GABRIELLE ROY AS FEMINIST

Re-reading the Critical Myths

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GABRIELLE ROY'S POSTHUMOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY paints a surprising portrait of the artist as a young woman.[1] In *her* story, Gabrielle Roy was independent and adventurous, an enthusiastic member of a travelling theatre group, and an aspiring actress. In 1937, despite family opposition, she forsook the security of a traditional teaching position near her home in Manitoba, for the uncertainties of pre-war Europe where she eventually abandoned her dramatic ambitions for the equally precarious career of female journalist. Yet most critical studies offer a very different image of Gabrielle Roy, the writer, a portrait steeped in maternal virtues, gentle resignation, and tender humanism, all the attributes, in short, of traditional femininity. None of Gabrielle Roy's youthful spirit of liberation, it would seem, has found its way into her fiction. Critics can perceive no darker side to her traditional vision of women, which Phyllis Grosskurth has disparagingly called her "mother's-eye view of the world?"[2]

Paradoxically, Gabrielle Roy's novels and short stories belie this conventional interpretation. Not only are women and their social, economic, and sexual exploitation central issues, indeed, in her writing, but her point of view on all of these questions is also essentially feminist in the broad sense of the word. In a recent collection of essays subtitled "Feminist Approaches to Writing by Canadian and Québécois Women," Barbara Godard defines as feminist "any activity which seeks to place the female in a position of equality with respect to males in society and culture."[3] This definition implicitly includes Roy's denunciation of sexual inequality and could extend, as well, to her heroines' struggle for identity, which Elaine Showalter defines as the "female" phase of "self-discovery, a turning inward freed from some of the dependency of opposition."[4] The question to be asked, then, is why Gabrielle Roy is considered to be a traditionalist.[5]

The answer to this paradox lies in the way traditional critical approaches have, themselves, obscured feminist elements in Gabrielle Roy's writing. In part, the reasons for this are circumstantial. Certainly, in the 1950s, 1960s, and even early

1970s, when most of the major studies of Gabrielle Roy's fiction were written, criticism in general showed little concern for, and often misrepresented, sexual difference. However, the critical myths engendered by such criticism remain extremely tenacious. More seriously, they have become persistent obstacles to new feminist approaches to Gabrielle Roy's fiction and a better understanding of the values and tensions which permeate her work. It is therefore imperative to identify the critical myths surrounding Gabrielle Roy's "traditionalism," to examine how these myths have developed, and to deconstruct the critical inconsistencies and contradictions which a feminist perspective could well illuminate.

Much early criticism of Gabrielle Roy's novels and short stories has relied heavily on the author's own declarations of intention. Gabrielle Roy's compassionate and sometimes idealistic humanism has often been quoted in the context of a non-differentiated appreciation of her portrayal of "man's" condition or the "artist's" mission,[6] or more recently, with reference to her refusal to join ranks with radical Quebec feminists on linguistic questions.[7] Traditional interpretations of her fictional mothers inevitably invoke Gabrielle Roy's admiration for the maternal role. Of course, reference to the author's intention to determine artistic meaning is, in itself, a very dubious critical procedure. Whatever a writer's conscious aims, his, or her, text may in fact reflect quite different preoccupations, or be read in divergent ways. In the case of Gabrielle Roy, however, it is striking that the intentional fallacy is consistently used to legitimize a traditional interpretation of her fictional women. The implicit values of the critical approaches to her fiction have simply been extended to her own comments on women.

