la tête, car tu voyais je ne sais combien de paires d'yeux avides.[20]

Although it would become less acute over time, women's discomfort while moving through the camp's public areas indicates how strongly the gendering of space hinges on sexuality. The above quotes suggest that the detached gaze that derives pleasure from "possessing" a passive landscape is here enacted by male workers onto female bodies, making them the object that is pleasurable to view. Submitted to this scutiny, female workers experience an added degree of surveillance in an environment already controlled by various regulations. More importantly, the sexual desire of male workers became the masculinism of the state when the project's administration responded by treating female employees as elements of risk.[21] At the same time, the fact that sexual desire was so strongly aimed at female bodies alleviated what was perceived as a greater risk of sexual misconduct, which is that of homosexuality. The administration's response to these concerns was to consider opening a brothel, although the plan never went through.[22] What is important to point out is that, although sexuality was a constant concern of the

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[20] "I found it terrible, humiliating, dreadful to have pointed at me, and spying on my smallest gestures, the insisting looks of hundreds of men. - Their gaze would land on you as soon as you came through the entrance door and follow you up to the front [...] You felt like you were being sized up, guessed, undressed and would experience a terrible awkwardness. And it was worse if you turned your head, because you saw I don't know how many pairs of avid eyes." Lacasse, *La Baie James*, p. 152.

[21] This sentiment was not unconscious and was expressed in a somewhat joking way: I found in Hydro-Québec's archives a picture showing a chart of explosives and detonating devices lined by several photos of topless women.

[22] While most people I talked to confirmed that such a possibility had been considered, it was difficult to find tangible proof in the archives since the SDBJ didn't keep extensive records of this controversial issue. At least one cartoon appearing in the SDBJ newsletter was unequivocal about the wishes of (some) male workers: see Figure 27, "Oh lil' Jesus, please let us have our *lil' hotel* for '76." See also Figure 28, "The further you get from the camp, the more the tree display bizarre shapes."

Figure 25: A prayer

Figure 26: Strange trees

development corporation, the creation of a sex-trade in James Bay was considered less a sexual impropriety than gay relations between consenting adults. The SDBJ's control over what constituted proper sexual behavior was aimed at protecting its employees' masculinity, which it defined solely in heterosexual terms. The result was that women faced tremendous odds in their efforts not to be treated solely as sexual objects in the work camps. As far as I could observe in my research, women's response to this gaze went two ways, sometimes challenging the masculinism of James Bay, sometimes playing right into it. I wish to sketch briefly these responses in an effort to open new avenues for analysing race in the landscape.

Female workers dealt with some of these odds by creating a separate sphere where they could return the gaze and regain a certain control within this patriarchal environment: it was called *Club Fémina* and consisted of a large room with a dance floor surrounded by tables and private alcoves that could welcome up to two hundred and sixty people.[23] Unlike the tavern whose access was forbidden to women, men were welcome in *Club Fémina* but only if they were accompanied by a woman. This simple measure did create some frustration for men who had to line up at the door in the hope of being invited in, yet it helped to introduce a more balanced ratio between the two genders and deflect some of the sexual tension by providing a sphere for informal dating with dance and music. The fact that the club was perceived as female territory - women had the power to decide who could or could not gain access to it - necessarily altered the balance of power and called for different social

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[23] "L'Eden de LG2." *En Grande* (July 1977), p. 10.

interactions. Both men and women seemed to welcome such a change and similar spaces would be open in subsequent labour camps built across the territory. The creation of these female centered sites - social clubs as opposed to sex clubs - outlines how control over space not only shapes the categories of male and female by enforcing normative relations, but can also serve to resignify them; the same is true of spaces that are marked by race and class. As it relates to the performance of national identities in James Bay, the important point examplified by the opening of Club Fémina is that the solidarity of the national community is also crisscrossed by other affiliations that equally impact notions of identity and yet are not necessarily delimited or defined by the space of the nation. Even at such a small scale, the positive introduction of a different subjectivity in space contradicts the spectacular, disembodied enframing of James Bay. It reminds us that community and political citizenship can be made democratically accessible not through the stubborn negation of difference, but through the active creation of diverse geographies where a broad range of identities can be deployed and accepted, even when they challenge the reiteration of a simple horizontal comradeship. Unfortunately, racial difference proved to be much more difficult to inscribe in the hydroelectric landscape since it could question the legitimacy of appropriating James Bay resources with only limited benefit, if any, for the local native population. I now turn to these issues in an effort to draw some connections between gender and race as they relate to the difficult inclusion of the Cree in the work camp.

Women with no femininity: reinscribing gender and race

In light of the above, I want to suggest that race and gender are not separate issues but must be analyzed together in order to understand how the homogenizing of the national community is effected within spaces of nation-building. Indeed, it is important to recognize that the difficulty of opening the space of James Bay to a female workforce is indicative of larger issues concerning the place of all forms of difference within the nation. The introduction of women in a highly masculine national space contained an element of "risk" which institutional regulations attempted to mitigate and, in so doing, ended up reproducing. Such a risk was partly rooted in the fact that the presence of women outlined how space was sexualised according to a heterosexual order. In doing so, it brought to the forefront how the space of the work camp - and the national solidarity it was meant to symbolize - was not neutral but gendered, which implied also that it was racialized and classed. As a result, this presence disrupted the abstract comradeship which the workers' solidarity rested on and, by extension, the nation upholding this image to signify its own unity. In the initial building years, the presence of women in James Bay seemed to act like a magic marker bringing to the surface the relations patriarchy maintains by covering them over. In the process, the categories of gender were destablized and opened to several outcomes. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that subversion was the norm. A look at how female workers performed gender identities within the work camp will illustrate that point.

As my analysis so far should have made clear, James Bay acquired the national prominence that it did during the nineteen-seventies because

of its intensity as a site of production. For an emerging modern nation, there could be no better way of representing progressive change than through the regular chronicling in the media of an "empty" space gradually being built up with large-scale technological monuments. A much-publicized spectacle of nation-building, James Bay encompassed a rich iconography of production; one which largely overshadowed social reproductive functions. This is examplified by the initial absence of family housing in the work camps. When such housing did become available in the village of Radisson, it was reserved for employees who fulfilled executive functions, most of whom were male, with the result that class was combined with gender in the SDBJ's bias. This meant that domestic duties were the chief occupation of only a small number of women whose presence in the camp was attributable to their partners' professional rank.[24] The SÉBJ showed its sexism by refusing to grant the same housing privileges to female executives who wished to share a house with their male partners; it was eventually forced to change its practices when a report by a Human Rights Commission judged them to be discriminatory.[25]

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[24] One article published in *The Gazette* gives a good example of how a stereotypical middle-class family structure was reproduced for executives who brought their families to James Bay. The couple talks about being able to enroll their daughter in ballet lessons, of playing tennis and enjoying the pool. Speaking about the female spouse, the reporter gives the following description: "You ask her how she spends her day, and her brown eyes light up like a child on Christmas Eve. She tells of painting and going to the pool, of making a family lunch, of packing the kids off to the subsidized *garderie* (daycare) and going to crochet classes, and, in the evenings, 'dancing at the staff club or playing cards. Just about every evening we're doing something.'" I. Anderson, "The Good Life in the North." *The Gazette*, October 21, 1978.

[25] The SÉBJ accepted to grant shared housing to female executives who wished to bring their spouse to James Bay and allowed them access to social clubs that had been open only to their male counterparts. However, it continued to deny couple housing to the broader work force despite the fact that a human rights commission recommended the length of stay as a primary criteria to qualify for this type of accommodation. In addition, it refused to change its official rule that visits to dorms by members of the opposite sex were forbidden, although sanctions were not always applied. The Commission argued that the existence of this rule exposed the workers

Marital status then was paired with gender and class in determining who could enjoy a private sphere. Ironically, the fact that family life was unavailable to the majority of residents meant that the unwaged labour of maintaining a house, looking after children and preparing meals could be looked upon as a privilege. Married couples who were part of the regular workforce ate their meals with the rest of the many thousand workers sharing the camp, and lived in segregated dorms with no other intimacy than the alcoves of *Club Fémina*, or the sub-zero outdoors.

The workers' limited access to a private and/or family environment had many repercussions on the positions available to women in James Bay, and in the larger national sphere it pointed to. One of the most obvious is that women could not be assigned the usual function of "reproducing" the nation both culturally and biologically.[26] This left a void which was partly filled by sexualizing women once they were detached from their roles as mothers or wives. Yet, placing women in the labour camp is a much more complex affair; throughout my research I have been looking at a space where women are heavily sexualized at the same time as they are strangely genderless. What's more, I believe both effects are produced by a spatial order that reinscribes gender even as it removes one of its most important productive forces, which is domesticity. A male interviewee crystallized this contradiction for me during a group discussion by declaring that, in James Bay, "there were women, but no femininity." Other

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who contravened it to arbitrary measures in the absence of a clear framework. See "Conditions de vie à la Baie James: des inégalités persistantes." *Droits et Libertés* Vol. 3, No 4 (April 1980).

[26] In that regard, see footnote number 16 in Scene 1 where Corinne Lévesque addresses the workers. Her characterizing of the female workforce strongly associates them with social reproductive functions, but this association was nevertheless challenged by the lack of family housing in James Bay.

participants - one man and six women - responded differently to this claim. Some women described the necessity of dressing in sturdier and warmer clothes as a daily annoyance which stripped them of the prettiness and elegance they had enjoyed, and come to rely on, in the city. Those who performed secretarial duties objected that for them nothing had changed, stating that they continued to wear skirts and high heels in their work environment. One female engineer, who objected most strongly to the idea that femininity was challenged on the construction site, illustrated her point by saying that she put on perfume every morning and that, even at the end of a damp underground tunnel, other workers knew that she was making her way down by the distinct smell around her. Her story suggests not only the performative aspect of gender identities but also the role of space in supporting or challenging these categories.[27] It also suggests that the reiteration of a cultural past - be it encapsulated in the *roman de la terre* or in a variety of other socio-cultural productions - also encompasses a reiteration of gendered identities. As a space of hyper-masculinity, the construction site makes her aware of her own means of signifying femininity and pushes her to insist on them, almost as a rebuttal of the masculine sphere she encounters routinely at work. Her strategy can be taken to equate femininity with the ability to remain sensual even as heavy layers of clothes muffle the body. In the final analysis, it is surprisingly consistent with the pervasive sexualizing of women in James Bay by redirecting the gaze toward the female body. As I interpret it, this story is about performing and inviting the same visual ideology that

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[27] For a discussion of gender as a performance, see J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990); *Bodies that Matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

constructs both the James Bay landscape and the bodies of women working for the project as a spectacle to be watched and enjoyed.