How selective critical interpretation of authorial intention has been, is best revealed by two interviews — one presented by Alice Parizeau in 1966, and another prepared by Gilles Dorion and Maurice Emond in 1979 on the basis of a questionnaire sent to the author. Although Gabrielle Roy stresses her humanistic view of life in both interviews, she is also explicitly preoccupied with sexual difference and its aesthetic consequences. The 1979 interview contains a brief evaluation of several well-known heroines conceived by male authors. Roy's denunciation of Flaubert's Madame Bovary is categorical: "that character seems to me to have so obviously come from a radically male brain that . . . I have difficulty in lending her any credence."[8] She concludes this judgment, strongly worded for her, by appealing to Virginia Woolf's theories of sexual difference in writing.[9] Clearly, Gabrielle Roy is concerned with a question much debated in current feminist criticism: do women write differently from men?[10] What Roy retains from Woolf's often contradictory declarations is equally significant. Rather than the biological imperative, or what Michèle Barrett calls Woolf's tendency to "essentialism," the belief in "intrinsic differences between the male and the female author in terms of the language they use,"[11] Gabrielle Roy stresses the notion of equality for men and women within an androgynous creative act.[12]

WHILE SUCH NEGLECT of Roy's interest in feminist aesthetics might be considered an oversight, interpretation of her comments on motherhood is more obviously tendentious. Roy's statement, in her 1966 interview with Alice Parizeau, that the final justification of the *couple* is a child[13] has been taken to imply that she considers reproduction to be a *woman's* ultimate *raison d'être*.[14] In the same interview, however, Roy decries women's "slavery" and criticizes the Catholic Church in Quebec for its oppressive stance towards women. Her admiration for the maternal role, while clear, is also voiced as social criticism, through her insistence on society's depreciation of motherhood and children.[15] By today's standards, Roy's concern for sexual equality and her conviction that women's biological role should not lead to social oppression are by no means radical feminist opinions, although they unfortunately retain their relevance. Understood in their historical context, they reveal a feminist consciousness incompatible with Roy's traditionalist label.

Other critical approaches to Gabrielle Roy's fiction have lent credence to the intentional fallacy and its misconstruction of her vision of the female condition. Sociological criticism has interpreted Gabrielle Roy's condemnation of the harsh fate of French-Canadian, native, and immigrant women in the broad framework of social, economic, and racial injustice.[16] Such criticism has seen women characters not as a group in themselves, but as representatives of other minorities. Certainly, one can not dispute Gabrielle Roy's condemnation of social and economic oppression. Undoubtedly, critical emphasis on this general point of view has led Jeanne Maranda and Maïr Verthuy to suggest that Gabrielle Roy's social criticism "is not aimed at a phallocratic society but at a political situation, and an economic structure which are perceived as oppressing the whole Quebec nation, rather than one particular segment of it."[17] Nevertheless, in the absence of a serious analysis of the reasons for the particular exploitation of women in Roy's fiction, such a conclusion would appear to be founded more on current critical myths than close textual scrutiny.

Studies of *La Rivière sans repos* (translated into English as *Windflower*) illustrate the problem admirably. Although this novel describes the rape of a young Inuit girl and her subsequent pregnancy and motherhood, critics have been oddly euphemistic. "In a lyrical evocation of the plight of the Eskimo in our century," writes Lorraine McMullen, "Gabrielle Roy returns to her recurrent theme of devoted motherhood as the central focus of the narrative."[18] Michel Gaulin identifies "man and the meaning of his destiny"[19] as the essential theme of the novel. However, to his credit, he does relate the problematic conception of the heroine's son (the word rape is not used) to white man's values.[20] Similarly, Jeannette Urbas considers *Windflower* to be a "novel of social criticism, continuing some of the

questions raised in *The Tin Flute* and *The Cashier* . . . the significance of technological advances and . . . the validity of modern life."[21]

Curiously, even those rare critics who discuss the heroine's rape are unable to develop their analysis. Paula Gilbert Lewis considers Elsa "the ultimate victim, raped by an unknown American G.I.,"[22] but quickly re-integrates the heroine's reactions within her own perception of the traditional values of Roy's female characters: "As a typical Royan female of a novel, she accepts what has happened to her as perfectly natural."[23] When Lewis attempts to sustain this interpretation through reference to the character's psychology, however, the result is unconvincing: "The formerly happy young woman is . . . transformed into a sad and morose individual, although predictably, she appears to be resigned and even indifferent to or apathetic about her destiny."[24] Decoding Elsa's implicit revolt is also problematic for Terrance Hughes who equates the young Inuit girl's nostalgia for the past and tendency for day-dreaming with the maternal resignation characteristic of Gabrielle Roy's fictional mothers.[25] Although he stresses both Elsa's marginality and her maternity, Hughes cannot relate the two, the first being perceived as cultural, the second as universal and immutable.[26]

UNDOUBTEDLY, the greatest focus on Gabrielle Roy's female characters has been within the context of psychological criticism. Many thematic studies can also be grouped under this heading, as the themes examined in Gabrielle Roy's fiction often have emotional connotations. Not surprisingly, given its sheer quantity, such criticism provides both the most problematic, and the most insightful, analyses.

Historically, interpretation of Gabrielle Roy's female characters has centred on the mother figure, perceived in the context of conventional values and morality. Early French-Canadian reviews of *The Tin Flute*, mostly by clerics, seem to have set the tone. Rose-Anna Lacasse was extolled as the incarnation of traditional values. Her unmarried daughter Florentine, and her unwanted pregnancy, of more dubious moral exemplariness, were ignored.[27] In a survey of the critical reception of *The Tin Flute* in French Canada from 1945 to 1983, Carole Melançon suggests that this preoccupation with traditional values gradually subsided in the fifties, giving way to more innovative analyses of aesthetic and thematic questions.[28]

Although such may be the case generally, interpretations of Gabrielle Roy's female characters, both inside and outside Quebec, have remained profoundly conservative. In Quebec, the publication in 1964 of a thesis by Sister Sainte-Marie-Éleuthère did much to fuel the myth of the heroic and prolific French-Canadian mother, ever loyal to paternal authority.[29] Such was the power of the myth that it structured opposition to it, as well, contributing to the difficulty in perceiving female

sexuality within, as well as without, the maternal orbit.[30] Certainly, more studies began to focus on Gabrielle Roy's fictional daughters, where the themes of frustration and revolt appear to crystallize. Emphasis on the generational continuum, however, soon returned the unhappy daughters to the maternal fold, victims of a feminine fatalism.[31]

Studies of Roy's fictional women thus continue to be inconsistent, as critics try unsuccessfully to reconcile character psychology and the myth of maternal resignation. Hugo McPherson, for instance, provides the definitive stereotypical description of Rose-Anna Lacasse, "the universal *mater dolorosa*, the infinitely loving mother whose "poverty of spirit" will inherit the world."[32] While he considers Florentine as the novel's heroine, McPherson reduces her revolt against maternal resignation to the whim of a "yearning, empty-headed little fool."[33] Not surprisingly, Rose-Anna's total commitment to "unpremeditated giving" is seen, in contrast, as "more reassuring," and her unhappy yearning to return to the land of her childhood,[34] as irrelevant.

Nor has the maternal stereotype been seriously challenged by more recent, and more nuanced, studies of Gabrielle Roy's heroines. Even Paula Gilbert Lewis, one of the rare scholars to insist upon Roy's ardent advocacy of women's independence, finds it difficult to extend this notion to her female characters. Roy's desire to re-evaluate the importance of the maternal role in society is simply equated with traditionalism: "it was this more traditional side of the author's beliefs that . . . shaped the lives of her female characters, essentially representing martyrdom, while extolling the virtues of motherhood."[35] In her latest article, however, a successful application of the theories of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan to Roy's portrayal of relations between mothers, daughters, and grandmothers, Lewis softens this judgment, at least with respect to the author's short stories.[36]

Gabrielle Pascal has examined another current theme in feminist criticism, namely the tension between attachment and autonomy. In her opinion, the role of teacher enables some of Gabrielle Roy's heroines to reconcile their quest for independence with their maternal desires, sublimated in the pedagogical relationship. However, adopting a somewhat prescriptive view of feminism, she concludes that "if, from a feminist point of view, the teacher figure represented progress at the time when *The Tin Flute* was written, . . . it has no mobilizing effect for women today."[37]