The latter seems to foreclose the challenging of the dominant gaze that was examplified by an initiative such as the *Club Fémina.* Since I had been intent during my fieldwork on analysing the ways in which difference was played out against the homogenizing narratives of the nation, I listened to this story with some disappointment. My reaction was compounded by the fact that, as our group conversation continued, racist notions toward the Crees were expressed by those same women who had so eloquently described different aspects of the masculinism of James Bay. What this suggested to me is that white women also performed the colonial masculinism that sanctioned the dispossession of native land, even as they were in some way agents of its deconstruction. More contradictory even was their reasserting of a Western understanding of what counts as labour by casting a negative look on Cree traditional practices upon the land, even as those same patriarchal categories were responsible for their own devaluation as members of the work force.[28] The pivotal point which this exchange brought into focus is that race and racism emerged in James Bay not only as products of the reiteration of colonial narratives in the North but also of women's attempts to make space for themselves within a patriarchal sphere, which also stood for the nation. For that reason, I want

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[28] I wrote the following in my notebook concerning this discussion, which became extremely uncomfortable for me: "*These people go crazy when they see geese in the sky. The quit their work, look for a stone to kill it.* I see no consideration for the fact that a clock, a strict schedule, long working hours (time-discipline) are Western attributes introduced by industrialization. Stereotypes: *They are never on time; we must understand that the Cree are a fundamentally lazy people; that may be because there is a lot of in-breeding...* I am left speechless by this parade of hateful stereotypes. Overwhelmed. I wonder if there would have been a bit more self-censorship had there been a tape recorder on the table.

to propose that it is necessary to view the marginalisation of women in spaces of labour not as something that exists on a different plane than the exclusion of the Cree on the basis of race, but is instead deeply connected to it. Both forms of marginalization - and more - can be seen to result partly from the mechanism through which the nation controls its boundaries and reinscribes a homogenous past. The separation and privileging of gender over race - or race over gender - helps to maintain the processes of separation and exclusion that are at work within the nation, which is why the task of bringing them back within the same sphere is such a difficult one.

Poststructuralist analyses of power suggest that there is no proper "outside" to ideology, and consequently to gender representations.[29] While patriarchy negates women's subjectivity, we cannot forget that they are nevertheless constituted as women in and through these various structures of power, and the hegemonic meanings they enact. Along these lines, the creation of *Club Fémina* can be seen as a reconstruction from the center which altered some of the gender and sexual dynamics of the work camp; women reworked these dynamics from the site of their own production as the "other" of James Bay by virtue of their minority status in the camp. Consequently, they were also subject to the push and pull that moves women from margin to center, and back, in their attempts to fashion new subjectivities.[30] Therefore, it is not simply that the presence of women

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[29] See L. Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes toward an investigation." *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review, 1971); M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, op. cited; T. de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, op. cited; J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, op. cited.

[30] For a discussion of this concept of a "push and pull" from margin to center, see T. de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 1-30.

opened a paradoxical space - or an "elsewhere" - where the categories of gender, race, class and sexuality could be resignified "beyond" patriarchy: instead, I suggest that it is necessary to envision this elsewhere "inside" power structures, poaching on their meanings to be sure *but also sometimes falling prey to them.* This is no doubt a less optimistic view but it offers, I think, a less starry-eyed and more pragmatic avenue for political agency by showing a commitment to understanding the production of dominant subjectivities not from a position of exteriority *but from the very site where these subjectivities are produced.* I have attempted through this thesis to expose the territorial discourse that contributed to the creation of "Québécois" subjects via the remaking of James Bay into a space of national development. As my analyses of the *roman de la terre* and the spectacular enframing of the North demonstrate, these structures help produce gender, race and class categories at the same time as they function to erase the traces of this production. Because this social production of difference is constantly covered over, it should come as no surprise that those who are marked by such categories should also play a part in making that process invisible. In trying to bring subaltern identities into positions of power, these identities can also become hegemonic: the struggles of the Québécois to overcome their colonized status and regain possession of their own economic and cultural becoming is a key instance of this. While Francophones were for a long time marginalized within their own land, their efforts to decolonize themselves and revalue their cultural heritage are not necessarily immune from calling upon the very colonial discourses that constructed them as the "other" of British rule who, according to Lord Durham, remained "an old

and stationary society in a new and progressive world."[31] In fact, the building of an extensive energy network in Cree ancestral territories can be said to have reactivated this very phrase over and over, changing only the spatial context and the identities of colonizer and colonized, from British and French to French and Cree. The way in which the labour geography of James Bay has been memorialized in the landscape offers a rich example of how the affirmation of previously subjugated identities can also work to invisibilize others, the same way that the opening of spaces of difference in the work camp does not guarantee inclusion for everyone. I want to end this Act with a discussion of a contemporary tourist site that ties together the central themes of this thesis - as much as they can be tied without unduly reducing the range of my analysis.

Pioneers and water builders: contemporary James Bay as a "people's geography"[32]

When I visited LG2 in March 2000, I was driven by a tour guide from Radisson to the hydro installations of few kilometers away. Anxious to finally see the "escalier de géant", I paid little attention to the scenery along the road until my guide pointed to a large vacant spot resting under drooping electrical lines, as though heavy with the power they were hoisting South. This, he informed me as he slowed down but kept on driving, was the site of the first James Bay work camp where nearly one hundred thousand people lived at different times during the busiest years of the project. I made him stop the car and got out, camera in hand, to get

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[31] *The Durham Report*, op. cited, p. 23.

[32] I am indebted to Don Mitchell and his "People's Geographies" project for this title. For details on this on-going research project, see http://www.peoplesgeography.org.

a better look. As my pictures would later disappointingly show, there was little there to see. Dorms, cafeteria, gymnasium, Club Fémina - all those buildings had been removed leaving only their faint contours on the ground, with a few interpretation boards barely bridging this otherwise empty space. I mentally filled this immense gap with words and pictures gathered along my research: workers lining up for a phone to call home; the union conflict and vandalism that led to closure of the camp; the acute discomfort, for women, of fetching a meal in a cafeteria packed with men. Trying to recollect this activity from such a mute space, I got an inkling of what Cree people may go through as hydroelectric development continues to transform and erase their cultural landscapes. As problematic as the presence of a non-local labour force was in James Bay, the flattening of this social landscape, in line with the SÉBJ's effort "to leave no traces", adds insult to injury with powerlines visible everywhere from the clearing of the work camp. If the Cree had disappeared from the landscape to allow for its spectacular enframing, it seemed to me that workers had encountered the same fate once their work - so celebrated during the building years - was done. This choreography of presence and absence, of where labour, natives, women will appear in the hydroelectric environment, of how they will be represented, speaks of the political struggles that form the snarly space of James Bay, and the space of the nation. As an analysis of the spectacular representation of the North, the exclusions it produces and the heterogeneous responses it sollicits demonstrates, the claim that these landscapes belong to "all the Québécois" intensifies rather than solves the power struggles that gave rise to them.

Nevertheless, a tourist site recently created on the banks of the La Grande has undertaken the difficult task of displaying various social aspects of the project by memorializing the workers who made it into reality. Created in 1999, this site was named after Robert A. Boyd, the influential president of the SÉBJ who steered the hydroelectric scheme through its first decade, working closely with Robert Bourassa and his liberal government.[33] The park is a much needed addition to a tourist circuit in and around Radisson that is somewhat dehumanized in its focus on the hydroelectric strutures and the technological marvel they represent. Yet, because they are so forcefully inscribed within the symbolic of the nation where working to exploit natural resources is seen as a national duty, representations of solidarity and of a labouring people in James Bay are complicated by gender and racial exclusions; this one is no exception, despite the good faith of its authors. I have sought to demonstrate these exclusions by taking the figure of the *défricheur* outside its immediate historical and literary framework and into one of the social spheres that has kept him alive - and sometimes also challenged him - as a national icon. The organization of the Robert-A.-Boyd Park demonstrates that, even though it questions the disembodied, spectacular enframing of the North, the act of writing people and their labour into the landscape is not necessarily an inclusive one but can play into the very hegemonic practices it seeks to stand against. This process is reminiscent of the push and pull whereby female workers in James Bay could open spaces of difference for themselves while perpetuating the marginalization of the Cree within the workforce. These contradictory processes remind us of the discontinuous

[33] Much of my analysis of the Robert-A.-Boyd park is derived from personal communication with Daniel Bellerose as well as from the materials he shared with me. I owe him thanks for this invaluable help.

nature of discourse, which explains why its reiteration is neither stable nor uniform: "To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies."[34] According to its chief architect, the main incentive behind the Robert-A.-Boyd Park was to create a space that was people-centered in an effort to balance the de-humanized, technological landscape that is offered to visitors in and around Radisson. In that sense, the site can be viewed as an attempt to render the space of James Bay as a geography of "the people" - the new sovereigns of James Bay - and to memorialize this community in the landscape for touristic purposes, more than twenty years after the beginning of the project. Consequently, the site offers some important clues to reflect on the performance and inscription of a Québécois cultural identity/governmentality in space, and how these processes continue to shape the geography of James Bay right into the present.

Viewing the colonial past

"Vivez l'aventure Baie James grandeur nature. Laissez-vous envoûter par l'esprit du lieu."[35] These words accompany two pictures in a promotional brochure for the Robert-A.-Boyd Park. One shows the Mosquito river where the camp is located, the other some of the canvas tents the visitor will enter to read about everyday life in this site during

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[34] Foucault, *The History*, p. 100.

[35] "Live the James Bay adventure nature-size. Let yourself be seduced by the spirit of the place." *Un Hommage perpétuel aux bâtisseurs d'eau de la Baie James* (information brochure - Parc Robert-A.-Boyd, n.d.).