Ironically, critical response to Gabrielle Roy's male characters has been, at once, more controversial, and more revealing, of sexual issues. Men are perceived to play a subordinate role in her fiction. Generally speaking, this perception has been more troubling for male than for female critics. "Where are the fathers, the men?" laments E. A. Walker. "They have virtually disappeared [after *Street of Riches*], but this is hardly surprising, for they have always had a tenuous foothold in her universe."[38]

More problematic than their absence is the inferior status of Roy's fictional men. In its most attenuated form, this concern has been expressed as aesthetic criticism, Roy's fictional men being seen as less successful, less rounded,[39] than her heroines. For those few male characters to receive critical acclaim, such as Alexandre Chenevert and Pierre Cadorai, praise has been for their compelling allegorical or symbolic value, rather than their psychological depth.[40] More frequently, however, such criticism focuses on personality and power, the more recognizable attributes of the traditional patriarch. "All her males are weak or unsympathetic,"[41] writes Walker, a judgment echoed by Michel Gaulin in more specific terms: "Gabrielle Roy's women characters have really only one fault; they are so strong that they crush, albeit unconsciously, the personality of their husbands."[42]

On the whole, female critics have been less judgmental.[43] Where they have been critical, their values also appear to reflect traditional male stereotypes. "Gabrielle Roy's error was to cut short Emmanuel Létourneau's psychological development," writes Annette Saint-Pierre. "Military training has above all the advantage of maturing a soldier; Emmanuel remains weak and too impressionable."[44]

That the issue is, indeed, the problematic nature of patriarchy in Gabrielle Roy's fiction is confirmed by two unusual attempts by male critics to re-evaluate Gabrielle Roy's fictional men. Reference to the male stereotype of strength and decisiveness leads Maurice Cagnon to defend Jean Lévesque as "the sole character [of *Bonheur d'occasion*] to act upon his principles and act out his personal victory against mediocrity and futility."[45] Similar values underlie Adrien Thério's energetic riposte to Michel Gaulin, in one of the rare articles to be dedicated exclusively to Gabrielle Roy's male characters. Thério rejects the contemporary critical tendency to represent Quebec society as matriarchal. In a meticulous analysis of family politics in *The Street of Riches*, he sets out to prove that the father, despite his frequent absences, is, in fact, the central authority figure in Gabrielle Roy's fictional family.[46] Paradoxically, the vehemence of Thério's defence of patriarchy provides a telling indication of the extent to which Roy's fiction can be, and was perceived to be, anti-patriarchal.

During the 1960s, sexual politics in Roy's fiction was the explicit object of three particularly insightful articles. In a structural study of *Bonheur d'occasion*, André Brochu suggested that central to Gabrielle Roy's world vision was the conflict between the male and female universe, a conflict which Brochu expressed in geometric terms as the opposition between the circle and the straight line.[47] Jacques Allard pursued this question in an article on *Where Nests The Water Hen*, speculating that Luzina's annual pilgrimages to deliver yet another child form a possible reconciliation between the masculine and the feminine, through the maternal appropriation of the male theme of travel.[48]

In a series of controversial psychoanalytical studies, Gérard Bessette shed new light on Gabrielle Roy's masculine protagonists, notably Alexandre Chenevert and

Pierre Cadorai, by suggesting that the equivocal themes and images associated with these characters were grounded in the author's psychological projections. Although Bessette did not explicitly address the question of transsexual projection or identification between author and character,[49] his hypothesis nonetheless enabled him to re-interpret textual imagery with reference to the author as woman.

Unfortunately, these articles have not led critics to re-examine the myths surrounding the issues of patriarchy and matriarchy in Gabrielle Roy's fiction. Like the more conventional psychological studies I have examined, most thematic criticism has simply been oblivious to sexual difference. Rather than seek inconsistencies in this form of criticism, however, it is more useful to point out how feminist perspectives could illuminate some of the important thematic tensions in Gabrielle Roy's fiction.

MANY CRITICS EMPHASIZE the fascination that Gabrielle Roy's characters feel for "the open road"[50] and their conflicting, homeward-bound search for security, a dilemma summed up in the title of McPherson's article, "The Garden and the Cage,"[51] and re-articulated by E. D. Blodgett in "Gardens at World's End or Gone West in French."[52] To these spatial tensions may also be added the urban/rural dichotomy in Gabrielle Roy's fiction, best illustrated by the alternation between novels about Montreal, *The Tin Flute* and *Alexandre Chenevert*, for instance, and such works, set in small-town or rural Manitoba, as *Where Nests the Water Hen*, *Street of Riches*, and *The Road Past Altamont*. Although these tensions have been related to universal themes, such as man's conflicting desire for security and liberty, for the warmth of intimacy and the exhilaration of exploration,[53] they may also reflect Gabrielle Roy's conception of the particular constraints of the female experience.

As Shirley Foster writes in an article on early twentieth-century American women novelists, not without relevance to highly traditional French Canada, female writers have often been compelled by external ideological pressures to use "artistic devices which voice their unease without obviously challenging literary or sexual conventions."[54] Other tensions or ambiguities can arise in their writing, pursues Foster, from "their awareness of the complex often contradictory nature of female aspiration."[55] In her autobiography, Roy returns time and again, with deep regret, to her conviction that her sisters, thrust into the more conventional lives of home-bound mother or nun, had little opportunity to develop their exceptional talents.[56] Although this cannot be taken as an expression of artistic intention, more fodder for the intentional fallacy, it nevertheless indicates a consciousness of the limitations of traditional feminine roles which could well find echoes in Gabrielle Roy's fiction.

On the formal rather than psychological level, this argument finds support in two recent articles which relate Gabrielle Roy's writing to particular literary canons or conventions. Sherrill Grace shows how Gabrielle Roy's use of "urban/rural codes" transcends literary convention by deconstructing the "sexual stereotyping of city and nature . . . usually viewed as female."[57] Examining the publication and reception of the writer's earlier novels, François Ricard suggests that Gabrielle Roy was well aware of contemporary expectations and sexual polarizations with respect to literary *genre*. In his view, the relative failure, in France and Quebec, of *La Petite Poule d'eau* (translated into English as *Where Nests the Water Hen*) in comparison with the overwhelming success of *Bonheur d'occasion*, was perceived by Gabrielle Roy as an indication of the critical depreciation of the more personal, autobiographical, in short, more feminine, type of writing which she, herself, most wanted to explore.[58]

Other frequent themes in Gabrielle Roy's fiction may also lend themselves to similar sexual de-construction. For instance, the nostalgia for innocence and childhood so often felt by her heroines could be read as a desire to return to the undifferentiated world before the sexual fall of the female adolescent. Certainly, in the case of the rape of Elsa in *Windflower* and the quasi-rape of Florentine in *Bonheur d'occasion*, to mention only two examples, Gabrielle Roy's fiction presents a negative view of sexuality, linked to male domination. The most erotic scenes in her writing, however, are found in *Children of My Heart*, in the highly charged relationship between a young teacher and her adolescent pupil, Médéric. Sexuality here is gentle and shared, although never consummated. Significantly, it is Médéric's father, the tyrannical patriarch, par excellence, abetted by village gossip, who ultimately puts an end to his son's friendship, by imposing his sullied view of exploitative sexuality.[59]