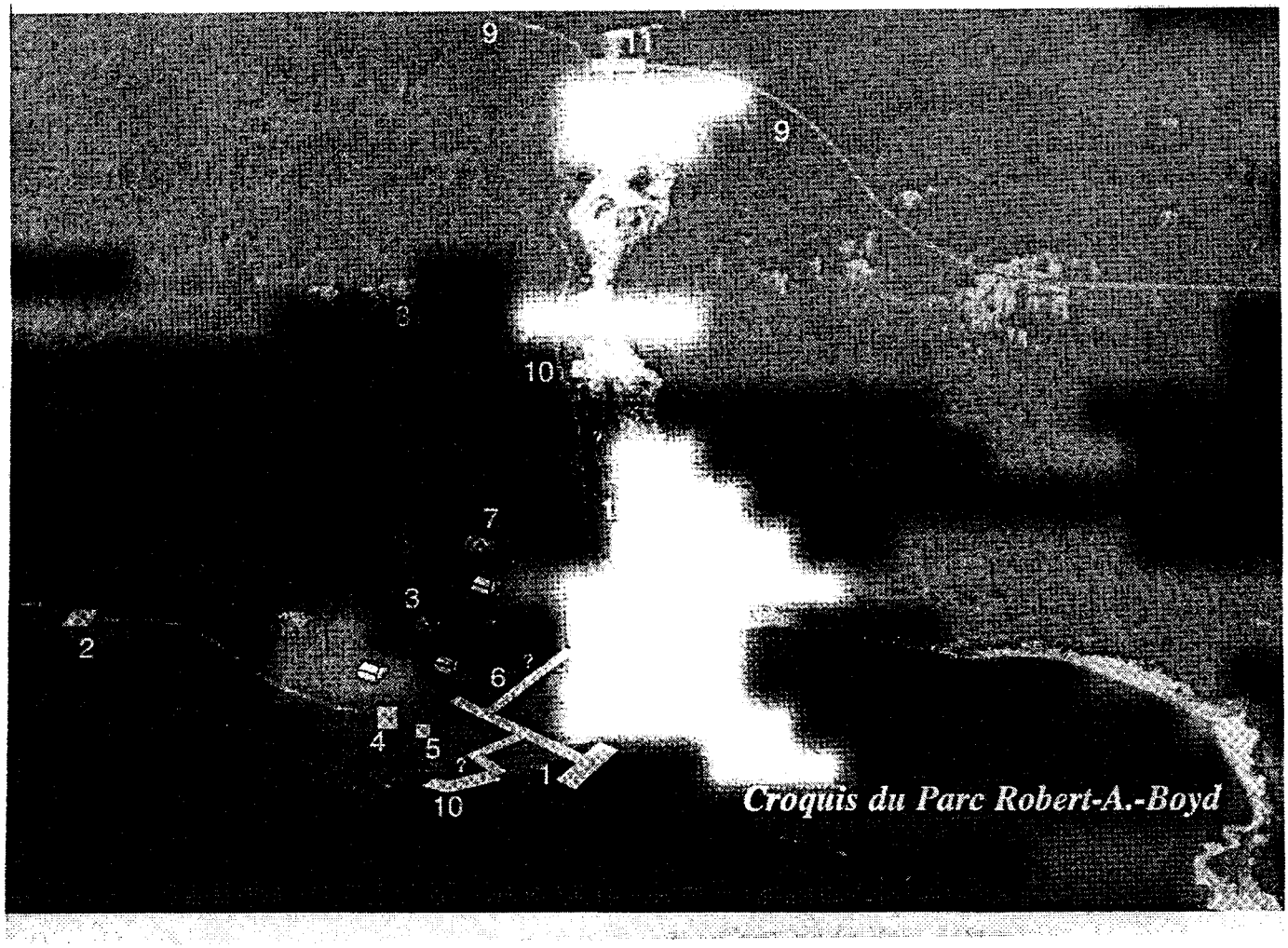

Figure 27: Sketch of the Robert-A.-Boyd

the exploration phase that preceded construction on the La Grande river. Here the expression "nature size" refers to a scale that is much reduced from that of the dams. The nature which the Robert-A.-Boyd park puts the visitor in touch with is not staged as the mighty expense of space but rather encountered as a more intimate, human-sized environment. Before boarding the boat that will take them across the La Grande river to the site, visitors frequently ask the question "Where is the camp?"[36] Unlike the hydroelectric structures which are easily visible on the land even from broad distances, the park is intertwined with the tree cover found on the

[36] Société des Sites Historiques de Radisson (SSHR), *Parc Robert-A.-Boyd: Concept d'interprétation* (Radisson: Communications Jamésiennes, 1999), p. 7.

banks of the river and therefore not so directly offered to the gaze of potential viewers. As a result, tourists are not meant to stand apart from an object to be viewed but must circulate through the woods to experience the camp, along with its cold climate or the discomfort of flies which are ubiquitous during the warmer months. Unlike Hydro-Québec's guided tours of the dams, one is encouraged to walk freely in the park and learn individually by reading the interpretation panels and viewing the pictures located in and around the tents. Nevertheless, if the tourist gaze is oriented quite differently than in the spectacular landscape of the dams, the emphasis on vision and seeing remains strong. Indeed, when tourists reach the river bank and inquire about the location of the camp, they are invited to scrutinize the surrounding space to recognize signs of occupation. As expressed in their documentation, the authors of the site trust that visitors will immediately recognize signs that call upon a colonial imaginary:

> Each person arriving at the foot of the Utahunanis (Mosquito) river scans for a trace that will awaken the imaginary of what he or she knows about an exploration camp. Whether it is a quay that used to serve as an anchoring point for aquaplanes, or even a few canvas tents erupting into the immense scenery of the Québec taiga, it is always with a certain febrile quality that the visitor looks for some clue that will allow him to establish a visual foundation with this exploration camp.[37]

In helping to establish this "visual foundation", the reconstructed site seeks to put the visitor in contact with a particular narrative. Significantly, this narrative is one which most Québécois visitors will easily recognize and

[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8, my translation.

perhaps identify with since it tells the popular story of the conquest of space, which represents such an integral part of French-Canadian concepts of territoriality:

> En s'efforçant de répondre à la question "Où est le campement?", la démarche de mise en valeur concrétise du même coup les orientations du message à livrer, soit celui d'éveiller le souvenir de "*l'épopée*" de la Baie James et de mettre en valeur un élément stratégique du patrimoine jamésien. Le site reconstitué devient un hommage perpétuel aux quelques 185,000 hommes et femmes qui ont oeuvré au sein des différentes compagnies sur les chantiers de la Baie James.[38]

The "James Bay epic" theme spills into the other two aspects the tourist site wishes to outline: namely, "Spirit of the place" and "Contact with nature." These themes are seen to "emerge" through the experience of physically moving through the area; they are not "suddenly accessible" but necessitate an engagement with the physical milieu where man-made elements are closely integrated with the natural environment.[39] In trying to bring together the human and physical environment of the river bank, the enframing of the park relies strongly on the power of evocation which a few elements added to the landscape detain: objects such as tents, quays or a helicopter pad are given a story to tell which the visitor gradually

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[38] "In trying to answer the question 'Where is the camp?', the process of communication concretises at the same time the direction of the message to be delivered, that is, to awaken the memory of the James Bay 'epic' and to highlight a strategic element of the James Bay heritage. The recreated site becomes a perpetual homage to the 185,000 men and women who have laboured through different companies in the James Bay construction camps." *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

reconstructs as he or she walks around the space. Such a process is not unlike that of Cree hunters for whom the reading of tracks on the land gives an indication of the presence of animals and their possible location in the environment: only in this instance, the land of James Bay has been rescripted according to the colonial meanings that have characterized the production of Québécois cultural landscapes in the North. Like these cultural landscapes, the memorializing of the human agents who materialized them is predicated on text. Most importantly, it is not the physical environment itself but the archival knowledge of occupation that served as a basis for reconstructing the camp:

> Les rares vestiges retrouvés lors du déboisement du site ne constituent pas des amers suffisants pour en faire des témoins significatifs de l'histoire et de l'importance du lieu. Les documents d'archives et les témoignages oraux des pionniers-explorateurs nous permettent toutefois de saisir toute l'ampleur et la portée des campagnes d'exploration de la fin des années 60 et du début des années 70. La présence d'équipes d'exploration d'Hydro-Québec sur le site du campement G-68 a été déterminante dans la découverte de cette région de la Baie James et dans la collecte de données techniques d'ordre topographique, géotechnique et hydrologique du bassin de la Grande Rivière.[40]

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[40] "The rare vestiges found while logging the site do not provide sufficient data to yield significant clues about the history and importance of the site. The archival documents and oral testimonies of the pioneer-explorers allow us however to grasp the extent of the exploration campaigns of the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. The presence of Hydro-Québec exploration teams on the site of the G-68 camp was a determining factor in the discovery of the James Bay region and in the gathering of technical - topographical, geotechnical and hydrological - data in the basin of the La Grande river." *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Like the underground cathedral, the *escalier de géant*, or the work camp, this recent tourist site seeks to give a new life to the colonial archive of Québécois territoriality on the banks of the La Grande and, in doing so, continues to appropriate it as a national territory: indeed, the James Bay of Cree hunters has become, in the Robert-A.-Boyd Park, the "patrimoine jamésien" (Jamesian heritage) of its new occupiers. In that sense, the park is a perfect extension to the hydroelectric installations, thus it is fitting that a ten kilometers hiking trail should be under construction in order to link it to a viewing platform where visitors will be able to get a close-up view of the LG2 dam and spillway.[41] As a recreated "exploration" camp, the Robert-A.-Boyd park materializes in the landscape the broad meaning of this term which is a pivotal element of a Eurocentric geographical imagination. In the context of James Bay, the importance of exploration as a lens for producing and viewing the territory is also in that it brings together the separate but mutually informing concepts of nature, nation and work. If the figure of the *défricheur* encapsulated these concepts in the *roman de la terre*, he is resignified, in this instance, as a *pionnier-explorateur*. Both ventured into a labyrinthine forest - Rivard himself felt "imprisoned" in it - which they needed to rationalize, know, and set up as a picture as a means of conquering it. This they did through assiduous and prolongued labour. The idea that visitors must "look" for the tourist site since it retreats from view in the wooded environment suggests that the camp in itself is a fragile site, not yet separated from the wilderness of James Bay but intensely, however, "working on it." It is the wilderness that calls for such a site at the same time as it threatens to choke it out of existence. Presented against such a background, the Robert-A.-Boyd park

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

emphasizes how much "work" was necessary to bring such a space into the rationality of dams and reservoir. Furthermore, it offers a testimony that Québécois people could come together and manage such a task. The issue of who such a community represents, and excludes by way of that representation, remains unexamined in the inscription of human actors in the landscape, this despite the park's emphasis on solidarity under the sign of a liberal idea of "the people."