Three recent studies have pointed out the importance of themes related to spectacle in Gabrielle Roy's fiction. Analyzing visual imagery in *The Hidden Mountain*, Jean Morency relates the importance of perception and colour in the novel to the larger aesthetic questions of the artist's vision and the artist as visionary. His mythological interpretation of the artist-hero's quest proves problematic, however, for visual imagery suggests two contradictory models, artistic creation as a Promethean struggle, or an initiation rite.[60] E. R. Babby also insists upon Gabrielle Roy's "marked preoccupation with the act of looking" in her structural study of the "spectacle construct" and its relation to "narrative technique and literary illusion"[61] in Roy's fiction. The viewed, not the viewer, is the object of Antoine Sirois' article on clothes, make-up, and jewellery in *Bonheur d'occasion*.[62] Sirois examines how Gabrielle Roy uses appearance to portray inner aspirations. Taken together, all three studies suggest the importance in Gabrielle Roy's fiction of appearance and perception for creation, artistic or personal, and identity, themes particularly poignant in women's writing, as the eternal "other."

Deconstructing critical myths is always an imprudent adventure; it can lead as often as not to new visions no less totalitarian. To replace Gabrielle Roy's traditionalist label with a feminist banner would be equally confining. Nor should one reject all traditional criticism of her fiction simply because it has been, in general, insensitive to sexual difference. However, the particular misconstructions which pervade critical studies of Gabrielle Roy's fiction, as well as their tenacity, demonstrate a compelling need to re-examine her writing from new feminist perspectives. In the meantime, the traditionalist label which haunts her work should be seen for what it is, a critical construct — subject, like all constructs, to revision.

NOTES

[1] Gabrielle Roy, *La Détresse et l'enchantement* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1984).

[2] Phyllis Grosskurth, "Gabrielle Roy and the Silken Noose," *Canadian Literature* 42 (Autumn 1969), 7.

[3] Barbara Godard, "Mapmaking: A Survey of Feminist Criticism," in B. Godard, ed., *Gynocritics, La Gynocritique* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1987), 29.

[4] Elaine Showalter, "A Literature of Their Own," in M. Eagleton, ed., *Feminist Literary Theory, A Reader* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 13.

[5] This judgment is explicit in some recent articles on Quebec feminist writers. See Karen Gould, "Setting Words Free: Feminist Writing in Quebec," *Signs* 6:4 (Summer 1981), 617-42; Jeanne Maranda and Maïr Verthuy, "Quebec Feminist Writing," *Emergency Librarian* 5 (September/October 1977), 2-11.

[6] One of the most curious phenomena associated with such undifferentiated studies of the artist in Gabrielle Roy's fiction occurs at the end of Annette Saint-Pierre's *Gabrielle Roy sous le signe du rêve* ([Winnipeg: Editions du Blé, 1975], 130), where the critic uses the masculine pronoun to refer to Gabrielle Roy as author. Although possible grammatically, since the French noun for author is masculine (a fact which has recently led to the creation of the feminized forms "écrivaine" and "auteure") this option is not by any means necessary on those grounds.

[7] Paula Gilbert Lewis quotes Gabrielle Roy as viewing "much contemporary feminist literature as hermetic and tedious" (*The Literary Vision of Gabrielle Roy: An Analysis of Her Works* [Birmingham, AL, and Lawrence, KS: Summa Publications, 1984], 2). Lewis's recording of her conversation with Gabrielle Roy shortly before the author's death has been somewhat controversial, although the element most disputed is Roy's imputed desire to be remembered most as a storyteller (see Richard Chadbourne, "Essai bibliographique: cinq ans d'étude sur Gabrielle Roy, 1979-1984," *Etudes littéraires* 17:3 [hiver 1984], 603-04).

[8] Gilles Dorion and Maurice Emond, "Gabrielle Roy," in *Romanciers du Québec* (Québec: Québec français, 1980), 170.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] For an analysis of some of the American options presented, see Eagleton, 200-37.

[11] Michèle Barrett, "Virginia Woolf on the Female Literary Tradition," in Eagleton, 224.

[12] Dorion and Emond, 170.

[13] Alice Parizeau, "Gabrielle Roy, la grande romancière canadienne," *Chatelaine* 7:4 (avril 1966), 122.

[14] See Paula Gilbert Lewis, "Feminism and Traditionalism in the Early Short Stories of Gabrielle Roy," in Paula Gilbert Lewis, ed., *Traditionalism, Nationalism and Feminism Women Writers of Quebec* (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1985), 29.

[15] Parizeau, 122.

[16] Ben-Zion Shek's work is exemplary of this approach: see *Social Realism in the French-Canadian Novel* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1977), 87-88.

[17] Maranda and Verthuy, 2.

[18] Lorraine McMullen, "Introduction" to Gabrielle Roy, *Windflower* (*La Rivière sans repos*) (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970).

[19] Michel Gaulin, "*La Rivière sans repos* de Gabrielle Roy," *Livres et auteurs québécois* (1970), 27.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Jeannette Urbas, *From Thirty Acres to Modern Times* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976), 57.

[22] Lewis, 73.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Terrance Hughes, *Gabrielle Roy et Margaret Laurence: Deux chemins, une recherche* (Saint-Boniface: Editions du Blé, 1983), 116.

[26] *Ibid.*, 113.

[27] Carole Melançon, "Evolution de la réception de *Bonheur d'occasion* de 1945 à 1983 au Canada français," *Etudes littéraires* 17:3 (hiver 1984), 463.

[28] *Ibid.*, 466.

[29] Soeur Sainte-Marie Éleuthère, *La Mère dans le roman canadien-français* (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1964). The author deals explicitly with the traditional nature of Roy's fictional mothers (171-92).

[30] Jean Le Moyne laments the power of the maternal myth in Quebec fiction: "la mère investit la femme de nos fictions . . . Ou plutôt, elle l'empêche d'être. Il n'y a plus de femmes, il n'y a que des mères dont on n'a jamais qu'à dire un mot: tabou" (*Convergences* [Montréal: Editions HMH, 1962], 105). However, if female sexuality is in part revalidated, it remains exterior to the maternal function. The end result echoes the approach of Soeur Sainte-Marie-Éleuthère, for instance, who describes Rose-Anna Lacasse's attraction to her husband in terms of a shared imagination (173-74), avoiding the question of physical attraction.

[31] See, for instance, André Brochu, "Thèmes et structures de *Bonheur d'occasion*," *Ecrits du Canada français* 20 (1966), 192; Maurice Cagnon, *The French Novel of Quebec* (Boston: Twayne, 1986), 41; E. A. Walker, *Profiles in Canadian Literature* 1 (Toronto and Charlottetown: Dundurn, 1980), 107; Jeannette Urbas, *From Thirty Acres to Modern Times*, 47-48.

[32] Hugo McPherson, "The Garden and the Cage," *Canadian Literature* 1 (Summer 1959), 52.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

[35] Lewis, *Literary Vision*, 64-65. In fact, Lewis has difficulty maintaining a coherent interpretation of Roy's "traditionalism." Her discussion of Roy's "feminine humanism" (95) is a good example of her inability to resolve this issue.

[36] Lewis, "Trois générations de femmes: le reflet mère-fille dans quelques nouvelles de Gabrielle Roy," *Voix et Images* 10:3 (printemps 1985), 168.

[37] Gabrielle Pascal, "La femme dans l'oeuvre de Gabrielle Roy," *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 50:1 (janvier-mars 1980), 61.

[38] Walker, "Gabrielle Roy," 107.

[39] See Gérard Bessette, "*Bonheur d'Occasion*," in his *Une Littérature en ébullition* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1968), 237; Réjean Robidoux and André Renaud, "*Bonheur d'occasion*," in their *Le Roman canadien-français du vingtième siècle* (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1966), 75-91; Jacques Blais, "L'unité organique de *Bonheur d'occasion*," *Etudes françaises* 6:1 (1970), 25-50.

[40] See François Ricard, "*La Montagne secrète*," in *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec*, Tome III, 592-95, and Paul Socken, *Myth and Morality in "Alexandre Chenevert" by Gabrielle Roy* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1987), 8-9.