Working/owning the land

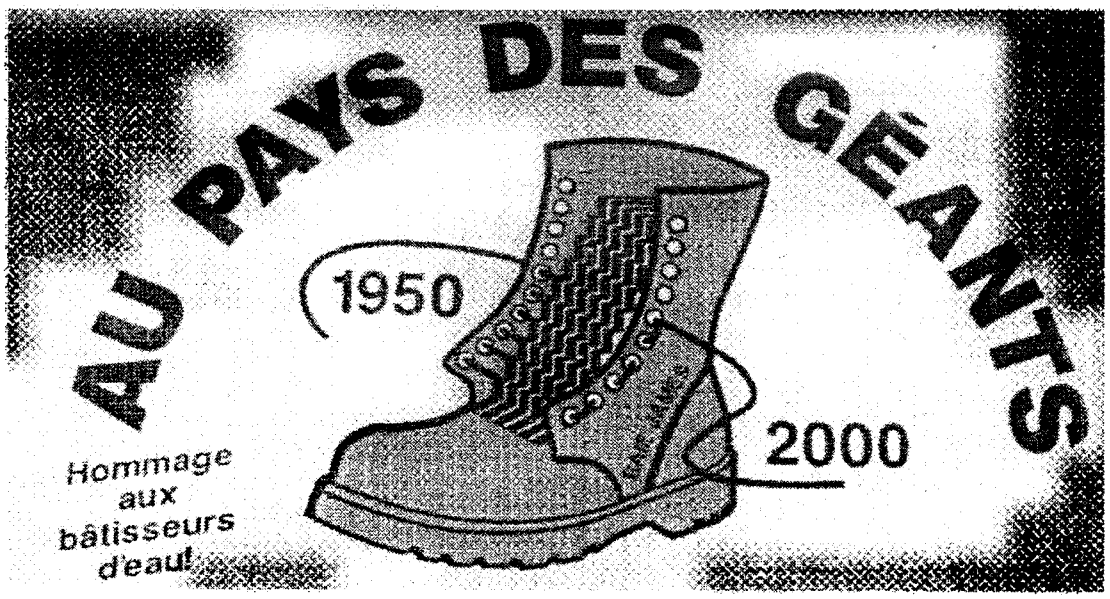

Figure 28: A country of giants. Homage to the water builders

La fameuse botte de travail! Elle était la même pour tous et de ce fait, évite toute référence à une hiérarchie quelconque. La couleur bleu représente l'eau omniprésente sur le territoire, la raison d'être de la venue de ces bâtisseurs. Les escaliers encavés à l'intérieur de la botte, avec ses dix marches, refèrent

à l'évacuateur de crues de LG-2, communément appelé l'escalier du géant. Les lacets représetent le fil conducteur de l'électricité. Le mot Baie James englobe tous les camps d'exploration et les chantiers. Les dates nous rappellent 50 ans en hydroélectricité à la Baie James, 1950/2000, avec l'arrivée du nouveau millénaire.[42]

The construction boot which is the emblem of the site has been stylized to signify both the natural aspect of James Bay, water, and the transformation of that aspect into the project's most recognizable icon, which is the *escalier de géant.* In its homage to the men and women who built this and other structures, the emblem salutes them as heroes of epic proportions: giants in "a country of giants." If the boot symbolizes the labour and solidarity of the workforce, it also stands as the region itself with the name "James Bay" imprinted on the heel. Bracketed by a period of fifty years, 1950-2000, James Bay as a space of work appears temporally limited to the period when exploration by energy companies was initially undertaken and the first hydroelectric mega-complex built. The notion, which the boot is meant to signify, that all forms of hierarchy were erased in James Bay is easily challenged by looking at the construction camp: I have sought to demonstrate that point by analyzing how the presence of women in the camps outlines the gendering and sexualising of space, and how these processes create unequal access to it. Among the white workers

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[42] "The famous work boot! It was the same for everyone and, by this fact, avoids all reference to any hierarchy. The blue color represents the water, omnipresent on the territory, the very reason why these builders came. The staircase sunken inside the boot, with its ten steps, refer to the LG-2 spillway, commonly known as the 'escalier de géant.' The laces represent the conduit for electricity. The word *James Bay* encompasses all the exploration camps and work sites. The dates commemorate 50 years of hydroelectric history in James Bay, 1950/2000, with the arrival of the new millennium." *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

I interviewed, both male and female, many asserted that there was a convivial spirit on the construction site which was fostered by the shared experience of displacement, group living and the intensity of the work schedule. Still, these workers also noted that class and status segmented the workforce either through the living quarters one would be assigned to, access to social clubs depending on company affiliation and ranking within this company, or simply the daily itineraries of workers who performed widely different jobs, from secretarial to engineering, catering, maintenance, entertainment, nursing, teaching or heavy machinery operating. The important point is that, if most of these labourers could rework the meaning of solidarity and adapt the metaphorical work boot to their various social positionings, the task was a great deal more challenging for native workers who had to negotiate these social and spatial structures from a different cultural experience of James Bay.

The James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement stated that Hydro-Québec and the SÉBJ had to apply preferential mechanisms in order to distribute contracts to native-run companies or hire native laborers.[43] These wishful measures were often met with resistance by employers who argued that they could stay within contracted building costs only by hiring their own, previously trained, team of workers. Thus, for Cree people, the James Bay work boot was a differently coded symbol: one where racial

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[43] This is stipulated in article 8.14 of the convention, but the lack of an adequate structure for training workers often made it difficult for Cree people to meet employment standards and expectations. In 1980, 550 workers were of native origin whereas the overal labour force on the project numbered approximately 16 000: this represents less than 4% of the workforce. The SÉBJ eventually sought to improve this ratio by creating an organization called "Formation Intégration Main d'oeuvre Authochtone" (FIMA). See *Le Complexe hydroélectrique La Grande: les retombées économiques régionales* (Montréal: Centre de documentation Hydro-Québec, 1994), p. 4; *Rapport d'activités sur la main d'oeuvre autochtone du territoire de la Baie James en regard du projet La Grande* (Association des employeurs de la Baie James, 1981).

barriers rather than non-hierarchy were articulated in and through notions of labour, experience and expertise in an employment market they, at the time, had little or no control over.[44] The lack of sensitivity to cultural constructions of time, space or work-discipline - which is examplified in the enframing of the region for the South - fostered intolerance toward Cree members of the work force who had to adjust to new modes of scheduling and face the challenge of modifying, if not altogether abandoning, their hunting and fishing practices in order to function as wage-earners.[45] Thus, in a very practical way, the cultural landscapes I have examined were not just the aestheticizing of a new region for nationalist purposes but enabled as well its remaking into a new economic space: it is in that sense that cultural and economic landscapes function so closely together. Much work remains to be done to continue

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[44] The "Compagnie de Construction Crie" is a good example of a Cree-run enterprise that was created to ensure more native control over the employment market linked to the project, as well as over regional employment in general. For details on Cree development and adaptation to a market economy, see J.-J. Simard, *Tendances nordiques - Les changements sociaux 1970-1990 chez les Cris et les Inuit du Québec: une étude statistique exploratoire* (Québec: Université Laval et Hydro-Québec, 1996).

[45] Clearly, it was in the interest of those who supported development to argue that Cree traditional culture had disappeared and to push modernization as the only form of progress for these communities. The place of hunting and fishing in today's Cree culture is complex, contested and differently assessed depending on the various observers. Less people go out on the land for extended periods of time, partly because the education system is not well adapted to integrate bush teaching within a Western curriculum, although some efforts are being made in that direction. To date, the most innovative iniative to address these issues following the JBNQ agreement has been a guaranteed revenue program whereby the Québec government supports traditional activities by subsidizing those who spend a minimum period each year on their hunting territories. Still, work always remains to be done to make the program flexible enough to accommodate the dual - sometimes triple - cultural, economic and governmental frameworks in which Northern Cree communities find themselves. For an analysis of Cree economic adjustments, see P. Sénécal and D. Égré, "Les impacts du complexe hydroélectrique La Grande sur les communautés autochtones." *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* Vol. 28.1 (1998), pp. 89-103; R. Salisbury, *A Homeland for the Cree - Regional Development in James Bay 1971-1981* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press); A. Tanner, *Bringing Home Animals: religious ideology and mode of production of the Mistassini Cree Hunters* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1979).

drawing these connections, in James Bay and elsewhere where resources stand at the junction of identity and development. Operating in this doubly resignified - i.e. culturally and economically - environment, native laborers would also have had to face various degrees of alienation from members of their family and community whose lives remained tied to a subsistence economy and its social structures, even as local landscapes were being remade or destroyed by the transformation of La Grande. These conflicts could only be exacerbated by the nationalist enframing of the project whereby the act of working in James Bay was valued as an active contribution to the "national" economy. The sense of conflict natives could have faced as they took part in the wage economy being implanted in the North remains unexamined in the language of solidarity that looks back on the early days of the La Grande complex as a heroic period, even as this language seeks to humanize the landscape of capital and development.

Still to be addressed in a popular geography of James Bay is the issue that, in putting their feet into the symbolic work boot, natives were stepping into a community - "all the Québécois" - whose government policies toward First Nations were transforming their cultures through a different production of land, nature and territory. Again, this transformation was effected via the enframing of the region in a different cultural register; one which effectively barred, or severely limited, the Cree from participating in an economy that was shot through with cultural assumptions about what constituted "development." While solidarity implies that each member of a community gives up part of their subjectivity to identify with the whole, the fact that native people in James Bay could not embrace Québec's "project of the century" without seriously

endangering the basis of their cultural identity - not merely the land but an ecological balance between it and its animal resources - is testimony that James Bay fundamentally divided rather than unified the people of Québec. This unless "all Québécois people" it should benefit is an imagined community that, at its root, was never meant to include the native population of the province. As Québec is increasingly becoming a multicultural society, the task of reexamining its territorial imagination to account for this reality still lies ahead. It is a task that seems to me all the more pressing since recent debates surrounding the nation have suggested that it shed its ethnic origin to propose instead a "civic" nationalism where the common experience of place forms the basis of national identification.[46] From a geographer's perspective, it is difficult to imagine that such a civic nationalism could be viable without a profound reexamination of the discourses which give meaning to place, whether explicitly or implicitly; this especially since many of these discourses are connected - as I have wanted to show - to Québec's colonial past and continue to recontextualize and reactivate its power struggles into the

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[46] The "Declaration of Sovereignty" publicized by the Parti Québécois as part of the last referendum campaign (fall 1995) reflects this emphasis on the communal making of place as a basis of national identification, which nevertheless retains a strong territorial essentialism: "At the dawn of the 17th century, the pioneers of what would become a nation and then a people rooted themselves in the soil of Québec. Having come from a great civilization, they were enriched by that of the First Nations, they forged new alliances and maintained the heritage of France. [...] The English community that grew up at their side, the immigrants who have joined them, all have contributed to forming this people which became in 1867 one of the two founders of the Canadian federation. [...] Because it is this land alone that represents our pride an the source of our strength, our sole opportunity to express ourselves in the entirety of our individual natures and of our collective heart; Because this land will be all those men and women who inhabit it, who defend it and define it, and because we are all those people, We, the people of Québec, declare that we are free to choose our future." The Declaration was broadly critized by all segments of the Québec population, see "Declaration of Sovereignty," *The Gazette* (September 9, 1995), p. B3. For an up-to-date discussion of ethnic versus civic nationalism in Québec, see M. Venne, ed., *Vive Quebec! New Thinking and New approaches to the Quebec Nation* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 2001).

present. The taking for granted of this geographical imagination and the uncritical expectation that non-Francophones, natives and immigrant will identify with the Québec nation when their experience of place is abstracted by its territoriality is precisely what perpetuates the exclusions that are at the basis of national strife. I stated early in the thesis using Audrey Kobayashi's words that "places must be seen not simply as cultural landscapes, but as manifestations of political objectives that cannot be accommodated without struggle and contradiction." Past or present, James Bay is such a statement of Québécois political, territorial, and economic objectives. Even though no large scale constrution is under way at present time, the legacy of its appropriation by the South continues to color relationships between natives and non-natives. Clearly, the intersection of nature, nation and work in the North has not created a common basis of territorial identification across cultures but has further fragmented the people of Québec. In doing so, it has demonstrated that territorial imaginings and the spaces they create have the capacity to materialize quite different ethnicities in the landscape, and their respective, taken-for-granted, cultural meanings.