[41] Walker, 108.

[42] Michel Gaulin, "Le monde romanesque de Roger Lemelin et Gabrielle Roy," in *Archives des lettres canadiennes*, Tome III (Montréal: Fides, 1977), 149.

[43] Jeannette Urbas, for instance, invokes the difficulties of the Depression to justify the behaviour of Azarius Lacasse (46). Paula Gilbert Lewis associates the perceived problematic status of Gabrielle Roy's male characters with the author's aesthetic aims, namely the priority given to female characters (104). She also praises Alexandre Chenevert as one of Gabrielle Roy's "most powerfully developed literary creations" (104).

[44] Saint-Pierre, 27.

[45] Cagnon, 36. Annette Saint-Pierre offers an interesting confirmation of this masculine view of Jean Lévesque. In an analysis based on Bachelard's theories, she suggests that Jean Lévesque's behaviour is more easily understood if one recognizes a "lack of harmony in his androgyny [the animus, anima dynamic]. He demonstrates an excess of masculinity" (*Gabrielle Roy*, 24). This raises the question whether male reticence to the character is due to the unfavourable, egoistical presentation of masculinity.

[46] Adrien Thério, "Le Portrait du père dans 'Rue Deschambault' de Gabrielle Roy," *Livres et auteurs québécois* (1969), 237-43.

[47] André Brochu, "Thèmes et structures de *Bonheur d'occasion*," 163-208.

[48] Jacques Allard, "Le Chemin qui mène à *la Petite Poule d'eau*," *Les Cahiers de Sainte-Marie* 1 (1966), 57-69.

[49] Gérard Bessette, *Trois romanciers québécois* (Montréal: Editions du Jour, 1973), 181-237.

[50] Paula Gilbert Lewis, "The Incessant Call of the Open Road: Gabrielle Roy's Incorrigible Nomads," *The French Review* 53:6 (May 1980), 816-25.

[51] McPherson, 52.

[52] *Essays in Canadian Writing* 17 (Spring 1983), 113-26. Paula Gilbert Lewis provides an interesting variation on the same theme in "Female Spirals and Male Cages: The

Urban Sphere in the Novels of Gabrielle Roy" (in *Traditionalism, Nationalism, and Feminism*, 71-81) although the sexual opposition developed in the article is not always consistent with the title.

[53] François Ricard discusses several interpretations of this polarization in *Gabrielle Roy* (Montreal: Fides, 1975), 31-32.

[54] Shirley Foster, "The Open Cage: Freedom, Marriage and the Heroine in Early Twentieth-Century American Women's Novels," in M. Monteith, ed., *Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory* (Sussex: Harvester Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 154.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] Gabrielle Roy, *La Détresse et l'enchantement*, 135-36.

[57] Sherrill E. Grace, "Urban/Rural Codes in Roy, Laurence, and Atwood," in Susan Merrill Squier, ed., *Women Writers and the City* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1984), 194.

[58] François Ricard, "La Métamorphose d'un écrivain," *Etudes littéraires* 17:3 (hiver 1984), 441-55.

[59] Gabrielle Roy, *Ces enfants de ma vie* (Montréal: Alain Stanké, 1977), 169-77.

[60] Jean Morency, *Un Roman du regard La Montagne secrète de Gabrielle Roy* (Québec: CRELIQ, 1986), 73.

[61] E. R. Babby, *The Play of Language and Spectacle: A Structural Reading of Selected Texts By Gabrielle Roy* (Toronto: ECW, 1985), 4, 19.

[62] Antoine Sirois, "Costume, maquillage et bijoux dans *Bonheur d'occasion*," *Présence francophone* 18 (1979), 159-63.

BIRDS

John Pass

Prisoners of the small head
and frantic heartbeat
contemplation thou never wert

but of outer world, vacuous
and flighty. Suburban budgies beeping zip
of interest fly

and are shredded
for their hour in true trees.
Mum watched ducks