Building water: nature as national resource

Finally, the overall meaning of the work boot also operates through the designation of workers as "water builders." I want to end this Act by reflecting on the implications of such an image for thinking about the production of nature, the reiteration of a national past and the closures effected by memorializing James Bay as a "people's geography." The reference to workers as "water builders" is filled with possible meanings; it

contradicts nature at the same time as it forces us to rethink our understanding of its social production. The idea suggests that water is a sculptural material for the workers/artists who fulfill its potential. In shaping and modeling the territory's resources for the benefit of its population, workers become creators; they use raw materials to bring a new object into being, in this case, water to create the nation.[47] Through this process, one of the most basic building blocks of nature - water - is understood as a construction. This language of genesis surrounding the Robert-A.-Boyd Park is consistent with the development discourse where the hydro installations were celebrated as technological "creations." The aerial imagery promoting the project made nature the jewel box of technology with shots of dams neatly fitted into an environment that was not so much a *surround* but a *support.* Yet, the meaning of "building water" is even better captured by the immense reservoirs that were "created" by diverting the La Grande and other rivers. For those who knew the landscape before its transformation, the reservoirs are not separate from the river but continue to be the river in an altered form, this despite the fact that the making of the reservoirs was accompanied by a renaming of the territory meant to materialize on the land the rhetoric of creation.[48]

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[47] This symbolism was expressed by a song that was written for the inauguration of LG2 and performed by popular singer of the time Fabienne Thibeault. The song was entitled *Québec l'enfant d'eau* (child of water).

[48] This is exemplified in the recent controversy over the *Jardin du bout du monde* ("Garden at the end of the world"). To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the French Language Charter (also known as Bill 101), the Québec Toponomy Commission wrote a 'geographical poem' by renaming 101 island in the head reservoir of the La Grande complex using words taken from famous Québecois literary works. The project was received with outrage by the Crees who reminded the Commission that these 'islands' had been mountains and hills prior to their flooding and that they already bore native names. A speaker for the commission stated that "We were certain that the territory was anonymous, completely virgin, simply because it is not a site where the population is concentrated" (*Le Devoir,* September 19, 1997, p. A12, my

The new landscapes these transformations yield - landscapes the Cree communities are only beginning to reappropriate - are testimony that the James Bay project produced its own spatial order, which enacted new forms of governmentality in the North. And yet as a building material, water is not "raw" but laden with a history and a becoming. It does not hold without the river, no more than it does without the material culture that the river has produced over centuries. While its spectacular enframing sought to make the space of James Bay portable for the South, it is this material culture itself that forms "the people" of James Bay and, by extension, the people of Québec.

In his work on Nigeria, Michael Watts has explored how "nature, nation, statehood, citizenship and ethnicity are constituted within the contested social and ecological landscape of oil."[49] His analysis provides a useful framework for understanding the conjunction between the poetics and politics of energy in Québec, which pass through the remaking of water - a *natural* resource - into a social artifact - a *national* resource for the Québécois of French origin. That conjunction cannot be understood without looking at the narratives whereby the Québécois nation has envisioned how it exists territorially, an imaginary which is predicated on and spirals out of what kinds of nature the nation has encountered and struggled to overcome in its effort to claim and control a physical environment of its own: what Durham significantly called "the converting of the wilderness into a settled and flourishing country."[50] Again, Durham's

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translation). The new toponyms would be changed or reallocated, he said, if proper documentation proved that they had been previously named by the Crees.

[49] M. Watts, "Nature as Artifice and Artifact." In Braun and Castree, eds., *Remaking Reality*, op. cited, p. 246.

[50] *The Durham Report*, op. cited, p. 151.

words remind us of how the building of such an indisputable claim is a pre-condition of cultural survival. In the latter part of the twentieth century, Northern rivers have provided the raw material for writing another chapter of this on-going *roman de la terre*, this time under the sign of water and energy. Moreover, these rivers have been the conduits of a further territorial expansion into the North, and of the establishment of a Québécois governmentality in territories where their demographic presence is limited. Water then functions as both a symbolic and an economic currency for Francophones in Québec: its dual nature as such suggests the extent to which cultural politics lie at the center of environmental issues, and can determine their outcome in the future. If nature is indeed socially constructed, then this construction is "always about much more than just nature."[51] Michael Watts gives us a sense of what filters through it in the context of Nigerian politics:

> Standing at the center of the Ogoni struggle is oil (Watts 1994) which is necessarily and unavoidably artifactual - a product of science, technologies and social relations - and natural (crude black gold). If oil as nature is in a strong sense constructed - oil as a set of discourses, as a form of wealth and value, as an embodiement of social relations in the form of the state and transnational capital - it is also the case that some fundamental social identities - the Ogoni people, the Nigeria nation state, Shell oil company - cannot be understood apart from nature, that is, apart from oil as a natural resource. It is not simply that these central forms of identification are contested on the

[51] Braun and Castree, *Remaking Reality*, p. 5.

> social and ecological landscape of late twentieth-century Nigeria, it is that all these identifications are, as it were, channeled through nature, through the oil nexus.[52]

A similar analysis can be made about water for the Québécois, as well as about the role of Hydro-Québec as an icon of decolonization and of political and economic power for Francophones. I have endeavoured to build such an analysis first by showing the strong cultural connection, in the *roman de la terre*, between identity and nature. I discussed how the purported "modernity" of the Quiet Revolution was supposed to have effected a break from what was envisioned as the archaïc foundational sphere of the rural. I have argued that such a clean break did not happen and proposed that other social productions of nature accomplished under the rubric of modernity have continued to anchor cultural identity within nature and geographical space, and thus territorially. Indeed, for the nation, letting go of nature is tantamount to letting go of national space, and therefore of the political and economic territory that ensures the existence of the group. For the nation is not just an imagined community but also one that seeks to territorialize itself, and indeed must do so, especially under colonial conditions. In altering these conditions and regaining control of their homeland over the span of the last century, the Québécois can be said to have recreated similarly colonial power relations with another people - the Cree - and in another space - that of James Bay. That much had already become abundantly clear in the early 1990s when various political debates erupted surrounding Robert Bourassa's decision to go ahead with the second phase of the project on the Great Whale river.

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[52] Watts, *Nature as Aritifice*, pp. 245-246.

How to alter these power relations to make them more equitable remains, however, a timely question. For it is only through equitable power relations that an equitable use of James Bay resources can be made into a reality.

PORTFOLIO 5

Laval, October 27, 1979 Vancouver, June 3, 2001

Last night, I circled the exact time and channel in the TV schedule with a thick felt pen. Saturday October 27, 1979, 3pm on Channel 2. My mother, sister and I have been anxious to watch the inauguration of LG2 where the first transmission line will be put into service by Québec's Premier René Lévesque. Mom is still busy in the kitchen during the opening credits. We call to her to hurry up or she'll miss the beginning of the show. She comes in a haste, spilling coffee onto the rug and dropping a bag of chips between my sister and myself. The province has been preparing for this; a ten-month countdown with newspapers and television constantly feeding us information bits, reacquainting us with the project now that it is nearly completed: the opening of a new territory, the face-off with a hostile climate, the distances, the scale. James Bay is for all the Québécois. It is the largest hydroelectric complex in the world and was designed, engineered and built right here up North, *chez nous*. It makes good economic sense, it is the key to our future. This inauguration is a national event, broadcast live by Radio-Canada to thousands of French-speaking viewers here and in Europe. It's a reason to be proud and we wouldn't miss it for the world. The living room feels cozy and bright, all three of us shift for a moment before we settle into the sofa, ready for the curtain to lift.

The ceremony opens with sweeping shots of the James Bay landscape and a theme song called *L'enfant d'eau*, child of water, interpreted by singer Fabienne Thibeault. *Mr. Magician you hold the world inside your hands...* All around her the stage is flooded in blue light, some of the crowd stands up to cheer as she sings the last notes and the Premier, René Lévesque, enters the stage to make a speech. He gives homage to the workers, those pioneers, those titans, who have built pyramids North of North in a prodigious geography. The LG2 hydroelectric installations have given a magic wand to the electricity fairy who has been so good to Québec. But she will be good also to those who live across the border. Lévesque talks about the energy exports which will bring together Québec and the United States into a union nature herself has created: heating Québec through the winter cold and flowing South when summer heat draws its share of electricity for air conditioning. *Gens du pays, nous aurons dans quelques instants la fierté de procéder à la mise en service de LG2.* The Premier leaves the stage and Fabienne enters it again to sing the Québécois national anthem, "Gens du pays." We see Lévesque walk toward a helicopter, the camera takes the audience on board with him to fly over the installations. Water flows through the *escalier de géant*, the helicopter veers toward the dam skimming from the bottom to the top of its rocky surface as a voice-over tells us that the volume of materials used to build it and the thirty-one dikes found in LG2 would be enough to erect twenty times over the Great Pyramid of Cheops. There are more songs and music building up to the moment when

Lévesque himself will hold the magic wand to release the first jolt of James Bay electricity through the transmission lines, reaching Québécois households across the province. A short animated film explains what is about to happen then jumps to a fuzzy image that zips across the screen, wavers and makes it go dark. Our living-room is suddenly quiet with a mute TV displaying a static, half-finished spillway with the words "L'inauguration de LG-2". My sister starts to reach for the antenna. The screen fizzles again, we catch a diagonal glimpse of the Premier wearing a construction hat, moving toward a large metal box covered with dials and lights, and the fateful lever waiting to be pulled down. Again, he slips from view and is replaced by a still. This time my sister angrily twists the antenna into the opposite direction but with no result, so we wait. What is this? Sabotage by enemies of progress? My mother goes back to the kitchen to refill her coffee while I turn to other channels, desperately trying to relocate the shot of the Premier turning on the giant machinery. When the fanfare of the inauguration is finally back, my mother comes running from the kitchen, spilling her coffee over again. We see dancers in the underground cathedral still unfinished. The earth is gutted by a row of large turbines piercing through it, not yet covered over with shiny floors. The event closes with the theme song about the magician and the water. A strange trick indeed, we saw the show but not the magical act that would mesmerize the river into a clean stream of power.

Figure 29: A handshake (JBNQ Agreement)

Figure 30: The Odeyak

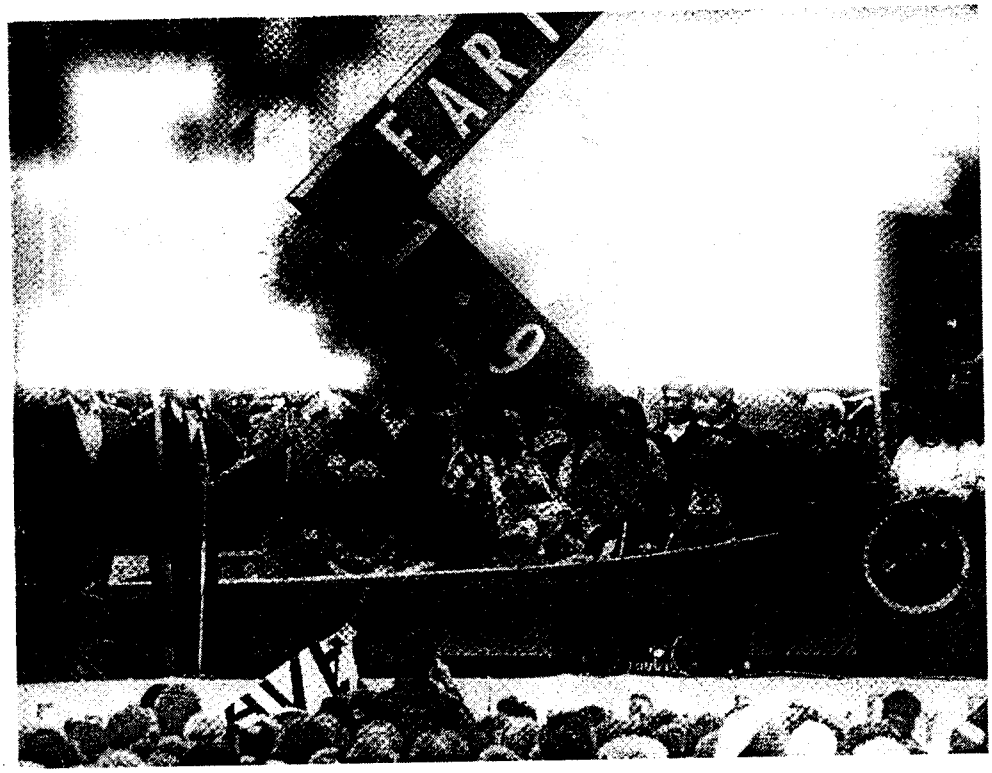

Figure 31: International outreach - Earth Day 1992

Figure 32: Another look at the *escalier de géant*

EPILOGUE

Si tu savais avec quel orgueil je porte mes regards sur cette vaste étendue de terre défrichée, devenue par mon travail la base solide de ma future indépendance![1]

Jean Rivard, p. 235.

There are two ends to a hydro line. There's the luxury end, the comfortable end. Lights, heat, cooking, there's music coming out of the other end of the line. But at our end of the line, we don't hear music. We hear massive destruction. Dynamiting of our rivers, dynamiting our cliffs, dynamiting our land, blowing up our land. Huge monstrous vehicles ravaging the land. That is what we hear at the other end of the line.

Bill Namagoose, Executive Chief, Grand Council of the Crees of Quebec, New England Environmental Conference, Medford, Massachusetts, March 1991.

[1] "If you only knew how proudly I gaze upon this vast stretch of land cleared up and transformed, through my own labour, into the solid basis of my future independence!"

James Bay - another look

In the midst of gathering examples of the spectacular imagery that created James Bay for the South, I picked up a book by the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Astchee) that had a different story to tell. Accompanying the text were several photographs, one of them of the project's famous *escalier de géant* (Figure 32). The angle chosen took me by surprise as it made the spillway a new object in an unfamiliar environment. Whereas the visual ideology of development had shown a highly aesthetic structure, sleek yet imposing against the elements it controlled and fitted into, this new object was clearly defacing the land. For Bourassa and the SÉBJ, the *escalier de géant* had been the jewel of the entire project, to be proudly displayed in its showcase which was the wilderness itself. In contrast, everything in this alternative viewpoint was shortened, crammed and constrained. The twelve giant steps appeared to be piled one on top of the other rather than sweeping down a gentle curve. The actual spillway mechanism stood above what had become a small hill and the ground on either side of it, which in other pictures appeared limitless, was pushing against the frame. A pale sky was oppressing the whole scene and there was not a drop of water in sight. Spectacular renderings usually showed water flowing from the spillway or framed their image from the reservoir that stretches behind it. When the spillway

is open, water flows in great cascades, creating a river that separates the viewing platform from the object to be viewed. The platform was still visible in this new picture, but it appeared deserted with its small, insignificant gazebo to the left. Unbelievably the spillway was small, ghost-like, unfinished as though its builders had been stopped in mid-gesture. With no water to be seen, the rushing energy with which James Bay was so frequently represented was absent from view and the underlying caption read: "Misuse and abuse of the land: a gigantic causeway at one of the dozens of dam sites at La Grande built without any environmental and social impact assessment."[1]

This image and its commentary provide a powerful reminder that nationalist Québec has fashioned new cultural landscapes in the North which seriously conflict with the interests of the Cree, who have seen their territorial practices severely threatened by this transformation of the land. The different representational modes employed by each party emphasize the importance not only of experience but also image-making in productions of space and of geographical imaginaries. Promotional imagery geared to urban populations rendered the space of James Bay as a series of views from above, encouraging the detached contemplation of this new landscape as a national scenery. Spectators of an abstract nature, Southern viewers were tacitly invited to envision James Bay as an abstract space and themselves as a unified community for whom the pleasure of seeing the "national" landscape would be a universal rather than individual experience. Although it was of course contested, this way of seeing the

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[1] Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Astchee), *Never Without Consent: James Bay Crees stand against forcible inclusion into an independent Québec* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1998), n.p.

North nevertheless entered the Québécois national imagination: during my fieldwork, images of the LG2 dam, reservoir and *escalier de géant* prominently displayed on the wall of a restaurant in Val d'Or seemed to be a sure sign that the conjunction of technology, identity, and natural resources "by and for the people" had indeed fashioned a landscape that had become a site through which local francophone culture and identity were constructed. To me, these images were also an indication that the old impetus to be "Maîtres chez nous" had been realized in pursuing not so much "sovereignty", as the development of a new relationship between "men and things" - or people and electricity - in James Bay, which also involved new spatial relations across the territory. For the Québécois, the forging of this relationship relied on new constructions of nature that could bring it into an ever closer connection with cultural identity. When the Cree sought to claim that same connection for themselves, and within the very territory Southern Québec had laid out for "conquest", the cultural production of a hydroelectric landscape in James Bay quickly turned the region into a highly divisive political territory.

Natural resources - a political landscape

I have chosen to explore this political territory through a cultural lens: that of literature and of culturally constructed ways of seeing that produce dominant, taken-for-granted meanings. In doing so, my chief intention has been to show in concrete and applied terms how culture is an active agent not only of political processes, but also of economic ones. Hydroelectric development in James Bay shows how nature - envisioned as water - functioned as both a symbolic category and a tangible resource

whose exploitation has greatly strengthened the Québécois national economy. Reflecting on "Hydroelectricity and its lessons", Sylvie Vincent has underlined these connections:

> Prolongement du corps social, l'espace est un amputé potentiel. Mais il est aussi la cave ou le grenier, le lieu où sont entreposées les richesses futures. Et parmi celles-ci l'hydroelectricité qui, non seulement occupe une place essentielle dans l'économie actuelle du Québec mais qui, de plus, occupe l'une des places fortes du champ symbolique québécois. Autrement dit, ce qui est en cause dans la relation entre les Autochtones et les autres Québécois à la Baie James et dans toutes les régions où il est question de harnacher des rivières, c'est l'intégrité territoriale mais c'est aussi le développement économique et l'image que les différentes communautés du Québec se font de leur avenir.[2]

By referring to "the image that different communities in Québec have of their future", Vincent's words also suggest that, while many Francophones certainly sought to represent themselves and their future in James Bay, the Cree *also* came together as a political entity - and indeed as a nation - through their struggle to have their land rights recognized by

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[2] "An extension of the social body, space is a potential amputee. But it is also the basement or the attic, the site where future riches are stored. Among these riches is hydroelectricity, which occupies not only an essential place in Québec's present economy but is also prominent within the Québécois symbolic field. In other words, what is at stake in the relationship between natives and other Québécois people - in James Bay and everywhere else in Québec where there is talk of harnessing rivers - is territorial integrity, but it is also economic development and the image that each community has of its future." S. Vincent, "La Leçon de l'hydroelectricité." In *Ten Years After. Proceedings of the Forum on the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* (Montréal: Recherches amérindiennes au Québec, 1988), p. 239.

the provincial and federal governments. Thus nation-building turns out to have been a two-way process in James Bay after all. This fact has irrevocably changed the political landscape in Québec, and its implications for nationalism within the province is a complex question that sets the research agenda that logically follows from this thesis. The Cree worked for more than five years to oppose Phase 2 of the hydroelectric scheme on the Great Whale river, which flows further North into Hudson Bay. They collaborated with international environmental groups to mount an awareness campaign and succeeded - through media, lobbying and various forms of outreach - in convincing political and energy policy leaders in the United States that the project would continue to cause irreparable damage to the environment and the Cree way of life. When Great Whale seized the attention of the international media, what was once spectacular now became monstrous, and Québécois viewers were shocked into reassessing the meaning of their "projet du siècle." The Cree's strategy of bypassing the Québec government to take their fight across the border where potential energy buyers were located highlights and challenges the process of boundary-making which was part of Québec's nationalist expansion into the North. I have examined the ways in which development was deployed in the region through a discourse of identity that sought to meld people, territory and economic becoming into a unified whole. During their campaign against Great Whale, however, the Cree publicized a starkly different production of James Bay's nature, one where water was imbued with a different symbolic which called for alternative cultural, political and economic modes of relating to the land. In doing so, they redefined the national scale that was being pushed North by Southern Québec. Jumping over national frontiers to associate with American and international

groups, the Cree effectively challenged the production of cultural, economic and political boundaries over native land, sending a strong message not only to Québec but also to Canada.

This was widely perceived by Francophone public opinion as an unprecedented affront by the Cree, one that further strained what were already tense relations between natives and non-natives in the province. I interpret the emotional tone of these mainstream reactions as a sign that the partisans of hydro development were unwilling to admit that the Cree were, after all, only performing the exclusion from the Québécois national community which the James Bay project had been putting into effect for nearly twenty years. Even more disturbing was the way in which the Cree's decision to "jump scale" and make global connections in order to have their concerns taken seriously brought into view the instability of existing political boundaries - and others in the making - and the potential for fluid and multiple national affiliations *within* Québec space. The Cree strategy showed that the political apparatus which sought to secure a unique link between people and territory in James Bay had in fact encouraged the strengthening of an oppositional form of national identification, and that this was now the geopolitical terrain wherein Northern hydroelectric resources were located, as was the sanctity of water as a "national" resource. This suggests that - when it comes to deciding for *which people* James Bay water can be a national resource - the tensions I have explored between divergent modes of landscape perception and their attendant ecological perspectives are also rooted in questions of scale and political citizenship. In the end, what James Bay - and similar "national" development projects around the world - point to is

the significance of geo-politics. The conflict that opposed Cree and Québécois people shows how cultural and political ties can be fashioned through fights for environmental justice. Yet it also shows how *unstable* these various ties are. Indeed, nations or nation-states are never fully articulated entities.[3] As I have shown, the struggle over James Bay and the production of its resources is ultimately a struggle to bind people and territory, to mark the boundaries of the nation through the symbolic and material appropriation of water. To say that nature - and by extension "natural" resources - are socially produced is only to glimpse the surface of the deeply complex terrain within which they are located. Beyond James Bay, this terrain is that of global geo-politics conceived not as the arena of autonomous nation-states fighting for the world's resources but *using* world resources as a way to delimit and secure these boundaries. The flexibility of capital and the further growth of transnational links continues to weakens the already minimal capacity of nation-states to secure a bond between people and territory.[4] The refusal of the Cree people to adopt the rhetoric of a "Hydro-Québécois" identity shows the instability of the Québec map, in the same way that Québec's interest in sovereignty shows the instability of the Canadian map.

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[3] For a discussion of this, see chapter two in G. O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics: the politics of writing global space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 57-74.

[4] Sylvie Vincent points out that the governments which have concentrated on hydroelectricity as a tool of economic development have been able to do so through foreign capital and exportation all the while describing hydro as a resources that "belongs" to the Québécois: "Par ailleurs les gouvernements au pouvoir ont généralement eu d'autres préoccupations. Dans ce qu'ils indiquaient être l'espoir de créer des emplois et de favoriser l'exploitation des richesses naturelles, ils ont tout fait pour attirer des capitaux étrangers. C'est ainsi qu'ils ont autorisé des dégrèvements d'impôts, concédé à des multinationales de grandes portions du domaine public, fourni à coûts très réduits l'énergie sous toutes ses formes (Gouin, Taschereau, Duplessis, Bourassa)." Vincent, *La Leçon*, p. 240.

Identity politics as environmental politics

These various instabilities are intensified by the tension in the North between the Cree's desire to preserve and make use of water resources for their various communities, and the Québécois institutions which want the same thing but on their own terms and on their own scale: one which is provincial but nonetheless "national" and pursuing its own trading connections with the U.S. My analysis of the production of a Québécois territory in James Bay shows that, if the nation is an imagined community, it also exists as a socially delimited geographical unit whose gradual creation actively constructs race, gender and class categories. As James Bay demonstrates, these can then become categories of exclusion from the land, or rather from the privilege of accessing and benefiting from the resources of the land. Thus James Bay offers an applied lesson of the close ties between environmental struggles and identity politics, and the governmental frameworks these politics give rise to. *It demonstrates that issues of identity often become expressed as environmental issues, and environmental issues often become expressed as issues of identity.* For the Québécois, the access and use of natural resources in the North was supported by a territorial discourse that recontextualized and performed their own cultural past. Its reiteration in a new environment provoked a response from the Cree which in its turn helped to constitute them as a modern political unit. In consequence, the future of water management in the region is inseparable from the political relations that were created as a result of accessing and harnessing the La Grande's energy potential. In the final analysis, my study is an inquiry into what political scales are created

in the accessing of resources, and what categories of identity are articulated through these access channels. By viewing identity as an integral part of the relationship with the environment, I have sought to understand what political geographies have been created that render the safe, equitable and sustainable use of resources more difficult to achieve in the James Bay region. With native governance now such a prominent part of the hydroelectric landscape, the central James Bay issue today is not simply one of environmental justice for the Cree, but one of devising a policy framework that treats all partners as equal and empowered political agents. This goal cannot be achieved without looking at the intersection between nature, culture, and identity for all parties involved.

If environmental issues in the North are already tied to the social processes that shape identity, they are bound to become increasingly so as the Cree continue to develop the political structures and national symbols they have forged as a result of their efforts to retain control of the land. Speaking about the Cree's long ranging struggle for autonomy in the face of governmental interventions, Harvey Feit remarked that: "Fur traders have been present in the region since the mid-seventeenth century, and missionaries have visited most trading posts since the mid-nineteenth century, but the arrival of the government characterizes the twentieth century."[5] Given the social transformations that have taken place since work began on the La Grande river, it may very well be that the arrival of native government, and *native governmentality*, will characterize the twenty-first century. My reading of how a Québécois cultural discourse of

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[5] H. Feit, "Hunting and the Quest for Power: the James Bay Cree and Whitemen in the Twentieth Century." In R. Bruce and C. Roderick Wilson, eds., *Native People: The Canadian Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), pp. 181-223.

the land traveled North of the fiftieth parallel hints at the Cree's own modes of scripting the land and leaves open the question of how these signifying practices now impact strategies of political representation in the region. For in the process of signifying their territorial practices in order to draft the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement and continue to deal with Hydro-Québec, the Cree can be said to have "territorialized" their living environments in ways that now impact the geographical imagination of the community, and its political ties to the rest of Québec. These questions remain to be explored in relation to the Cree and, eventually, for all cultural communities that share the geographical space of Québec - especially when these communities are located in resource-rich areas. I believe this study provides an important compass for pursuing such a research agenda by asking how the Francophones' colonial past was not done away with, but reconfigured into the landscapes of hydroelectric development. My hope is that it can provide further guidance in understanding how the Cree, or other post-colonial societies in Canada, negotiate their own colonial present and, as a result, help to open Québécois territoriality to questions of difference and multiculturalism. I want to say something about each of these points, before I bring the thesis to a conclusion.

Performing/challenging the past through development

The case of James Bay shows that colonial history remains active, but this is not because of an unbroken link between past and present since each historical sequence determines its own specific context and should be analyzed in relation to it. Rather, James Bay shows that the colonial past

travels because it can be encapsulated - however partially and unevenly - in cultural discourses, many of which are strongly geographical. I have sought to show that, in Québec, the *roman de la terre* is such a discourse, as is the myth of the North and its utopian ideal of territorial conquest. Both narratives are rooted in a broader historical context, both have fed into the Québécois cultural imagination of territory and the social project of consolidating a French homeland in North America; the latter being partly in response to Durham's questioning of the French's ability to transform a wild nature into a flourishing country. Although I have suggested that the French effort to keep pushing their frontier of occupation into the North was a way of showing to their colonial rulers that they could govern themselves, part of this effort can also be understood as a attempt to be *like* these rulers. If colonial history is fragmented and travels unevenly across time, the same is true of its actors and of the apparent division between colonizer and colonized, or of who will occupy each of these subject positions. The story of French-Canadians becoming "masters in their own house" through the economic and cultural currency of hydroelectricity demonstrates how the process of decolonization necessitates that a subaltern people also succeeds in occupying, and defending, a dominant position. In Québec, this position is now largely secured by the maintenance of uneven geographical relations between North and South. Speaking about Québec's early colonial dream, Serge Courville has remarked that the North has long been envisioned as a colony of the "Québec de base" (Québec lowlands):

> Celle-ci sera non seulement une colonie de peuplement, au sens d'ailleurs très britannique du terme, mais aussi une colonie

d'exploitation. C'est là qu'on déversera les surplus démographiques des basses terres et c'est là aussi qu'on tirera les ressources utiles aux grandes villes.[6]

This is strongly reminiscent of Robert Bourassa's geographical vision of the province, in which the North was a standing reserve of economic power, a sort of Northern attic from where the industrialized South could draw its raw materials. Yet it also harks back to Lord Durham's own perception of Québec in relation to England: "It is by a sound system of colonization that we can render these extensive regions available for the benefit of the British people."[7] Reframed against this larger spatio-temporal context, development appears more critically as the production of an uneven geography - what chief Bill Namagoose sees as the two opposite ends of the hydro line - where some communities disproportionately pay the cost of resource exploitation while others enjoy its benefits. This division must remain unexamined if the South is to maintain its own level of prosperity: the representation of difference and multiculturalism in the landscape disrupts this silence by highlighting spatial boundaries, as well as the economic unevenness they create. What is more, the celebration of development as a "national" project covers over the ways in which it effectively fragments and entrenches various inequalities within the social body, even as it is envisioned to be "for the people" and "by the people." My geographical analysis of development as a process of nation-building within Québec emphasizes how the exclusionary construction of difference

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6 "The latter will not only represent a colony to be populated - in the British sense of the term - but also a colony of exploitation. This will be the place where the lowlands' demographic surplus will be absorbed and the place also where resources that are useful to large cities will be extracted." S. Courville, *Rêves d'Empire: le Québec et le rêve colonial* (Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2000), p. 50.

7 *Durham Report*, op. cited.

within the nation goes hand in hand with its materialization in space. Indeed, looking at the reiteration of past identities within a contemporary space of development helps us see how the nation molds its own space according to its underlying race, class and gender constructions. When Jean Rivard shuts himself up into the wilderness to clear it one tree at a time and remake nature into a space of civilization, he does not create a new space of meaning so much as reorders the signs nature makes available around him - trees, plants, soil, resources - so that they are made to speak his own language, which is that of European culture. As I have endeavoured to show, it is in that sense that discourse is at the center of the uneven production of space and, by extension, that it is through the performance of its colonial past that the nation creates its own heterogeneous territory, even as it seeks to represent this territory as a unified entity. When I look back upon it, I realize that the act of turning on the TV as a child to watch the latest installment of Québec's expansion into the North leaves no doubt as to how the performative nature of the nation functions as a way of maintaining its homogeneity. My own Québécois subjectivity was fashioned partly through the pleasure of watching this conquest of land by "my people"; it was only years later, and with some distance, that I could start to turn a more critical eye onto this performance.

While I have insisted that the performance of past identities is an integral component of post-colonial landscapes, I have paid less attention to the responses these performances gave rise to and to the potential for rescripting traditional discourses through the process of reiterating them. If each performance of the *défricheur* - and the nature he produces -

further sedimented him in James Bay as a reference of Québécois identity, it also provided an occasion for redirecting the meanings and environments this cultural figure yields. For the performance of a Québécois identity in the North left in its wake clearly "visible" markers on the land. Like planting a cross, the construction of a dam was meant to signify a territorial claim; both had to be *seen* for that authority to take effect. This points to another aspect of the role of vision in actualizing power relations: it is in the "seeing" of colonial markers that the order they impose can be challenged. Thus, if spectacle was a means of attempting to control the meaning of the hydroelectric project and of bringing a national territory into view, it also became a powerful way of opposing it for native groups and their supporters through the staging of resistance and the articulation of new points of view. My goal was to identify the dominant strategies of representation enacted in James Bay by the South throughout the 1970s in order to open up the possibility of reintroducing other - and indeed othered - histories that make up that space, and consequently the space of the Québec nation. If James Bay developers sought to maintain the productive relation between people and territory by reiterating a nationalist discourse around the project, this production was regularly disrupted by its various opponents and by supporters of a more inclusive sense of nationhood within Québec. The abstract representation of territory enacted in the James Bay spectacle was clearly disrupted by opposing spatial practices on the part of the Cree. The performance of their own traditional territoriality demonstrate that it is at the very site of the cultural production of territory and its resources that the intersection between nation-building and the governmentality of the state can be understood, challenged and redirected. When the Cree employed the media

apparatus to script their own part in the drama over land use and resource access in the North, they proved that control of the means of representation also meant control of space and territory.

Multiculturalism in the wilderness

If access to James Bay resources has created a new political landscape in the North, this thesis then must also be envisioned as a form of political engagement with how the Québécois nation is presently being redefined along the lines of a "territorial" nationalism; one where the community is imagined not on the basis of essential cultural affiliations but in relation to an experience of place which is specific to those living in Québec. I have tried to demonstrate that a fundamental moment in nation-formation is the construction of place - especially outside the city - through the making of various cultural landscapes that encompass and perform the "collective" ("national") past. James Bay shows that such a performance can easily be culturally specific and yet masquerade as universal and available to all. The central issue at stake here is that the reality of a multiculturalism within the social body does not automatically become translated into the collective imagination of the nation's territory. Benedict Anderson's view of the nation as an "imagined community" leaves out the important fact that this community is frequently imagined through its territory. As James Bay demonstrates, some dominant narratives of identity in Québec are articulated through nature, land and territory. Despite recent efforts to promote an open territorial (place-bound) nationalism over an ethnic (language-bound) one, the cultural production of space in Québec continues to inscribe a dominant Francophone

perspective and leaves little room for alternative readings of the land. Looking at nature, capital and the production of space in James Bay we cannot but be looking at the expression of - which is also indeed the "activation" of - culture. A change in the terms of national identification in Québec will require a change in the terms of its geographical imagination. James Bay shows that - with identity, resources and economic development so deeply caught within the material and discursive matrix of this imagination - such a shift is easier said than done.

The undeniable link between culture and space is proof that societies cannot be fully "multicultural" unless they can imagine themselves through a multicultural spatiality; an idea expressed by Audrey Kobayashi when she reminds us that the interests of Canadians are as diverse as the Canadian landscape.[8] As James Bay demonstrates within the Québec context, the structures of belonging on which the Québécois nation rests are not only symbolic: they are also economic, material and political. These anchors of cultural identity are created as a result of interaction with the land, as well as specific modes of settlement and development. With the growing diversity of cultures among the Québécois population and the necessity of reflecting this reality in the imagination of the national community, urban space in the province - particularly that of Montréal - has been increasingly theorized as fragmented, multiple and crisscrossed

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[8] "The interests of Canadian citizens are as diverse as the landscapes of francophone Trois-Rivières, the Kahnawake Indian Reservation, Vancouver's Chinatown and Toronto's old elite district of Rosedale. Such places must be seen, therefore, not simply as cultural landscapes, but as manifestations of political objectives that cannot be accommodated without struggle and contradiction." Kobayashi, *Multiculturalism*, op. cited, p. 224. I put the term "multicultural" in brackets to signal how it can imply essentialist notions of culture. Indeed, if cultures are perceived to be hybrid from the start, it would follow that they are always already "multicultural." In a contradictory way then, the term reproduces the very problem it seeks to address.

with different cultural claims. In comparison, rural spaces - and even more so remote spaces which are identified as "wilderness" - remain deceptively homogenous within Québec's geographical imagination. I have spoken at length about the "wild" North and the rural landscape of the St.-Lawrence, but said nothing about how *urban spaces* figure in Québec's territoriality. Clearly, the city is also a defining element of cultural identity and this thesis remains incomplete without an appraisal of how this plays into the imagination of nature, land or resources. What would an *urban* nature look like? Could such a nature serve to anchor concepts of national identity? Or is it specifically because of its lack of "nature" that the city is a more viable space for the imagining of a multicultural national community? These are questions that need to be asked if we are to continue piecing together the historical and cultural geography of Québécois territoriality, and make it a more inclusive one.

As a result, the remaking of Québec's natures also means the reshaping of its political identity and nationhood. As Braun and Castree argue, the social construction of nature always gestures toward other social processes:

> If this is our first point - nature is always something made - then our second is that its making is always about much more than nature... Thus, the remaking of nature(s) has wider implications - it becomes, quite simply, a focal point for a nexus of political-economic relations, social identities, cultural orderings, and political aspirations of all kinds.[9]

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[9] Braun and Castree, *Remaking*, op. cited, p. 5.

The fact that, thirty years ago, Bourassa could announce his "project du siècle" without notifying the very people who would lose their land as a consequence of it should give us a sense of the shock registered in the province when his abstract construction exploded with the concreteness of native territorial claims. While natives are expressing their presence on the land all across Québec (and Canada as well) and reinscribing their own narratives of belonging into the territory of the nation, the spaces they inhabit - whether it be the country, the reserve, the North, or the Great North - are still surprisingly blank in geographical renditions of the nation as a spatio-political unit. The expression of divergent national scales and modes of belonging in James Bay - whether Cree, Inuit, Québécois or even Canadian - and the demand that they be recognized forces us to rethink the wilderness of the North as a space rife with conflict. In this new framework, the qualities of boundlessness, emptiness and purity that so often organize Québécois geographical imaginings have to be replaced with boundaries, fragmentation or even a sense that such a vast space can become crowded with too many needs, some more legitimate or immediate than others. Louis-Edmond Hamelin has already called for such a vision of the North as a plural space and argued that there exists in Québec:

> [U]ne nette différence de même qu'un faible niveau de cohérence entre la partie laurentienne et la partie nordique. Si le Québec constitue une entité en tant que nation politique et s'il influence tout le territoire par ses lois et institutions, il est loin de démontrer d'unité, même d'union, dans les domaines

ethnique et culturel. L'état d'hétérogénéité au niveau des "peuples" saurait-il demeurer sans conséquence géopolitique?[10]

New narratives of nation-building open to diversity have had much to say about the multiplicity of the Québec population and yet most representations of national space do not portray this difference, insisting instead on the inviolable "integrity" of the Québec territory. The difficulty remains: How to render the large, sometimes sparsely populated extent of the nation's (would be) territory as a space of multiplicity and change? What kind of imagery could counter the bird's eye view to incorporate the multiple territorialities that clashed together in the space of James Bay? The spectacular imagery meant to promote the construction of dams carefully avoided the possibility of a multiplicity of perspectives and instead wishfully imagined the people as harmonious, undifferentiated and legitimate owners of the land through the performance of economic development.

Power from the North: cultural critique as environmental study

In light of this broad framework where entities such as Hydro-Québec, the Québec state or the Québec "people" are channeled through nature,[11] I hope that my cultural reading of water as a national resource will be understood and treated also as an environmental study. With so

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[10] "[A] marked difference as well as a low level of coherence between the Laurentian part and the Nordic part. While Québec is an entity as a political nation and while it influences the whole territory through its laws and institutions, it is far from exhibiting a unity, even a union, in the ethnic and cultural domain. Will this heterogeneity in terms of "peoples" be able to remain without geopolitical consequences?" L.-E. Hamelin, "L'Entièreté du Québec: le cas du Nord." *Cahiers de Géographie du Québec*, Vol. 42., No 115 (April 1998), p. 105.

[11] See Watts, *Nature as Aritifice*, op. cited, pp. 245-246.

many present debates around the social construction of nature, it is time to further explore the "cultural economy" of the environment and to take it seriously when addressing environmental issues. This thesis is an effort in that direction; the cultural and political questions I pose are all environmental questions that can deeply impact the future of water resources in Northern Québec. For that reason, their analysis should serve planners, environmentalists, community leaders, political advisors and policy makers in the task of designing a healthy social and environmental geography in the region. My study of James Bay as an energy landscape that was socially produced to become a tool of decolonization demonstrates that the symbolic power of land is not safely locked in literary and cultural works but informs the economy, industry, planning and energy efficiency models that tap into resources. It suggests that environmental planning has to engage not only all actors but also *all levels of signification* involved in the development process. Efforts to engage indigenous ways of relating to the environment only half fulfill their purpose if industrialized societies are unable to reflect on their own cultural production of the land. I have tried to mix the categories of past and present, of tradition and modernity, of colonization and development to show that non-indigenous societies also harbour a surprising amount of "traditional practices" within their narratives of progress and modernity: the same is true of so-called "pre-modern" societies for whom the interface with various market economies is much more extended over time and space than industrialized societies tend to assume. Such a realization is crucial for designing research and policy agendas that successfully challenge the dualism between "native societies" and "industrialized nations", and recognize that past and present simultaneously inform the cultural and territorial practices of each group.

These relations are the nexus of power/knowledge whereby the natural world becomes visible and useful to political leaders, developers, workers or citizens. In an effort to express how Northern resources are conceptualized by these various parties, Harvey Feit has used the expression "quest for power": "The quest for power is a metaphor the Cree might use for the life of a hunter; it is also a metaphor Euro-Canadians might use for the goals of both northern developers and government bureaucracies."[12] Given this contextual nature of power and the way in which it arises from different forms of cultural practice on the land, Cree and Québécois notions of what constitutes "power" have created divergent approaches to resource management in the region; and yet both cultures share a common goal, which is the management of resources across the territory in a way that is advantageous to each group. That hunting and development should both be conceptualized as "quest for power" forces us to see the differential constructions of nature inherent in each quest, but it also suggests the possibility that these constructions may be redirected in order to meet, rather than negate, each other's needs. My study shows that the intersection between modern development and national identity has been a two-way process in Northern Québec. In this light, Bourassa's expression "Power from the North" acquires a new meaning, one that was largely unforeseen by him when he launched the project. His figure of speech suggested the ability both to rationalize space and to draw maximum potential from the orchestration of its separate elements. Transformed into electricity, the power of a river carries the flow of everyday life: that same energy is also materialized politically. It feeds not only into a grid of pylons and powerlines but also into the politics of

[12] Feit, *Hunting and the Quest*, p. 181.

nationalism: as it turns out, the Cree hold as much of that power as do the Québécois. What they both do with it will impact the quality and viability of the natural and national environment in Québec.

An analysis of "Power from the North" opens venues for thinking about the interface between nature and nationalism, and the colonial geographies this interface reinscribes - even in the so-called First World - under the name of "development." To watch the James Bay spectacle and become a "Hydro-Québécois" was to anchor identity in water, one of the most abundant natural resources on Québec's territory. Who such an identity includes - as I have asked, "What bodies were enlisted for the production of what kinds of nature" - determined who could own and occupy the land. Thus identity constructions enabled and supported the ecological changes that fixed uneven relations into place. For the urban population to whom the power of the La Grande keeps flowing, the act of turning on a switch is banal to the point of seeming alien to the politics that typically enter into the production and distribution of energy. Read as a geography of power, James Bay electricity is rendered less banal. In the same way that social activists have enjoined us to ask how our breakfast gets to the table, the Cree have asked potential buyers in the urbanized centers of the Eastern United States to question where power comes from. Returning to my neighbourhood, I have no way of knowing where the fragment of machinery I caught a glimpse of as a child now lies in the network that has threaded the currents of James Bay rivers into the industrial economy of the South. Yet it is that curious act of envisioning a promised land from the viewing platform of a suburban balcony that provided a first clue regarding how power from the North was generated

through vision, performance and exhibition, as much as through physical geography.

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